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To: Margery Pritchard, Op Ed Editor, The Boston Globe, Fax (617) 929-2098

Hysteria on the Left

Chip Berlet's op-ed piece, "Armed and dangerous," which appeared in the Globe on January 6, is not only incredibly inept journalism but reminiscent of the kind of unfounded "guilt by association" charges attributed to the late Senator Joseph McCarthy.

Nothing that the deranged John Salvi has done, said or written indicates that he was influenced by any of the well-known organizations mentioned by Berlet, such as The John Birch Society, Concerned Women for America, or the National Right to Life Committee. In fact, Salvi's rambling letter, published in the Globe on January 6, reveals a deplorable ignorance of the aims and precepts of these well established organizations. I defy Mr. Berlet to find one word in the publications of these organizations that in any way encourages or condones the actions of those who would kill the providers of abortion. Salvi has only added to the tragedy of abortion, not alleviated it.

As for the meeting held at Burlington High School last November, I was invited to speak on the subject of education, which I did. I was not told in advance that one of the exhibitors would be Den's Gun Shop. But considering the fact that the right to own and bear arms, protected by the Second Amendment, has been under unrelenting attack by the liberals, I could understand the rationale of having a gun shop exhibit at the meeting. But to suggest by the craftiest of innuendos that people browsing at the gun shop table while pro-life leader Dr. Mildred Jefferson was speaking in another room indicates that she or the browsers or the exhibitor caused or condoned what John Salvi did is just about the sleaziest and most reprehensible piece of writing I have yet read by the promoters of hysteria on the left.

People on both the left and the right have had to deal with those deranged individuals who feel compelled to perpetrate acts of terror and horror. One does not blame liberal black leadership for the actions of the black man who shot up the passengers in the Long Island commuter train. We all understand that there is no way to control solo individuals bent on committing mayhem.

But the concern of those of us on the right is the government's potential for committing mayhem. Even Chip Berlet admitted to me that he deplored the way the U.S. government handled the Waco atrocity. And it is that atrocity, not abortion, that has galvanized gun owners into such defensive responses as the militia movement.

But perhaps the worst of Berlet's accusations is where he says that "There is a growing right-wing social movement that uses theological arguments to encourage direct confrontation of its targets and tolerates discussion of armed resistance."

I have been involved in the so-called right-wing movement since 1965 and not once have I heard of such theological arguments. In fact, I've heard just the opposite. Dr. R. J. Rushdoony, leader of the Christian Reconstruction movement, has strongly denounced demonstrations at abortion clinics let alone the murder of abortion providers. He believes, as most Christians do, that only the moral regeneration of the American people will put an end to legalized abortion.

For Berlet to needlessly alarm the readers of the Globe into believing that conservative organizations have entered a new, sinister phase of armed confrontation with the left is not only to grossly misinform this newspaper's readers but to libel those of us on the right who have spent the last 25 years writing, lecturing and educating Americans about the vital issues our society faces.

I also question the judgment of the editor who decided to use such an obviously provocative illustration and title for a smear article that strongly suggests that we on the right are moving toward Salvi-type terrorism. I know that the Globe is a staunchly liberal newspaper, but I never thought it would stoop to such unadulterated, Nazi-like propaganda. Back in 1938, a young Jew assassinated the German ambassador in Paris. The Nazi propaganda machine blamed the Jews of Germany for the act of one deranged youth. The result was Kristallnacht during which Jewish synagogues and stores were burned and destroyed throughout Germany. The irony is that Chip Berlet, who thinks he's defending liberalism, is unaware of how much like Goebbels he has become. Tragically, those who forget history are condemned to repeat it.

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