

Democrats declined to say how they plan to get the bill back to the White House: as a separate bill or, more likely, as an attachment to the next Iraq war spending bill they intend to get to Bush by Memorial Day. The latter, they maintain, would give them a little more leverage by forcing Republicans to vote against money for American troops to block the minimum wage package. "We will take whatever steps are necessary to get a minimum wage increase enacted into law as quickly as possible," said Tom Kiley, spokesman for Rep. George Miller, D-Calif., chair of the House Education and Labor Committee. The White House has complained the tax cuts are too small in the minimum wage measure as now written. Fratto said Bush's advisers might recommend he veto it. A veto may be more difficult if other measures in the Iraq spending bill are to the president's liking. Increases in the minimum wage are often leveraged against something, or used as leverage for something else. For example, Democrats last year killed a proposed minimum wage increase after Republicans paired it with a cut in inheritance taxes on multimillion-dollar estates. Republicans easily muscled the legislation through the House but Senate Democrats refused to allow it to go to the White House for approval. The last minimum wage increase was in 1997. This has been the longest stretch without the federal pay floor rising since the minimum wage was established in 1938. Currently, a person working 40 hours per week at the current minimum wage of \$5.15 makes about \$10,700 a year. An increase to \$7.25 would boost that to just over \$15,000 a year. More than two dozen states and the District of Columbia have minimum wages higher than the federal level. Minimum wage workers are typically young, single and female and are often black or Hispanic.

The bill is H.R. 1591.

Iraq Lies, the Media, and Misplaced Trust

~ by James W. Breedlove

Four years ago on May 1, just 42 days after initiating the Iraq war, Commander-In-Chief Bush landed on the aircraft carrier USS Lincoln dressed in a combat flight suit and delivered a speech in front of a giant "Mission Accomplished" banner that included the assurance, "Major combat operations in Iraq have ended." He was hailed by media pundits, using approved White House scripts, as a breathtaking example of presidential leadership in toppling Saddam Hussein. At that moment questions over the failure to locate weapons of mass destruction and the increasing violence in Baghdad seemed to be forgotten. The elite members of the press were all too eager to confirm the White House's claim that the war was won. MSNBC's Chris Matthews declared, "We're all neo-cons now," NPR's Bob Edwards said, "The war in Iraq is essentially over," and Fortune magazine's Jeff Bimbaum said, "It is amazing how thorough the victory in Iraq really was." Four years after shock-and-awe was unleashed, the press has yet to come clean and explain its role in enabling the Bush Administration to go to war based on completely false pretenses.

Venerable journalist Bill Moyers, after a two year absence, has reappeared on PBS hosting an indicting video documentary that chronicles the lies told by the Bush administration and supported by a complicit lapdog media to manipulate the American public into supporting the Iraq war.

"Buying the War" aired on April 25 and through the skillful blending of video clips and interviews the viewer experienced a virtual personal shock and awe while witnessing the sickening horrors of death and destruction caused by the war's facilitators who are still trying to rationalize it as justified, moral, and legitimate.

Absurd administration and media announcements were the order of the day during the lead up to the war and afterwards. For the most part these ridiculous claims were neither challenged nor proof demanded. The administration's media cabal simply continued to beat the war drums and vilify all dissenters. Contrary opinions aren't very popular in Washington. It is not only unfashionable but also extremely risky to dissent from the official White House line regarding the war. Talk show host Bill O'Reilly stated, "Anyone who hurts this country in a time like this well let's just say you will be spotlighted. I will call those who publicly

criticize their country in a time of military crisis, which this is, bad Americans." Freedom of speech must be passé.

The Bush administration's propaganda machine is every bit as ruthless and efficient as that organized by Joseph Goebbels during Hitler's reign.

Their truth squads sought out dissenters and labeled them as anti-American or unpatriotic. Dan Rather said fear was in every newsroom in the country. They [the administration] had and they have a very effective slam machine. You either report the news the way we want it reported or we're going to hang a sign around your neck. Many prime time journalists surrendered their independence and skepticism to join with the administration in its grand march to war. Indicative of the media mindset in late 2002 was the reaction when two top democrats dared to go against the grain. West Virginia Senator Byrd and Massachusetts Senator Kennedy both demanded more documentation and persuasive evidence on the threat potential of Saddam's chemical, biological and nuclear weapons. Kennedy predicted, "War with Iraq before a genuine attempt at inspection and disarmament, without genuine international support, could swell the ranks of Al Qaeda with sympathizers and trigger an escalation in terrorist acts." The WASHINGTON POST gave Kennedy's concerns just one sentence, 36 words.

From August 2002 until the war was launched in March of 2003 there were about 140 front page pieces in THE WASHINGTON POST, 27 editorials, and about 1,000 articles making the administration's case for war but there were only a handful of stories that ran on the front page that made the opposite case. Network executives knew dissent was bad for business.

Six weeks before the Iraq invasion, with the debate over the relevant facts intensifying, Secretary of State Colin Powell placed his impeccable reputation on the line and went before the United Nations to make America's case for war.

Following Powell's 90 minute presentation some of the most discerning and sophisticated journalists in the country bought what Powell was selling without question. Some of their lead lines were, "A Masterful Legal Summary", "A Strong, Credible and Persuasive Case", "An Ironclad Case... Succinct and Daming Evidence", "A Persuasive, Detailed Accumulation of Information." Obvious flaws in the Powell case went unchallenged. The lack of WMD evidence, the biological weapons that had been destroyed, and the heralded British intelligence report that in reality was a graduate student's plagiarized thesis.

As Bush's ship of state begins to crumble and the once loyal supporters desert to save themselves, it should become clear to the chief malefactors and their media cohorts that in the end integrity, honor, and trust is what really matters. Most of the administration's media lapdogs are still in place. They are named in "Buying the War". The message is Americans need to reassess the trust placed in misguided political leaders and compromised media pundits.

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