

Stopping at Nothing

Many folks think politics and religion don't mix. I disagree [government and organized religion, however, must be kept separate.]. But I don't deny they can be a volatile mixture. In the current campaign I have seen up closer than usual how perilous it can be for someone to take a political stance on religious grounds.

On September 14 an email went out from Republican National Campaign Committee Communications with the header:

“Baron Hill’s Partisan Preacher

Spends Sundays in church and weekdays spewing partisan venom on Internet Blogs.”

This piece of ugliness proceeded to accuse Hill of “stopping at nothing to weasel his way back into Congress” and of falsely attacking Rep. Mike Sodrel for violating a clean campaign pledge both candidates signed. It also identified me as “author” of the pledge and charged me with being “a tool of the liberal left.”

To set the record straight: I did not “author” the clean campaign pledge. It was not my idea. On behalf of Monroe County Religious Leaders, I made some relatively minor adaptations to a League of Women Voters clean campaign pledge, and incorporated it into a letter to Hill and Sodrel inviting their response. The text clearly stated that the pledge was adapted from the League. It was then forwarded by our group’s convenor to Sodrel and Hill. I forwarded a copy to the H-T. Both candidates, apparently with prompting from the H-T, eventually signed it.

Sodrel violated the pledge with his first TV ad, shown on Louisville stations, which cover 60% of the 9th District. He has violated it repeatedly since, but—to my knowledge-- has never acknowledged so, nor publicly repudiated specific ads that do so on his behalf. Hill now admits to having broken the pledge. Sodrel’s violations seem far more numerous and egregious. The violations of both candidates are regrettable.

I am nobody’s tool, nor do I post on Blogs. Amy Bernitt has attacked me on a Blog, citing some of my statements in the H-T. I regard the Bush presidency as the worst in American history, and have voiced my criticisms in this column and in instant messages to the H-T.

The NRCC Communications email typifies what I see as the resort to half-truths and out-right lies to discredit those who take serious issue with the current administration. Anyone who cares about civility, democracy, and truth should be alarmed, and should “throw the bums out.”

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