



Stringer Victim of a Witch-Hunt?

Conviction by Accusation: The New Puritans Unload

By **ROBERT CROGHAN**



The current fad of convicting people just because they are accused is wrong. It is not new to America, but it is wrong. Our Puritan forefathers set up the first witch trials. There were, of course, no witches whatsoever, but that did not save those accused.

Later, in the former slave states, any white woman who accused a black man or even a boy of misconduct could be sure of mob violence exacting revenge without trial or evidence.

More recently, the McCarthy period's modern witch-hunts hurt tens of thousands of our citizens and chilled free speech for years. Now, in the current day, we are doing it again.

Stringer the New Target

Scott Stringer, the New York City Comptroller, a serious candidate for Mayor and lifelong public servant, has been accused. He was not accused of workplace sexual harassment. His accuser was a political campaign volunteer and not an employee. The "offense" occurred 20 years ago and was witnessed only by the accuser.

The "offense," if it occurred, was not criminal and if it was repeated, how was that even possible? Unwanted sexual advances are normally handled by avoidance of the transgressor.

If the offense was a single incident, does this rise to the level of censure 20 years later? No.

The new Puritans are discarding all the best aspects of our American justice system. We, as a nation, believe you are presumed innocent until proven guilty. We insist on evidence and a fair trial. These new Puritans do not require evidence, nor witnesses, nor will they offer the accused any sort of fair trial.

The Organization of Staff Analysts rejects this discarding of due process. We reject this move to convict by accusation. We are furious with witch-hunters and lynch mobs. For shame: we are better than that. Or, at least, we ought to be.

Editor's note: Mr. Croghan is Chairperson of the Organization of Staff Analysts.