

EVE CONANT: RIGHT WING TERRORISTS ARE STILL “HO HUM”

Newsweek’s Eve Conant, in the guise of writing about progressive media, reviews several descriptions that consider the Hutaree militia a disturbing case of right wing domestic terrorism. She links to a Blue Texan post, quotes Rachel Maddow describing them as “a ‘strange combination of absurd and scary’ with names ‘out of a *Calvin and Hobbes* strip’,” includes a judgment from Ed Brayton (who knows his right wing MI violence) that they are dangerous but fringe even for right wing militia groups, quotes from Eugene Robinson’s op-ed calling out apologists trying to draw false equivalence between right wing violence and left wing activists, and finally cites stats from the Southern Poverty Law Center showing that militia activity has exploded recently.

But she still, ultimately, clings to the kind of “on the one side, on the other side” cowardice that fuels beltway media.

The question of who is worse, right-wing or left-wing radicals, and how to label radicals cropped up again most recently when pundits raced to describe recent Pentagon shooter John Patrick Bedell as right wing and conservatives lashed back that he was left wing.

[snip]

Whether [the 363 new Patriot groups that have sprung up this year] are right wing or left wing will continue to be debated, but Robinson argues that such a debate is a nonstarter.

But there’s a reason why Conant probably insists there is a debate about this right wing violence. She believes anti-government

violence—even people like Joseph Stack, who flew a plane into a federal building and killed a man—is literally “ho hum.”

Isn't the ho-hum reaction in part the simple psychology behind the fact that a) no one likes the IRS and b) he's an American (so closest he might get is “domestic terrorist” in terms of labels) who doesn't hate Americans but hates an institution. The act is horrible, but somehow the motivation is perceived as less offensive. As one conservative at the CPAC conference told me, Stack simply “made a poor life choice.” There's no way anyone would say that about the underwear bomber.

So sure, Conant can review a bunch of stats showing that this kind of violence is exploding, she can review Ed Brayton's knowledgeable statements about the danger of groups like the Hutaree, but because someone at CPAC told her Stack's murder-suicide constituted a “poor life choice,” she's going to consider the danger of rising right wing terrorism open for debate.

Eve Conant, I guess, can dismiss the reality of rising right wing terrorism with platitudes about “less offensive” motivations and “poor life choices.” As if that will somehow make up for the number of people that have already died as a result of this terrorism.