

Rehash in the House

I give Robert Novak credit for being loyal to his friend Rep. Dan Burton. But his series of op-ed columns on the House campaign finance investigation has twisted reality beyond recognition and spread misinformation about my actions.

Novak's Feb. 9 column accuses me and my staff of obstructing the investigation into Charlie Trie's alleged campaign violations and being indifferent to whether Trie's sister, Man Lin Fong, made conduit contributions on his behalf. Novak also reaches the ludicrous conclusion that Burton, who is leading the House's \$10 million campaign finance investigation, is entitled to most of the credit for the Justice Department's indictment of Trie.

I did, in fact, raise objections to Burton's October hearing regarding Charlie Trie's sister. But here are the facts—all available on the public record—that caused my concerns.

Two months before the Burton hearing, Sen. Fred Thompson chaired an identical hearing that uncovered extensive incriminating evidence relating to Trie. Because of this comprehensive Senate hearing, at the outset of the House hearing I stated: "Our hearings will have value if they at least add to the knowledge gained in Senator Thompson's hearings . . . In my view, the Senate hearing conclusively demonstrated that Mr. Trie and Ng Lap Seng asked Yue Chu and Xi Ping Wang to make conduit contributions. The depositions of Man Lin Fong and Joseph Landon seem to indicate that they had an identical experience. But . . . nothing in their depositions . . . [adds] to what Sen. Thompson uncovered."

As things turned out, it became clear during the House hearing that Man Lin Fong would in fact add nothing to what we learned in Thompson's hearing.

Fong testified that she did not believe her brother was a spy, that she did not know Ng Lap Seng, that she had no information regarding her brother's business and no knowledge of his political activities and that she was unaware of any contact her brother might have had with the Chinese government. She knew nothing of how conduit payments worked, and the fact that she was involved in one—which the DNC had disclosed to the Justice Department seven weeks before the hearing—could have been stipulated as a supplement to Thompson's record.

Furthermore, it's ridiculous to suggest that the House hearing had any significant role in the Trie indictment. Of the 54 "overt acts" alleged by the Justice Department, only two related to information from the Burton hearing.

One last point—Novak criticized Ken Ballen, my chief investigative counsel, for his comments to Man Lin Fong in her deposition. Ballen's comments reflected the concerns of Democratic members that fair government investigators should inform unsophisticated witnesses of basic facts and rights. In the case of Fong, Ballen should be commended, not attacked, for his actions.

—Henry A. Waxman

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