

**THE BLOG****Alternate History: NSFW**

By Marty Kaplan

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Listening to Republican icons and media lions extol the Ford era for values nearly extinct in today's GOP — healing, humility, honesty, and the like — I couldn't help thinking that the closest analogy to the Nixon Administration, which gave rise to Ford's, is the present Bush Administration (a point John Dean has decisively made).

What if those Ford values, instead of being road kill cynically invoked by the very politicians who slaughtered them, had actually been operative in our own era? What if our own Washington had been obliged to play by Ford's rules?

By 2005 or so, it's not a stretch to think that Cheney, like Agnew, would have had to resign — in Dick's case, over his campaign to out Valerie Plame, say, or perhaps because of Halliburton shenanigans.

Then, if Bush had followed Nixon's precedent, he would have appointed the House Republican leader to succeed Cheney as Vice President.

And then - if today's Fourth Estate had been as uncowed as the Watergate press corps, and if today's Republicans evinced the patriotism of the Howard Bakers instead of the pathetic lapdogism of the Bill Frist - surely Bush would have been impeached for manipulating pre-war intelligence, and would then either have been convicted, or resigned to spend more time with his dogs.

Which would have given us - oh, dear - President Tom DeLay.

Talk about long national nightmares not being over...

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