

Maine governor met repeatedly with violent ultra-right group

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Maine Governor Paul LePage, a Republican, participated in a series of eight meetings in 2013 with a neo-fascist group called the Constitutional Coalition, which is aligned with the nationwide movement of ultra-right—and sometimes violent—“sovereign citizens.”

Meeting locations included the State House and Blaine House, the governor’s official residence in Augusta. According to local media reports, LePage himself called Constitutional Coalition member Phil Merletti after he and others held a press conference in the State House.

Jack McCarthy, one of Merletti’s cohorts, is also a host of the “Aroostook Watchmen” radio show. According to blogger and columnist Mike Tipping, who first broke the story of the meetings, although Aroostook is a sparsely populated county near the Canadian border the radio show “has hosted a who’s who of the conservative far-right in Maine, including leading Christian conservative activists, the heads of the various Tea Party groups, state legislators, members of LePage’s administration, presidential candidate Ron Paul, and, during the 2010 primary, LePage himself.”

Two days after the Constitutional Coalition’s first meeting with LePage, show co-hosts McCarthy and Steve Martin talked on air of how the meeting included a discussion of executing Maine House Speaker Mark Eves and Senate President Justin Alford, two leading state Democrats, for treason. McCarthy said on air that “the governor looked at us and looked at his buddy and said, ‘They’re talking about hanging them.’ I said, ‘Praise the Lord, let’s hang a few. We’ll be done with this crap.’ ”

Several months later Merletti sent LePage a letter declaring that if the legislature continued to ignore the Coalition, “we will be left with the 1776 or 1865 option. In the pursuit of liberty there is no extremism.”

The “1865 option” was a reference to the assassination of Abraham Lincoln.

In addition to such threats, the “Watchmen” peddle vile conspiracy theories on their show: that the Sandy Hook school shooting was a “false-flag operation” of the government, for example, or that Jews in the US Senate are planning a “holocaust against America’s Christian Population.”

They also seek to disorient workers by manipulating anger about government spying and International Monetary Fund austerity policies.

As part of a nationwide movement of “sovereign citizens,” McCarthy, Merletti, Wayne Leach and the other constitutionalists claim that elected county sheriffs are the only legitimate police force in the United States. Essentially endorsing this argument, LePage asked Kennebec County Sheriff Randall Liberty to assist the ultra-rightists in pursuing their “treason” charges against Eves and Alford.

In another incident, McCarthy boasted on his radio show about working with Schaeffer Cox, the founder of the Alaska Peacemakers Militia. In 2013 Cox was sentenced to 26 years in prison for conspiring to murder federal and state government officials, including judges and law enforcement agents, and for stockpiling illegal weapons and explosives.

The meetings with McCarthy, Merletti, et al came to an end after legal counsel for the Governor sent him a memo criticizing the ultra-rightists for their suggestions that the governor could exercise quasi-dictatorial powers. The memo stated, “Mr. Merletti may believe that the Office of the Governor has the power to strike down laws that Mr. Merletti deems to be unconstitutional. As we all know, such is not the case. Neither does the power of the executive extend to providing a mechanism for private citizens to declare

laws to be unconstitutional.”

Given his association with the Constitutional Coalition and its open discussion of killing prominent Democrats, one might expect LePage would be treated as a political pariah. Yet the Maine Public Broadcasting Network reports that the Republican Governors Association has sent its national communications director to work on LePage’s behalf, adding that “the RGA has targeted Maine as one of the top five races in the country for the GOP, and that’s a ranking that comes with some serious punch.”



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