

Kevin McCarthy meets with Republican House conference amid ongoing revelations regarding January 6 coup

Jacob Crosse
28 April 2022

On Wednesday, House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy addressed the Republican House Conference in a closed-door meeting for the first time since the release of audio last week confirming that after the failed coup of January 6, 2021, McCarthy held then-President Donald Trump responsible for the attack and thought Trump should resign.

A new book by *New York Times* reporters Jonathan Martin and Alexander Burns, *This Will Not Pass: Trump, Biden and the Battle for America's Future*, quotes McCarthy and Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell agreeing that Trump was responsible for trying to overthrow the election and that he should be impeached.

"I've had it with this guy," McCarthy told fellow Republicans following the attack.

"He put a gun to his head and pulled the trigger," McConnell told Martin shortly after midnight on January 7, 2021. "Couldn't have happened at a better time."

After the reporting surfaced last week, McCarthy initially denied that he had suggested Trump bore "some responsibility" for the failed coup. In an apparently reflexive lie, he called the reporting "totally false and wrong." But within hours, Martin and Burns released audio recordings in which McCarthy declared Trump culpable for attempting to overthrow the election of Joe Biden.

The *Washington Post* reported on Wednesday that the house minority leader, who is in line to become house speaker should the Republicans win control of the House of Representatives in the 2022 midterm elections, received a "standing ovation" from Republicans after explaining himself and defending his comments.

The *Post* described Republicans admitting that at the time McCarthy made his post-coup comments, many were having similar thoughts of being eager to "move on" from the 2020 election and rid themselves of Trump, whom they viewed at the

time as a failure.

"All of us were trying to make sense of, you know, what happened, why did it happen, why didn't we stop it?... We were all trying to wade through that as the dust was settling, and then the dust settled. And I think he came to the right conclusion," Texas Representative Jodey Arrington told the *Post* following the meeting.

The day before the meeting, the *New York Times* released additional audio from a January 10, 2021 House Republican leadership conference call. The audio featured McCarthy and Louisiana Representative Steve Scalise, the minority whip and second highest ranking Republican House member.

The pair discussed the comments of Florida Representative and Trump acolyte Matt Gaetz following the coup. One of 147 Republicans (139 in the House and eight in the Senate) to vote against certifying the election of Biden, even after the attack on the Capitol, Gaetz went further, openly defending the fascist violence.

"I'm calling Gaetz, I'm explaining to him... I'm going to have some other people call him too, but, the nature of what, if I am getting a briefing, I'm going to get another one from the FBI tomorrow. This is serious shit. To cut this out," McCarthy said on the January 10, 2021 call.

"He's putting people in jeopardy," McCarthy added. "And he [Gaetz] doesn't need to be doing this."

Acknowledging the pre-planned character of Trump's coup—that it was not a "spontaneous riot" that got "out of hand," as McCarthy and virtually the entire Republican Party now claim—McCarthy said: "We saw what people would do in the Capitol, you know, and these people came prepared with rope, with everything else."

Agreeing with McCarthy, Scalise replied: "It's potentially illegal what he's doing."

In the same January 10 call, McCarthy and Scalise discussed

the conduct of Trump's co-conspirators following the attack. They specifically named Representatives Louie Gohmert of Texas, Marjorie Taylor Greene of Georgia, Lauren Boebert of Colorado and Barry Moore and Mo Brooks of Alabama.

After discussing some of the fascist statements they were circulating prior to, during and following the coup, McCarthy suggested that they be kicked off of Twitter, as Trump was following the attack. "We can't put up with that," McCarthy said, adding, "Can't they take their Twitter accounts away, too?"

After these initial outbursts over the coup attempt, however, McCarthy quickly reversed course, eventually traveling to Mar-a-Lago for an audience with Trump and making his peace with the would-be dictator.

In this he was responding to two factors: he took the measure of the Democratic Party's spineless response following the attack and weighed it against the support Trump continued to receive within the far-right base of the Republican Party.

While Biden and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi called for a "strong Republican Party" following the attack, Gaetz, Greene, Ohio Rep. Jim Jordan, Pennsylvania Rep. Scott Perry and other Republican House members voiced their support for Trump and their opposition to impeachment.

McCarthy, McConnell and the rest of the so-called Republican "establishment" made a political calculation and dropped any suggestion that Trump no longer represented the future of the Republican Party.

More than 15 months after the failed coup, nearly every current Republican and aspiring Republican candidate for office has made the same calculation and embraced Trump's lies concerning the "stolen" election.

Immediately following the tapes' release, multiple news outlets reported that McCarthy was on the phone with Trump, seeking to placate the party's leader-in-exile. The *Washington Post* reported last Thursday that after McCarthy called Trump, the ex-president was not upset at McCarthy and was "glad" he did not follow through by supporting impeachment efforts.

Trump was interviewed last Friday at his Mar-a-Lago estate by reporters from the *Wall Street Journal*. In the interview, Trump said that while he "didn't like [McCarthy's January 10] call," he had a "very good relationship" with McCarthy.

"I like him. And other than that brief period of time, I suspect he likes me quite a bit."

"I think it's all a big compliment, frankly," Trump told the *Journal*. "They realized they were wrong and supported

me."

He added, "almost immediately, as you know, because he came here and we took a picture right there—you know, the support was very strong."

By "picture right there," Trump was referring to a photo McCarthy took with him on January 27, 2021. The photo occurred one day after 45 out of 50 Senate Republicans voted against moving forward with the impeachment trial against Trump on the specious grounds that because Trump was no longer in office, he could not be impeached.

While McCarthy has, for now, seemingly placated Trump and his Republican allies, there remains the very real possibility that if the Republicans take back the House this November, especially with Trump-endorsed candidates, they will block McCarthy from becoming speaker.

The *Post* reported that the aforementioned Gaetz was the only Republican lawmaker who confronted McCarthy during Wednesday's Republican conference meeting. The night before the meeting, Gaetz released a public statement attacking McCarthy and Scalise: "Rep. McCarthy and Rep. Scalise held views about President Trump and me that they shared on sniveling calls with Liz Cheney, not us. This is the behavior of weak men, not leaders."

There is no doubt Trump and his allies like Gaetz are keeping McCarthy's revelations close to their chest in order to extract concessions from him in the future, or perhaps use them to deny McCarthy the speakership, should the Republicans take back the House.

The intensity of the political warfare within the ruling class, which has not abated nearly 16 months after Trump's failed coup, underscores that without an independent intervention of the working class, the outcome will be a further lurch to the right of the entire political system and the strengthening of the fascist forces.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact