

Paul Wellstone: why take him out?

Jim Fetzer (READER WEEKLY 16 January 2003, pp. 18-19)

In my last column ("Paul Wellstone: more questions, fewer answers", *Reader Weekly* 9 January 2003, pp. 12-13), I explained how the FBI was on the scene of the crash by noon, as reported by St. Louis County Sheriff Rick Wahlberg. Which means that, since this contingent came from Minneapolis, it must have departed from the city no later than 9:28 AM to make it to Duluth around 10:50 AM and arrive at the scene by noon. Remarkable, considering the crash only occurred at 10:20 and was verified at 11:00.

These agents are truly special. Their powers of anticipation defy explanation. Indeed, Wellstone's plane only departed from St. Paul at 9:30! So they were heading north to cover a crash that had yet to occur at approximately *the same time that the plane they were going to cover was taking off!* Anyone with predictive abilities of this caliber is wasting their time with the FBI. They should be investing in stock, running a betting emporium or, better yet, picking tickets for the lottery. They would make a bundle!

Of course, they might be making a bundle already. Who am I to say? Shenanigans by the FBI are nothing new. They knew that JFK had been killed by a lone assassin before the smoke had cleared in Dealey Plaza. That was in the past. More recently, a St. Paul man says the FBI set him up (*Duluth News Tribune*, 9 January 2003, p. 4C). The victim, who was born in India, claims they gave him a plane ticket to Hong Kong and arrested him there after engaging him in an alleged terrorist plot to trade drugs for weapons.

I know enough about the FBI to find this claim highly plausible, especially during the reign of John Ashcroft, Attorney General extraordinaire, who specializes in depriving

American citizens of their rights under the Constitution, which he is in the process of dismembering. Anyone remember the USA Patriot Act, which compromises your and my rights to legal representation, to freedom from unreasonable search and seizure, from detention without formal charges, and other basic elements of the Bill of Rights?

This administration has been lying to us about its tax cuts, the SEC, Homeland Security, 9/11, and Iraq. The foundation for its domestic policy has become an obsession with terrorists. We are not actually fighting a war against terrorism, which would require attacking its causes rather than its effects. If we wanted to eradicate terrorism rather than kill a few terrorists, we would be doing very different things, as I have explained ("Killing terrorists vs. eradicating terrorism", *Reader Weekly*, 27 September 2001, p.10)

What the Attorney General and this administration need, more than anything, is some sort of evidence that there actually *are* terrorists at work in the USA. And that remains the case, even if they have to fabricate their evidence, as may be true in this instance. Even Eisenhower was sufficiently distraught over the ascension of Castro in Cuba that he instructed the Joint Chiefs that, if the Cubans did not commit an incident to incite an invasion, they should invent one, as James Bamford, *Body of Secrets* (2001), disclosed.

The schemes they proposed including blowing up the Atlas rocket carrying John Glenn into space or loading a commercial airliner with college students on a holiday and shooting it down over Cuba. The Chiefs took satisfaction in the thought that the list of casualties would inflame the nation to rise up, demanding a military invasion of Cuba. Jack thought these guys were paranoid--which they were--and disapproved their daffy schemes. Which led them to conclude that JFK was an obstacle to fighting communism.

If the FBI was faster than a speeding bullet in reaching the scene of the Wellstone crash,

which implies a cover-up, then what were they covering up? At the very least, they had a chance to secure the black box experts say the plane was probably carrying--although it was not required by law--and the cockpit voice recorder the NTSB spent a day and a half looking for, before concluding it did not exist. It may have been taken by the FBI.

So there are advantages to being on the scene right away, even if getting there in time might entail certain risks of discovery. Who would bother to think about the precise time the FBI reached the crash scene in the midst of all of that confusion and concern? or what time it had reached Duluth and rented a car? or what time it had departed for the northland from Minneapolis/St. Paul? If they had not reached the scene on time, they would have lost the chance to seize or affect whatever could give the game away.

Having studied the death of JFK for more than a decade, however, I might have become a bit paranoid myself. Even if elementary considerations and simple addition prove that *the FBI knew the crash was going to occur before the plane had taken off*, that does not explain why this man was targeted. As in other cases of the discovery of a corpse, it is possible to know that a man is dead without knowing how he was killed, much less why.

The how looks increasingly like the plane was brought down by the use of EMP, as I had originally proposed ("What happened to Paul Wellstone?", *Reader Weekly*, 28 November 2002, pp. 18-19). But even if that turns out to explain how it was done and why there was complete cessation of communication concurrent with complete loss of control, it does not explain why Wellstone was targeted for assassination. The reasons, however, as in the case of JFK, may not be very difficult to discern. They appear political in kind.

In a column published seven months before the election ("Paul Wellstone, Fighter", *The*

Nation, 9 May 2002; at <http://www.thenation.com/doc.mhtml?i=20020527&s=nichols>),

John Nichols advanced reasons why Paul Wellstone was "a hunted man". "Minnesota's senior senator is not just another Democrat on White House political czar Karl Rove's target list, in an election year when the Senate balance of power could be decided by the voters of a single state", Nichols wrote. "Rather, getting rid of Wellstone is a passion for Rove, Dick Cheney, George W. Bush and the special-interest lobbies that fund the most sophisticated political operation ever assembled by a presidential administration".

It was Wellstone's unabashed liberalism and determination to block the Bush agenda that won him so many enemies. When most Democrats were ducking for cover from the Bush political machine, Wellstone was leaping into the ring and taking them on--with gusto! The race was being read as a measure of the potential of progressive politics. Nichols wrote, "If he wins, a blow will be struck, not just against the Bush machine but against those in the Democratic Party who argue for tepid moderation."

For years, he notes, progressives have argued that Democrats can win big only when they emphasize fundamental differences between them and Republicans on principles of social justice and economic fair play. Wellstone understood that it is a huge mistake to back away from the "liberal" label. With which I agree. Democracy, after all, is a liberal idea. Liberals believe that everyone deserves representation, not just the rich.

Nichols also reported that Wellstone had the most consistent record of opposing Bush administration initiatives of any member of the Senate, according to *Congressional Quarterly*. He received 100% ratings from the AFL-CIO, American for Democratic Action, and the League of Conservation Voters. As the *Star Tribune* had described him, he was "the go-to guy to advance the causes of educators, environmentalists,

consumer and labor groups, the elderly and the poor". And he is greatly missed.

As a measure of the difference it makes that his voice has been silenced, take the news from a single day, such as Saturday, as reported in the *Duluth News Tribune*, and ask what Paul Wellstone would have had to say. The headline concerns a local issue, the anti-loitering ordinance, but does anyone doubt Paul Wellstone believed in the right of peaceable assembly and association? I think he would have opposed it.

On the national scene, another front-page story concerns a Bush proposal to deny some 20 million acres of wetland protection from industrial pollution as an industry effort to gut key provisions of the Clean Water Act. Wellstone understood, as this administration does not, that wetlands play a crucial role in our ecology, filtering out wastes and nurturing sensitive links in the food chain. When the wetlands are gone, the human species will not be far behind. Wellstone would have opposed it.

In international affairs, a headline announces, "U.S. officials want Iraqi oil to help cover cost of war", which will inflame Arab opinion that America has gone to war in Iraq to help itself to that nation's natural resources. Paul Wellstone would have observed that the apparent justification for going to war in Iraq is to take control of the oil that we need to pay for a war in Iraq. But, if that is true, we don't need the oil, because we don't need a war with Iraq. It is that blatant and that stupid.

Turning to page 3, "Special interest provisions cut from security measure", even the Republicans have been so embarrassed by their own secret machinations in passing the so-called Homeland Security bill that they are now acting to remove language that would have protected pharmaceutical companies from lawsuits for defective vaccines and broadening a provision that would have had the effect of restricting

federal funding for related research to Texas A&M! Wellstone would have agreed.

As though those provisions were not outrageous enough, Republican leaders are said to have agreed "to restore language pushed by the late Sen. Paul Wellstone, D-Minn., to prohibit homeland-security contracts with American companies that have moved offshore to avoid U.S. taxes". That would hardly seem controversial, but the Bush administration is going to reserve the right to make exceptions *in the name of national security!* Wellstone would have observed that national security is rooted in economic security, which is thereby further weakened.

On page 4, "U.S. condemns North Korea for withdrawing from nuclear treaty", he would have pointed out that the United States set a poor example for the world when it withdrew from the Kyoto Accords and efforts to control global warming, and abandoned the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty to undertake an expensive and (almost certainly) ineffectual ABM system, which has undermined a half-century of arms control agreements. How can we complain when they simply emulate us?

On the Opinion page, Paul Wellstone would have agreed with Michael Hill that, but for the presence of oil, the US would not be considering--even remotely--going to war against Saddam Hussein. He would have gone further, however, to point out that our real reason for attacking Afghanistan appears to have been to construct a vast oil pipeline that the Taliban had opposed and the what has been going on in Venezuela appears to be a classic CIA destabilization operation for the sake of oil.

And he would also have agreed--most emphatically!--with Maureen Dowd that this administration is brilliant at manipulating its image to reveal only what it

wants the public to see, where "(Karl) Rove and his president have a new style of class warfare--the affluent afflicting the afflicted; the ruling class enacting policies to help itself, weaving a pashmina safety net so the well-off can buy more expensive stuff they don't need." Pure Wellstone! We miss you, Paul.

