

Right-wing in US mounts new political provocation

## The Wall Street Journal and Juanita Broaddrick

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The latest round of scandal-mongering against the White House demonstrates that extreme right-wing elements, backed by the media, are determined to press ahead with their campaign of political destabilization.

With the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times* providing pre-broadcast publicity, NBC news on Wednesday night aired a thirty-minute interview during prime time with the latest Clinton accuser, Juanita Broaddrick. The Arkansas businesswoman has suddenly emerged on the national scene with sensational--and utterly uncorroborated--allegations that Bill Clinton sexually assaulted her 21 years ago.

Of particular significance in the Broaddrick episode is the role of the *Wall Street Journal*. The *Journal* was the first establishment news outlet to break the story, publishing a lengthy interview with Broaddrick on its editorial pages on February 19. Editor Robert Bartley and writer Dorothy Rabinowitz made no bones that they were vouching for the truth of Broaddrick's allegations, highlighting in enlarged type their view that "this was an event that took place."

Rabinowitz was chosen to write the interview in an effort to lend credibility to Broaddrick's story. Notwithstanding her right-wing views, Rabinowitz earned a certain stature within journalistic circles for a series of articles she published in the *Wall Street Journal* and *Harper's* magazine some years ago exposing high profile cases in which people were convicted and jailed on false charges of child abuse. Ironically, her defense of these frameup victims was based on exposing the allegations against them as consisting of precisely the type of unsubstantiated charges that she is now supporting in Broaddrick's attack on Clinton.

Bartley had to publish the interview on the *Journal's* editorial pages, which he controls, because the *Journal's* news editors refused to carry the story. They judged it to be lacking the minimal basis in fact and corroboration required to bring it before the public. Such was the odor of slander given off by the *Journal's* interview with Broaddrick that three days after its appearance, Bartley felt obliged to publish an editorial protesting the reluctance of other media outlets, including his own paper's news pages, to publicize the rape allegation.

The *Journal's* role in promoting the Broaddrick story is nothing new. Its editorial pages have supplied the main ideological ammunition for the political destabilization drive that began within weeks of Clinton's taking office in 1993. The *Journal* led the character assassination campaign against Clinton aide Vincent Foster, which Foster cited in his suicide note as the thing that drove him over the edge. Then the *Journal* turned around and initiated the "Who Killed Foster?" editorial campaign, implying that Clinton had his long-time friend and political associate bumped off.

The *Journal* set the tone for the rest of the media, avidly promoting every piece of salacious gossip and sexual innuendo that it could throw against the White House, culminating in the Monica Lewinsky scandal, all the while insisting that Clinton's alleged crimes were "not about sex." Such denials notwithstanding, one of its editorial campaigns centered on the demand for the publication of Clinton's medical files, which Bartley hoped would reveal a history of venereal disease.

Now, in the wake of the failed impeachment drive, the *Journal* has escalated its attack from charges of sexual impropriety to rape. On Friday the *Journal*

published a second editorial on the Broaddrick story, venting its spleen over the failure of the public to rise up in anger against the White House in the aftermath of the NBC interview.

Certain points in this piece are worth noting, because they typify the scurrilous methods employed by Bartley's scribes. The editorial praises the NBC interview as a "strong report, well corroborated (such as pinning down the date)..." In reality, the interview corroborated nothing, nor could it, since there is no evidence to back up Broaddrick's charges. As for the date of the alleged rape, the *Journal* skips over the fact that it was left to NBC to come up with a day in 1978 when Broaddrick was in Little Rock, and present that as a plausible date of the assault, because the supposed victim could not on her own "pin down" the month, let alone the day, of the purported crime.

The *Journal's* editorialists, while denouncing others for refusing to accept Broaddrick's allegations, tacitly acknowledge that they cannot be proven: "Commentators who are dismissing it as gossip or unprovable are missing the point... Juanita Broaddrick told her story. Either you believe it, or you don't."

But there is a more politically significant and sinister side to the editorial. "Well, the President is not going to be impeached, tried, indicted or anything else," it states. "He won't resign. Those avenues are behind us."

What other avenues, then, are Bartley and company suggesting? The *Journal* does not directly answer this question, although it makes clear it intends to continue its campaign of slander and provocation: "But with every dreadful shoe that drops--and of course there will be more--the President's political capital expires."

The piece concludes with an ominous allusion to the Hollywood western "High Noon" and similar films: "Now, with Juanita Broaddrick standing among them, the Washington political community appears to be averting its eyes. More than anything, the city looks like one of those small towns in a Western movie where something quite awful is happening out in the street, and one house after another draws the curtains to shut out the sight."

The *Journal* does not cross every "t" and dot every "i." It doesn't have to. The message is clear enough. As far as the *Wall Street Journal* is concerned, the President is a rapist and murderer, and the established political institutions are too cowardly to take him on.

Extraordinary measures are called for, and a man on horseback who is prepared to carry them out.

Since Clinton's acquittal, this theme--the need for an authoritarian government--has become increasingly prominent in the effusions of the *Journal* and its allies on the extreme right. It emerges alongside the assertion that the American people, by refusing to support Clinton's removal, have proven themselves immoral and unfit for democratic self-rule.

This view is, in reality, an inversion of the true situation, in which the broad mass of working people, who take democratic rights seriously, are stubbornly resisting the efforts of significant sections of the political and business establishment to undermine those rights. The depravity which Bartley projects onto the people is, in fact, an increasingly predominant feature of the social elite for which he speaks. It is bourgeois politics that has sunk to a debased level, so degraded, in fact, that the politics of right-wing conspiracy and coup are tolerated as legitimate.

The fact that the *Wall Street Journal*, with increasing frenzy, advocates the politics of political coup and dictatorship is of enormous significance. Much of what appears on its editorial pages verges on incitement, if not to overthrow, then to eliminate the present head of state. This is coming, not from a supermarket tabloid, but the principal organ of American business.

Bourgeois academics generally scoff at the Marxist contention that the politics of the extreme right ultimately reflect the interests of, and are supported by, powerful sections of big business. Today they need look no further than the *Wall Street Journal* for confirmation of this historical truth.



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