

The US election

Bush campaign spokesman Governor Marc Racicot tied to extreme-right forces

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The fact that Montana Governor Marc Racicot has emerged as a leading spokesman for the campaign of George W. Bush says a great deal about the social and political physiognomy of the Republican Party.

In recent days Racicot, a close friend and advisor to Texas Governor Bush, has held press conferences and appeared on the Sunday morning news shows, making allegations of Democratic vote-rigging and whipping up opposition within the military to a possible victory by Democratic candidate Al Gore.

At one press conference Racicot, citing the rejection of overseas military ballots by local election officials in Florida, declared, "I am very sorry to say, but the vice president's lawyers have gone to war, in my judgment, against the men and women who serve in our armed forces." Such incendiary language, bordering on incitement to mutiny, has become almost routine in Republican quarters.

It is the language of the militia groups and white supremacist cults that have found a comfortable home in Racicot's state, becoming part and parcel of what the media calls, in its disarming way, the "base" of the Republican Party in Montana. The cozy relationship between the Republican Party, including Racicot, and the terrorist fringe was on display two years ago, at the height of the anti-Clinton impeachment hysteria.

On October 9, 1998 Racicot attended a Republican fundraiser and candidates' forum in Bozeman, Montana, where Bob Davies, a candidate for the state legislature, declared that President Clinton "should be shot." Davies said he routinely uttered that sentiment in response to voters who asked about his stand on the impeachment controversy.

Davies also told the forum that Clinton was guilty of

treason and should be executed for selling satellite technology to the Chinese government, likening the president to Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, who were electrocuted as Soviet spies at the height of the 1950s McCarthyite witch-hunt.

Neither Racicot nor any of the other Republican officials at the forum interrupted Davies, opposed his threats against the president, or reported Davies' comments to law enforcement agencies, even though advocating attacks against the president is a federal crime. Davies' comments only came to light two days later when one of those in attendance at the meeting wrote a letter to a local newspaper, declaring, "I am filled with disgust when I hear someone like Bob Davies who is running for public office advocate violence against other public officials."

In the aftermath of the October 1998 forum, Racicot did not respond to reporters' inquiries about Davies' remarks for nearly a week. He finally issued a perfunctory statement disassociating himself from the threats against Clinton. The director of the state Republican Committee told the *World Socialist Web Site* at the time that the party would not retract its endorsement of Davies' campaign.

Racicot's political rise is indicative of the far-right character of Republican politics in Montana, where the party has close ties with racist and anti-Semitic organizations, including paramilitary militia groups like the Montana Freeman and the Militia of Montana. The thinly-populated Western state has seen an influx of wealthier, conservative social layers trying to escape the more racially- and ethnically-diverse, and politically liberal, West Coast.

Top elected officials, including Republican

Congressman Rick Hill, have appeared at militia gatherings and the party has solicited support from these organizations for political campaigns. In August of 1999, the Montana Human Rights Network reported that Republican Senator Conrad Burns' office had sent a letter to the Militia of Montana appealing for support against the “gun control crusade” in the US Congress, a reference to pending legislation requiring background checks at gun shows. The senator's spokesman insisted there was nothing wrong with writing to the militia, a sentiment that was immediately echoed by John Trochmann, the leader of Militia of Montana, whose ties to the white supremacist Aryan Nation are well known.



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