On the business page, he would have deplored the Bush administration for not extending unemployment benefits for 800,000 American workers that expired between Christmas and New Year. He would have opposed a judge's ruling that required United Airlines the union for 37,000 machinists to take a cut in pay, no doubt observing that it would be far more effective and judicious to have ordered United executives to take massive pay cuts, which they can easily afford, instead.

He would also have skewered Republican complaints that Democrats are practicing class warfare, when precisely the opposite is the case. As my father taught me, the Republicans tend to accuse the Democrats of that of which they are most guilty. And he would have ridiculed the Vice President's reply that the tax cuts are not slanted toward the rich, will not adversely impact state budgets, and will not increase the federal deficit, which appeared in *The New York Times* today, as ludicrous claims which are provably false, as Reaganomics should have taught us.

And he would have been outspoken in denouncing Richard Perle's announcement that the US, even without United Nations' authorization, is still going to attack Iraq, pointing out that the US is bound to the UN by a treaty; that nations entering into that treaty renounce their right to attack other nations without UN authorization unless subject to imminent attack; that treaties have the same status under our Constitution as the Constitution itself as the supreme law of the land; and that

Bush would thereby violate his oath of office and have committed an obviously impeachable act (http://www.truthout.org/docs_02/011203A.perle.attack.htm).

JFK was taken out for many reasons, including his desire to cut the oil depletion allowance; to reform or abolish the Federal Reserve; and to dismantle the CIA. The mob wanted him out to regain control of its resorts and casinos in Havana, where it was running the largest money-laundering operation in the Western Hemisphere and to get his brother, Bobby, off their backs; J. Edgar wanted to stay on as Director of the FBI; LBJ wanted to be "the president of all the people".

The Joint Chiefs resented Jack because he had not invaded Cuba against their unanimous recommendation; he had gone ahead and signed an above-ground nuclear test ban treaty with the Soviets against their unanimous opposition; and he was withdrawing our advisors from Vietnam, again contrary to their unanimous recommendation. The Chiefs had come to believe that removing JFK as the Commander-in-Chief was essential to the fight against communism.

The day after the plane crash, David Cogswell raised the question of whether Paul Wellstone could have been the victim of an assassination ("Wellstone Death: Foul Play?", <http://davidcogswell.com/Political/WellstoneDead.html>).

"The right-wingers have shown clearly with their veiled threats that they will stop at nothing to achieve their aims. Now they are prepared to take it to all-out-war in Iraq. They are no longer talking about bombing some killers holed up in caves in the barren rural landscape of Afghanistan

"Yes, the people running things are willing to kill large numbers of people. They don't like to get their hands dirty. They like to push buttons and have other

people do the killing. They are far too genteel to do the dirty work. Obviously, killing is not a problem for these people. So, yes, when, when I see someone killed and I see a motive for someone to have killed him, yes, I am suspicious.

"The United States is [this was written prior to the election] one Senate seat away from total domination by the Bush-Cheney-Lott-Delay right wing of America. The stakes are extreme. These guys play for keeps. It used to be called hard ball. It's not ball at all. It's war. It's gang war on a very large scale. . . . I am suspicious of everything I see. I see them playing games, cheating, lying and manipulating in practically every sphere. . . . Isn't it strange how many people who opposed the fascists are killed in some mysterious manner?" Strange, indeed.

Paul Wellstone was defying the odds. He was pulling away from Norm Coleman, the hand-picked candidate of Karl Rove. The differences between them could hardly have been greater. (See, for example, "20 Questions for Norm Coleman" *Reader Weekly*, 3 October 2002, pp. 10-11.) His lead by 25 October 2002 had grown to six or seven points and was increasing. He was threatening the image of the omniscient and omnipotent Bush political machine. He was in their face.

Use a small bomb. Detonate it by remote control or a pressurized device. Better yet, use that new EMP thing. No one will ever think of that. Make sure you get the feds there right away to clean up the scene and secure incriminating evidence. Send someone unqualified to head up the NTSB. It has worked before. It can work again.

And let's not kid ourselves. This guy was a menace. He might have filibustered the Homeland Security Act. He also opposed us on tax cuts, the SEC, and the war on Iraq.

He wanted us to investigate 9/11! He had become an obstacle to the war on terrorism.

Killing him set an example. In the name of national security. He had to be taken out.

Jim Fetzer, a professor of philosophy at UMD, believes the Bush administration, like the Joint Chiefs under Kennedy, has gone off the deep end and would do anything to promote its conception of national security, which just happens to coincide with the best interests of the nation's oil industry. It's a small world.