

# Thoughts on the First January 6 Committee Hearing



Thursday evening was opening night of the January 6 committee hearings, and after a bit of a lackluster intro from committee chairman Bennie Thompson, things really took off. Liz Cheney, the vice chair, presented a compelling outline of the committee's findings, previewing – in almost prosecutorial terms – evidence of Donald Trump's deliberate, conspiracy-fueled deception of millions of Americans (on the 2020 election), as well as his exhaustive efforts to subvert the will of U.S. voters and remain in power.

The result of that campaign, the committee contends, was the deadly insurrection attempt at the U.S. Capitol on January 6, 2021.

Introduced at the hearing was never-before-seen, sworn, eye-witness testimony from members of Trump's own administration and campaign, who confirmed that Trump had been informed, repeatedly, by them and others, that he had lawfully lost the election. Even Trump's daughter Ivanka, who testified before

the committee, was convinced.

Yet the then president pressured the Justice Department to backup his "rigged election" narrative, instructing officials to "Just say the election was corrupt and leave the rest to me and the Republican congressmen." Senior officials who said no to the president were soon replaced.

When Trump's dozens of legal challenges failed, along with his attempts to strong-arm state election officials into withholding their vote certifications, the president moved onto Mike Pence, pressuring his loyal vice president to illegally and unconstitutionally stop the finalization of the election.

Pence actually came across very well in the hearing, presented as not only sticking to his oath in accordance with the Constitution, but also in assuming command of the army national guard, and calling them to the Capitol, because Trump refused to (along with any other law enforcement entity).

According to Cheney, when Trump was made aware that rioters had set up gallows and were chanting "Hang Mike Pence," the president responded with, "Maybe our supporters have the right idea. Mike Pence deserves it."

I look forward to hearing more about what was said in the Oval Office during the hours when Trump was apparently doing nothing to stop the riot, as well as the details on members of Trump's Cabinet discussing the possibly of invoking the 25th Amendment to replace him. I'd also love to find out more about the multiple Republican members of Congress who, according to the committee, asked Trump for presidential pardons (in the days following January 6) for their roles in attempting to overturn the 2020 election.

The committee also presented a good amount of graphic video from that day's mayhem, including previously unseen footage, and coordination among paramilitary groups including the Proud

Boys.

Contrary to skeptics' assertions that nothing "new" would come out of the hearings, we actually learned, as described above, a fair amount. And this was just the first night.

Were there chinks in the committee's armor? Sure. Bennie Thompson evoking racism in his long-winded opening didn't do anyone any favors. And there's of course the criticism, which I think is fair, that the hearings don't need to be broadcast in prime-time; doing so, and using a cinematic production professional, gives fuel to the critics who've been casting the event as nothing more than a performative, partisan exercise.

It should be noted that many of these same critics, including a large number of Fox News commentators and Republican politicians, have also been quick to point out the party-lopsidedness of the committee... while simultaneously refusing to acknowledge (and hoping people have forgotten) *why* it's that way.

To refresh people's memories, congressional Republicans killed the original 50/50-balanced committee that they themselves had asked and successfully negotiated for. The "select committee" – the more partisan one – was plan B.

"I wish that we had had the bipartisan commission that unfortunately, the Republicans in the House and then the Republicans in the Senate killed, and I think that's a really important point," Liz Cheney said in an interview earlier in the week. "But once that bipartisan commission had been rejected by my party, by the Republicans, the question became, are you going to investigate, or are you simply going to say, you know, 'too bad, we're gonna throw our hands up and walk away?' And I don't think that there's any way that we could have said we're gonna throw our hands up and walk away."

I too wish the bipartisan commission had become a reality, but

unfortunately, nearly every member of congress now crying foul over the current lineup wouldn't let that happen.

Speaking of Fox News, I wonder if they're having second thoughts about refusing to air the hearing live on their main network, electing instead to let their prime-time commentators insist for over two and half hours (notably commercial-free) that it was all a sham. After all, any arguments that the committee's findings wouldn't be new or newsworthy were effectively destroyed.

Then again, I'm sure whatever ratings the network walked away with that night will be deemed well worth it.

The next hearing will take place Monday morning, and Bernie Goldberg and I plan to discuss the first two hearings on Wednesday's "No BS Zone". See you then.