

# THE DNI IS WELL-MEANING. REALLY. EXCEPT WITH THOSE HE CLAIMS WANT NO IC.

The LAT has an article on the acrimony between Mike McConnell and Democrats over FISA. In it, McConnell's backers insist in his good faith in his negotiations with Democrats.

A spokesman for McConnell said that the director's dealings with Congress were "always in good faith."

"He values the relationship with Congress," said the spokesman, Michael Birmingham. "He works at it, and he invites and welcomes the oversight they provide."

[snip]

"I think the fact that it was open and argumentative at times was very positive," said Rep. C.A. Dutch Ruppersberger (D-Md.). "I think he improved his relations [with the committee] just by communicating."

[snip]

"I feel he's an honorable person," Ruppersberger said. "Some of my peers feel he's compromised. I would say that on the majority side, we were not happy with some of the positions he took."

But the article also lists the many attacks McConnell has made against Democrats. Apparently, in a secret meeting leading up to the House vote, Democrats aired those complaints. And McConnell responded by attacking HPSCI members for being insufficient cheerleaders for the Intelligence Community (I really do hope he attacked both parties equally,

since Crazy Pete Hoekstra is one of the loudest critics of the Intelligence Community).

Democrats accused McConnell of making exaggerated claims and of doing the bidding of the Bush administration, according to officials who attended the event. McConnell bristled at the Democrats' charges, and chastised members of the committee for failing to defend the intelligence community amid a barrage of bad press. [my emphasis]

Incidentally, can someone point out where in the Constitution it requires Congress to defend Executive Branch incompetence in the press? That McConnell would even make such a complaint reveals his rather stunted understanding of the role of Congress.

Given McConnell's apparent attempt to make nice with Congress, though, I'm utterly mystified by the comments he made in a speech at his alma mater, Furman University in South Carolina, last Friday, about the negotiations with the Senate.

We had a bill go into the Senate. It was debated vigorously. There were some who said we shouldn't have an Intelligence Community. Some have that point of view. Some say the President of the United States violated the process, spied on Americans, should be impeached and should go to jail. I mean, this is democracy, you can say anything you want to say. That was the argument made.

First of all, did McConnell really miss that even the biggest hippie in the Senate—Chris Dodd and Russ Feingold—started every floor speech by supporting not only the IC, but the importance of spying on terrorists? Who, who, Mike McConnell, "has that point of view" that doesn't want an IC?

More importantly, until McConnell gets the fact that when Presidents break laws, they usually

(unless Congress abdicates its responsibilities) should be held accountable for breaking those laws (McConnell used the Constitution as a prop throughout his speech, but apparently missed the whole point about rule of law). The President didn't just violate the process—he violated the law, all under a veil of secrecy in which not even his top DOJ officials approving the program knew what he was doing. Until McConnell realizes the gravity of that, he's simply not going to understand the Democrats' position.

To be fair, elsewhere in the speech, McConnell gave a remarkably candid of the threats facing the US, noting that the fight for energy is our biggest challenge, and noting that Tim McVeigh is a dangerous terrorist every bit as much as Osama bin Laden.

let me just talk about threats. One of the – and you maybe haven't thought about it this way – one of the biggest challenges that we have as a nation is access to energy. You think about that. Now, we're all sitting here enjoying the comforts of this campus and room and there is an air conditioner and there is an elevator. And we all have credit cards and we all buy gas. All that runs off energy. Well, you think about where does energy come from? Predominantly, it comes from areas that are pretty unstable.

So until we invent an alternative to fossil fuel – and we will some day – we're going to figure out hydrogen someday, but the estimates are 30 to 50 years – so I would say in the interim, in the meantime, a more stable Middle East, access to energy are one of the things that's going to be most important to us as a nation – and not only us in the United States, but the people of the markets we engage with: Europe and China and India. And it's one global economy. If one thing I can leave you with is a

thought is that when I grew up, we had great saltwater moats and friendly neighbors north and south. Today, it's one globe and I can have somebody get sick in Hong Kong and have an epidemic breakout in New York City 10, 12 hours later. So it's the global – it's the connectedness of the world.

Now, terrorism is a terrible thing. There are radical elements in every society, every society. We have our own Timothy McVeigh. We've had, you know, those kinds of issues. With a global network, what al Qaeda's been able to do is to connect the radical elements and maintain a dialogue and to show what they do and to talk about what they do and train.

Still. It's one thing to be able to admit the amazingly banal truth that our security efforts largely pivot on oil, and yet another to make a good faith effort to work with Congress in our security efforts.

And it seems that Mike McConnell simply doesn't have it in him to deal with people who want both security and the rule of law.