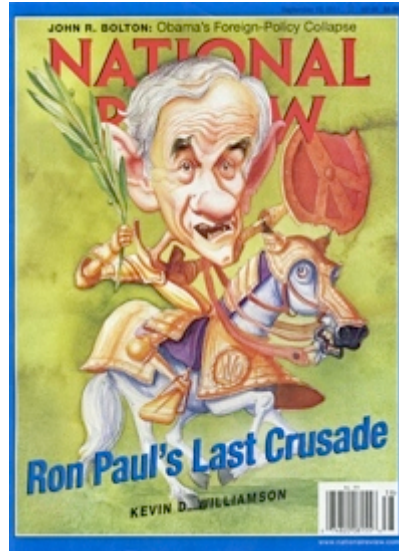




National Review's Latest Smear: Ron Paul and The John Birch Society

Although William F. Buckley, Jr., died more than three and a half years ago, his spirit clearly lives on in the *National Review*, the neoconservative political magazine he founded in 1955. The September 19 cover story, "Ron Paul's Last Crusade," by Kevin D. Williamson, purports to be an investigative piece about Congressman Ron Paul and his latest run for the presidency, but is instead a snide character assassination of Paul and an all-purpose smear on anyone who shares his convictions, including The John Birch Society.



"Ron Paul is kind of a dork," Williamson declares in the article's opening paragraph — this allegedly in favorable contrast to "Mussolinian" Barack Obama, "cowboy" Rick Perry, and "self-parodically 'presidential'" Mitt Romney. Decrying the "raging personality cult" that has supposedly elevated Ron Paul far beyond what his limited natural merits could possibly justify — the congressman checks his watch too often, according to the article, and isn't much of a public speaker, transgressions that make him America's "most successful awful retail politician," whatever that means — Williamson effuses paragraph after paragraph of scornful prose intended to portray Ron Paul supporters as nut jobs and ignorant wackos. Dislike the Federal Reserve? How dare they, those ignorant booboisie! Oppose interventionist American foreign policy? What are they thinking, given the shining success of America's incessant warmaking in the Middle East and Central Asia over the past generation!

The article is classic Buckleyite *National Review*, with its faux intellectual sniping at anybody to the left of William Kristol and its East Coast Ivy League-esque contempt for the Old Right grassroots, all packaged in the mocking, ad hominem purple prose that was and remains the hallmark of Buckley and his latter-day epigones.

According to Williamson:

The Ron Paul party, unlike the Republican Party, is full of people who whisper darkly about "international bankers," "the New World Order," "globalization," "American imperialism," "war profiteers," and the like. They hate Dick Cheney more than any three-espresso leftist ever hated Dick Cheney. And if Ron Paul is not the nominee — and let me go ahead and break the bad news to you guys: He's not going to be — many of them will not be supporting the Republican in 2012. They're already talking about an independent or third-party run for the most electable Republican who isn't going to be elected as a Republican. And the fact that Ron Paul is on his way out — he's not running for the House again — has a few Republicans worried that he's going to be a looser cannon than usual.

And that isn't the worst of it. It seems that Ron Paul and many of his followers have ties to The John Birch Society, which Williamson derides as "fringe lunatics":



Written by [Charles Scaliger](#) on September 22, 2011

[Ron Paul] still addresses the [John Birch Society] and has other political connections to it. Asked about this by the *New York Times*, Doctor Paul said: “Oh, my goodness, The John Birch Society! Is that bad? I have a lot of friends in The John Birch Society. They’re generally well-educated and they understand the Constitution. I don’t know how many positions they would have that I don’t agree with. Because they’re real strict constitutionalists, they don’t like the war, they’re hard-money people.”

The John Birch Society: hard money heroes. That is an example of what one longtime Paul-ologist calls “Ron’s Ronness.” He is so maniacally focused on his issues — the Federal Reserve and American military action above all — that he has a hard time making judgments about friend and foe alike.... The John Birch Society may in fact be rock-solid on monetary policy; they also think that vast swathes of the U.S. government and business community are part of a secret socialist cabal actively working to replace American sovereignty with a one-world government under the United Nations. It’s the only political organization that I know of that lists “CONSPIRACY” as a major title under the “Issues” tab on its web page. They’re crackpots — but they’re Ron Paul’s crackpots.

Elsewhere, Williamson smears Ron Paul’s Iowa campaign manager, Drew Ivers, for his long-ago association with maverick congressman John G. Schmitz — who also was involved for a time with The John Birch Society, dontcha know (he was kicked out of The John Birch Society for his extreme views — “Too crazy for the John Birch Society — make a note,” smirks Williamson). Oh, and John Schmitz’s daughter was a teacher who notoriously had an affair with a 13 year-old student back in the ‘90s — “totally random but absolutely unexcludable trivia” that Williamson can’t resist bringing up, although it has absolutely nothing to do with Ron Paul or, for that matter, The John Birch Society.

For the record, Kevin, The John Birch Society does believe that conspiracies play a significant role in history, politics, and finance. However, nowhere does the JBS characterize such operations as “vast swathes of the U.S. government and business community” taking part in a “secret socialist cabal.” What the JBS does say under its “Conspiracy” tab is:

By definition, a conspiracy is when two or more people work in secret for evil purposes. The John Birch Society believes this definition fits a number of groups working against the independence of the United States. Extensive study has shown us that history is rarely accidental.

That’s it. No black helicopters. No shape-shifting aliens. Heck, not even neocons are mentioned. And given Ron Paul’s takes on [U.S. foreign policy](#) and [the Federal Reserve](#), among many other issues, it’s a good bet the Texas Congressman would be as glad to see the United States exit the United Nations and Congress lay bare the secret machinations of the Federal Reserve as would The John Birch Society. As for malevolent cabals, check out fringe historical events such as the French Revolution, the Russian Revolution, the Catilinarian Conspiracy in Ciceronian Rome, the Sicilian Vespers in the medieval Mediterranean, and other such. Nothing to be seen here, folks. Move along.

So there you have it: Ron Paul is certifiably nuts, according to the studied opinion of *National Review* pundits. It’s ironic that, in another feature article this month — in *Time* magazine, of all [places](#) — writers who presumably disagreed with many of Ron Paul’s ideas nevertheless managed to produce a thoroughly fair and professional description of Paul and his ideological influences, including economists Murray Rothbard (another figure on the libertarian right that Buckley and the *National Review* have always despised, and whom Buckley notoriously smeared in a brief obituary), Hans Sennholz, and Friedrich von Hayek.



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But *National Review*, one of the most mean-spirited periodicals this side of *Fangoria*, has always reserved especial bile for those it perceives as ideological competitors. With the gospel of [neoconservatism](#) on the wane — thanks in no small measure to the efforts of Ron Paul and organizations such as The John Birch Society — a meritless hit piece like Williamson's is to be expected.



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