

The US impeachment hearing

What a socialist would have said

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What if a member of the Socialist Equality Party had been given five minutes to address Mr. Starr at last week's impeachment hearing? This is what he or she might have said:

Mr. Starr, you've had more than enough time to explain your side of the case. Since I'm limited to only a few minutes, I won't waste any time asking you questions. I would simply like to explain to the American people what is really behind the impeachment drive against the Clinton White House.

It is an attempt by ultra-right and Christian fundamentalist groups, using a trumped-up sex scandal, to replace Clinton with a government that would go even further in attacking working people and the poor, enriching the multimillionaires, undermining basic democratic rights and launching military actions throughout the world.

Mr. Starr, if you and your political friends can't get along with Clinton even with his right-wing record, you must have something truly barbaric in mind for the American people. Perhaps like your cheerleaders at the *Wall Street Journal* you would like to turn back the clock an entire century to the days of robber baron capitalism, without any government social programs, without any restrictions on corporate business, without any protection for workers or consumers, without civil rights for minorities, women or gays.

The investigation you've been conducting is not simply about sex, although you and the media seem obsessed with the subject. In your illegal leaking of grand jury testimony and your treatment of Monica Lewinsky and others, we've seen your attitude toward the 'rule of law.' Your definition of 'criminal behavior' includes any measures a person takes to defend himself against your inquisition. There is a name for the type of country the US would be if you or people like you were

running it. It's called a police state.

You say you are not a man of politics. Who are you trying to fool? You're a conservative Republican with many ties to the religious right. You submitted your 450-page report, filled with salacious details about Clinton's sex life, barely two months before the election. The plan was to engineer a Republican landslide and insure Clinton's impeachment and removal from office.

Not 'a man of politics?' Your entire history, your connections and your course of action prove otherwise. But you've never made your political agenda clear to the American public. You've hidden behind your position as independent counsel. By the way, of all the words I would use to describe you, 'independent' is the last that comes to mind.

Your career has depended on your connection to a network of right-wing lawyers, judges and politicians. You moved from the Reagan Justice Department to a seat on the Appeals Court, then to a top position in the Bush administration, as Solicitor General. A right-wing North Carolina Republican and former aide to Jesse Helms, David Sentelle, fired Robert Fiske and appointed you independent counsel. The right-wing Supreme Court, through its ruling on the Paula Jones suit, made it possible for you to use quasi-legal means to attack the White House.

You've had the closest ties to the Jones case, funded by the far right, since its beginning. You discussed writing a brief in support of Jones, at the request of a group financed by billionaire Richard Mellon Scaife and headed by the wife of Laurence Silberman--another right-wing Republican who sits on the same Appeals Court as Sentelle. These are the circles you travel in: wealthy men and women with a contempt for the vast majority of the American people and for democratic

principles.

These connections are the dirty secret of political life in this country. They are well-known in official Washington, but no one on this committee will discuss them. They want to continue pretending that the judicial system is 'above politics.'

In the fall of 1997 the Paula Jones suit and your investigation came together. Monica Lewinsky's affair with Clinton, and tape recordings made by Linda Tripp, became known by people close to you and Jones's lawyers. Tripp manipulated Lewinsky into discussions and actions the purpose of which was to set Clinton up by asking him questions so embarrassing that he was bound to lie.

What was your exact role in setting this up? When did you begin to direct the activities of Linda Tripp, and coordinate your investigation with the Paula Jones suit? These are questions worth looking into, but the broad outlines of this campaign are clear. This investigation is an attempt by the extreme right to accomplish by the methods of backroom conspiracy and frame-up what they haven't been able to carry out through elections.

Your operation was cleverly planned. But there was one thing you could not contrive--the thoughts and feelings of the American people. They have largely seen through you. They don't know everything about you, thanks to the media, but they've seen enough to be suspicious. They smell a rat.

Your investigation has disgusted millions. They think you're prying into something that's none of your business. They have no interest in Clinton's sex life. They think you're a peeping Tom, a snoop. And, instinctively, they associate you with the politicians in Washington, like Newt Gingrich, whose policies of budget-cutting and handing everything over to the rich are more and more unpopular.

And the American public can spot a phony. You go on about seeking the truth, but you're on the payroll of the giant tobacco companies, some of the worst liars in corporate America. These people have denied for years that smoking causes illness, while they raked in profits at the expense of untold human suffering and death.

You make a small fortune working as a hired gun for big tobacco. The Republicans on this committee have extolled the great sacrifices you've made, without mentioning that during your time as independent

counsel, you've been earning more than a million dollars a year defending Brown & Williamson, United Airlines, General Motors, Hughes Aircraft, Bell Atlantic and other corporate giants. The Republicans and Democrats on this committee have no problem with that, but I do.

As a socialist I recognize that Clinton, like you, is a servant of big business who defends an inherently unjust and unequal economic system. But I'm not indifferent to how Clinton is removed and by whom. If the political coup which you have spearheaded were to succeed, it would be an enormous blow to the democratic rights of working people.

As the Democrats have once again demonstrated at today's session, they don't and can't expose the political agenda of the right wing. They themselves have moved so far to the right, they largely share that agenda. I believe that the working people of this country need a new party, a socialist party, that would represent a genuine alternative.

Such a party would oppose everything you stand for--the defense of privilege, social inequality, political reaction. It would fight for the radical transformation of society so that economic life would be controlled by the vast majority. That is the path of human progress.

See Also:

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