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NARAL, NAACP, Handgun Control Assail A.G. Pick, But Media Outlets Resist Using Labels for Them

If Ashcroft's "Extreme," What's the Left?

The leftist enemies of Attorney General designate John Ashcroft have decided to try to defeat him by characterizing him as an "extremist." Yesterday, far-left activists announced an "unprecedented" coalition to create an unprecedented result: defeating an incoming President's Cabinet pick over ideology alone. But how extreme are they? The networks didn't ask. The networks didn't tell.

In the network idiom, there aren't two political extremes. There's the "extremist" right, and opposing them on the other extreme are...labor activists, civil rights groups, women's rights groups, gun-safety advocates, and environmentalists.

■ **CBS.** *Evening News* reporter Phil Jones declared: "At a jam-packed Washington news conference, the stop-Ashcroft battle was launched. There were all the familiar faces from groups who've been on the front lines for years fighting over civil and human rights, the environment, gun control and, especially, women's rights." Jones concluded with some equivalence: "The President-elect avoided a fight with his right wing by picking Ashcroft. But in the process he may have picked an even bloodier battle with left wing Democrats."

■ **CNN.** On *Inside Politics*, Bernard Shaw announced: "A number of interest groups banded together to take aim at Attorney General nominee John Ashcroft. CNN's Jeanne Meserve has more on the coalition, its issues and its strategy." Meserve began by alluding to Helen Reddy's '70s feminist anthem *I Am Woman*: "They are angry. Hear them roar in numbers they hope too big to ignore. Labor is here; environmental and gun control groups; gay rights, civil rights, women's rights organizations — all bonded into a coalition called, quite simply, Stop Ashcroft."

■ **NBC.** Tom Brokaw found "a number of groups took aim at President-elect Bush's choice for Attorney General, John Ashcroft, the former Missouri Senator who's an outspoken conservative and Christian activist." NBC's Lisa Myers began: "Today a declaration of war on Attorney

General nominee John Ashcroft by an unprecedented coalition of some 45 interest groups representing women, gays, minorities, labor — all condemning Ashcroft as too extreme." (But wasn't this "unprecedented" coalition the same exact coalition opposed the Supreme Court nomination of Robert Bork in 1987?) Myers later used a mild label: "Liberals who sense blood in the water after Chavez are putting heavy pressure on Senate Democrats to derail Ashcroft."

This morning on *Today*, Lisa Myers repeated some attack lines and added a wild new one: "Handgun opponents went so far as to claim that Ashcroft has the same view of the Second Amendment right to bear arms as Timothy McVeigh." Mike Barnes of Handgun Control Inc. was aired: "This is the same extremist theory subscribed to by Timothy

McVeigh and so-called militia groups. "Myers added, "Ashcroft's allies call that charge outrageous," but didn't explain that HCI is arguing that Ashcroft believes in the "insurrectionist" theory that the Second Amendment was passed to give citizens the right to defend themselves against force by the government. That would make "McVeighs" out of millions of Americans.

Myers may have spent the last few election cycles at NBC's advertising "accuracy" monitor, but no one at the leftist press conference was being vetted for accuracy, and none of the networks aired the views of these groups' conservative opposites: the National Rifle Association, the National Right to Life Committee, the National Right to Work Committee, and the list goes on. — *Tim Graham*

Ashcroft = Timothy McVeigh?

"Ashcroft is the son of a fundamentalist minister who doesn't drink or dance. He opposed most civil rights laws, and his proposal to outlaw abortion is so sweeping it would even ban some contraceptives. Handgun opponents went so far as to claim that Ashcroft has the same view of the Second Amendment right to bear arms as Timothy McVeigh." — NBC's Lisa Myers on Today this morning.

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