

Scripted Press Conferences and the Lapdog

As we have mentioned over the last two years, the Republican Party is so brazen in its hypocrisy, it will sometimes just openly brag about its duplicitousness.

It happened when Andrew Card said in September of 2002 that the Bush Cartel waited until the fall to begin the drumbeats of war against Iraq, because, he argued, the summer is not a good time to roll out a "new product."

It happened again on Thursday night when Bush openly acknowledged that the news conference was scripted. Bush appeared to be referring to a list of reporters prepared for him that he was reading from, which excluded Helen Thomas, of course. As he read down the list, he told a reporter, in essence, to wait to ask his question because the reporter was further down on the list.

You can hear (557kb wav) the "script" comment yourself in an audio file created by a BuzzFlash Reader, who notes, "The relevant excerpt from CNN's transcript is included below -- notice the 'scripted' comment is conveniently scrubbed out."

BUSH: ...The risk of doing nothing, the risk of hoping that Saddam Hussein changes his mind and becomes a gentle soul, the risk that somehow inaction will make the world safer, is a risk I'm not willing to take for the American people.

QUESTION: Thank you, Mr. President. Sir, how would you answer your critics who say that they think is somehow personal? As Senator Kennedy put it tonight, he said your fixation with Saddam Hussein is making the world a more dangerous place.

(See: <http://www.cnn.com/2003/US/03/06/bush.speech.transcript/index.html>)

Whether or not reporters were quietly "prepped" for their questions by the White House propaganda staff may never be known. What we do know is that the White House press corps "heels" when it is told to heel and "sits" when it is told to sit. Ever since Art told a reporter who dared to ask a challenging question that his insubordination "was noted around the White House," the media lap dogs know that they better toss the Dim Son soft balls or they will be exiled to covering oil spills in Armenia.

In the *Washington Post*, White House Communications director, Dan Bartlett, revealed that the White House knew of the questions in advance:

"[T]his White House uses news conferences more sparingly than other types of presidential events, because "if you have a message you're trying to deliver, a news conference can go in a different direction."

"In this case, we know what the questions are going to be, and those are the ones we want to answer," Bartlett said. "We think the public will see the thought and care and attention he's given to a lot of the different questions that are being asked about the diplomatic side and the military side and the potential post-Iraq issue. These are all legitimate questions that he has answers for and wants to talk about."

(See: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A53542-2003Mar6.html>)

But it wouldn't have mattered if any of the Stepford White House press corps had dared to ask a probing question. Bush was scripted in more ways than just having an arranged list of reporters, he was clearly reading from a set of stock answers that were to be used to answer known questions.

Karl Rove knows that such a "packaged" event will guarantee that the White House mantra of deception is conveyed in the next day's papers. Calling the scripted Thursday night

event a news conference is a bit like calling Ann Coulter a journalist -- neither claim is credible.

So, how can such a phony, staged production be deemed credible by the media? Well, as we know, the media, with few exceptions, is the chief enabler for the Bush Cartel. They are really just a megaphone for White House lies and propaganda. The deal is that the White House gets to appear as if it is really serving the American people and the media shills get to pretend to be journalists.

The reason there is even any support for a war in America (and the majority don't support a unilateral attack on Iraq) is because the public believes the Bush Cartel disinformation campaign. As a commentary in *The Nation* recently noted:

The shortage of critical challenges from the press (and from intimidated Democrats) assisted the manipulation of public thinking. By relentless repetition, Bush and his team accomplished an audacious feat of propaganda--persuading many Americans to redirect the emotional wounds left by 9/11, their hurt and anger, away from the perpetrators to a different adversary. According to a New York Times-CBS News survey, 42 percent now believe Saddam Hussein was personally responsible for the attack on the World Trade Center and Pentagon. In an ABC News poll, 55 percent believe Saddam provides direct support to Al Qaeda. (See: <http://www.thenation.com/doc.mhtml?i=20030324&s=greider>)

We might add that some polls have shown that most Americans believe that the hijackers of September 11th were Iraqi, when the truth is there were no Iraqis. The truth is that 15 of the 19 hijackers were from Saudi Arabia, a nation that the Bush Cartel has assiduously protected despite strong evidence of direct Saudi involvement in the financing and support of Al-Qaeda. Let's not forget, furthermore, that Osama bin Laden is Saudi and that he views Saddam Hussein as a secular infidel.

But the truth will never get in the way of the cozy relationship between the Bush Cartel and the media.

Support for a war in America is about a foot wide and an inch deep. If we had a responsible, professional media in this country it would be a millimeter wide and a millimeter deep. And that millimeter would be confined to the White House.

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