

Conference of US right-wingers hears call to execute John Walker

Let liberals know “they can be killed too”, says TV commentator

Patrick Martin
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The largest US gathering of right-wing political activists cheered the remarks of Ann Coulter, a columnist and television commentator, who called for the execution of John Walker Lindh as a political measure to intimidate liberals.

“When contemplating college liberals, you really regret once again that John Walker is not getting the death penalty,” Coulter said in an address to the Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC). “We need to execute people like John Walker in order to physically intimidate liberals, by making them realize that they can be killed too. Otherwise they will turn out to be outright traitors.”

Coulter was unapologetic afterwards, claiming that her statement was a “huge hit with the audience.” About 3,500 people attended the four-day CPAC conference, the annual gathering of far-right elements in the Republican Party, which was held January 30-February 2 in Arlington, Virginia. Representatives and supporters of some 70 organizations and publications participated. (It was at the 1994 CPAC conference that the Paula Jones sexual harassment case was publicly launched against the Clinton White House, at a press conference organized by a group of right-wing activists.)

Coulter’s comments, and the audience reaction, are an expression of one of the most important realities in American political life—the emergence within the political establishment of a significant fascist layer, cultivated and promoted by sections of corporate America and the media, which now plays a dominant role in the Republican Party and wields enormous influence within the Bush administration.

Coulter is one of the most ignorant representatives of

this layer, which espouses a toxic combination of Christian fundamentalism, American chauvinism and militarism. A former Justice Department and Senate aide, she became a syndicated right-wing columnist and television pundit during the Clinton administration.

Her focus was on scandal-mongering rather than policy, as she worked closely with the group of right-wing lawyers who used the Paula Jones case to engineer Clinton’s impeachment. Coulter herself wrote an anti-Clinton screed, *High Crimes and Misdemeanors*, which raised her profile in ultra-right circles. In her book she compared Clinton to a serial killer.

In the wake of the September 11 terror attacks, Coulter declared in her column in *National Review Online*, referring to Muslims, “We should invade their countries, kill their leaders and convert them to Christianity.” This evoked considerable press commentary and protest, and *National Review* refused to run a follow-up column in which she advocated taking special police measures against “swarthy males.”

Ultimately the right-wing magazine dismissed her as a contributing editor, not because her political views are uncommon in those circles, but because her racist diatribes cut across the Bush administration’s efforts to win support from Pakistan and various Middle East client states for the US war in Afghanistan. With President Bush declaring that the United States was not at war with Islam, it was embarrassing to have a fervent supporter of the Bush administration declaring that war with Islam was precisely what was required.

Since then Coulter has continued to assert that the “war on terrorism” requires the Christianizing of the

Middle East. In a television appearance in December she declared that “future terrorist attacks against the West can never be fully eradicated until the American ideal of freedom and equality of all people is adopted in these countries. And that freedom ultimately derives from a Christian world view.”

Such rantings were no barrier to Coulter’s invitation as a featured speaker at CPAC. A press release for the event described her as one of a group of “great authors” who “have made themselves available to our conference attendees.”

Nor did her presence give any pause to the numerous Bush administration officials who attended and spoke, including National Security Adviser Condoleeza Rice and Secretary of Health and Human Services Tommy Thompson.

There has been little press attention to the matter in the three weeks since the end of the CPAC meeting, although one can imagine the furor that would have erupted if a prominent liberal had hailed the execution of Timothy McVeigh as an object lesson for conservatives. No Democratic Party spokesman has denounced Coulter’s comments or demanded that the Bush administration distance itself from her identification of liberalism and treason. Nor has any Bush administration or Republican Party spokesman raised any objection to her remarks.

On the contrary, similar comments have been made both by administration spokesmen and by other representatives of the far-right political milieu. Attorney General John Ashcroft, in testimony before Congress, declared that anyone criticizing the sweeping anti-democratic provisions of the USA Patriot Act was guilty of aiding terrorism.

Pat Robertson, founder of the Christian Coalition, only last week declared on his television program, the 700 Club, that Islam was violent and aggressive. Islam “is not a peaceful religion that wants to coexist,” Robertson said. “They want to coexist until they can control, dominate and then, if need be, destroy.”

Coulter’s comments about John Walker Lindh underscore the political motives behind the prosecution of the California youth who converted to Islam and went to Afghanistan to fight for the Taliban. It hearkens back to the methods of the McCarthy witch-hunts and the trial and execution of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg. The two Communist Party members were sent to the

electric chair in order to terrorize all left-wing opposition to American capitalism.

It is not the cowardly and corrupted representatives of official liberalism, in the Democratic Party leadership and the media, who are the principal targets of this right-wing venom. What Coulter, Ashcroft and company fear is that, given the growing disparities of wealth and income in America and the unpopularity of the Bush administration’s social policies and attacks on democratic rights, wide layers of working people will be attracted to a critique of American capitalism based on socialist and democratic principles.



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