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The strongest argument against amending the Constitution to prevent desecration of the American flag is the frightening irrationality of the proponents of such an amendment. Consider the polemics of Pat Buchanan, for example.

Buchanan admits (Daily News, June 17) that to say "I hate the flag" is protected by the First Amendment, but he says that to actually burn the flag is conduct that merits punishment. Why? Because it constitutes "fighting words" — "words" that inspire the desire to fight in Buchanan, of course. Nevertheless, pugnacious Pat prefers to have the police do the dirty work of exacting revenge on those who offend him.

Later, Buchanan likens burning the flag to spitting on the picture of his wife and kids that he offers as show-and-tell. Thus, even though I burn an American flag that I made from materials I bought myself, I am evidently destroying his symbol of America, and I should go to jail for it.

Buchanan, and many like him, are clearly calling for a new Inquisition to silence those who do not see things their way. We should not be fooled by their invocations of the Founding Fathers, or by clever references to George Orwell. Buchanan and his friends are far more akin to Orwell's Big Brother and his thought police than to the least of those who helped prepare our Constitution. Such "patriots" are very dangerous.

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— Bill Becker
West Hills