Montana Republican tells candidates' forum: "Clinton should be shot"

Jerry White
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Bob Davies, a Republican candidate for the Montana State Legislature, spoke at a Republican fundraiser and candidates' forum near Bozeman on October 9 and declared that President Clinton 'should be shot.'

Davies, a candidate for House District 27, said this is how he responds when he goes door to door and is asked by voters whether Clinton should be impeached. He also said Clinton was guilty of treason and should be executed for selling satellite technology to the Chinese government, and that his actions were no different than those of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg. The Rosenbergs were electrocuted in 1953, at the height of the McCarthyite witch-hunt, after being convicted of passing atomic secrets to the Soviet Union.

Montana Governor Marc Racicot was among the Republican officials at the forum. Neither he nor any other official interrupted Davies, opposed his threats against the president, or reported Davies' comments to law enforcement authorities. Advocating attacks against the president is a federal crime, punishable by five years in prison or a $250,000 fine.

Davies' comments only came to light two days later when a letter from one of those who attended the meeting appeared in the *Bozeman Daily Chronicle*. Kirk Astroth, a youth development specialist at Montana State University, recounted Davies' remarks, saying, 'I am filled with disgust when I hear someone like Bob Davies who is running for public office advocate violence against other public officials.'

The letter sparked several complaints about Davies to the regional Secret Service Office in Great Falls, which said it was investigating the matter and would be turning the case over to the US Attorney's office.

Governor Racicot did not respond to reporters' inquiries about Davies' remarks for nearly a week. He then issued a perfunctory statement disassociating himself from the threats against Clinton. The Republican National Committee has remained silent. When the *World Socialist Web Site* contacted the director of the Montana Republican Committee, Sue Akey, she attempted to distance herself from Davies' comments, but said the party would not retract its endorsement of his campaign.

In an interview with the *Bozeman Daily Chronicle*, Davies attempted to downplay his statements. 'I'm certainly not advocating any paramilitary development,' he said. 'It was a Republican meeting. It was a light-hearted thing, kind of a joke. And no one took it seriously except for him [Astroth], who was obviously a Democratic plant. I didn't make any suggestion that I or any other private citizen should do the executing.'

He continued, 'The implication is that I'm trying to incite violence against the president, which I'm not. It would be a total disaster from my point of view if someone did a Lee Harvey Oswald on Clinton. He would be viewed as a martyr and his legislative agenda, which I vigorously oppose, would be enacted.'

According to a reporter from the *Chronicle*, Davies is an electrical engineer, originally from Pittsburgh, who moved to Montana to work on US military missile silos for Boeing and Sylvania in the 1960s. He became a member of the ultra-right John Birch Society in the 1970s.

Prior to his current election bid, Davies was defeated as the Republican candidate for US Congress in 1982 and the state House of Representatives in 1990. He is seeking the seat of Republican Jack Wells, who is running for state senator this year. Like Wells, Davies is a rabid opponent of government taxes for public education and other services. He advocates replacing income and real estate taxes with a single consumer tax, and giving parents vouchers to pay for home schooling

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and private education.

The district includes parts of Bozeman, a town of 20,000 and the home of Montana State University, as well the mansions and 'ranchettes' of the very wealthy, including NBC News anchor Tom Brokaw, CNN owner Ted Turner and film star Mel Gibson.

Montana has been hard hit by an agricultural crisis that has wiped out many small farmers, and most new jobs have come in the low-pay service sector. These conditions have created fertile ground for the emergence of the extreme right-wing Montana Militia and Montana Freemen movements. Davies denies any connections to the militia movement, but he shares their fascistic sentiments and their identification of Clinton with 'big government' and even socialism.

Davies' remarks and the silence of top Republicans underscore the degree to which right-wing radicals have come to exercise a dominant influence over the Republican Party.

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