



THE BLOG

Soft Bigotry, Hard Bucks

By Marty Kaplan

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Looks like no contractor is being left behind, either. Dick Cheney's corporate alma mater is the most recent victim of the soft bigotry of low expectations.

Turns out that Halliburton will get nearly all of the quarter-of-a-billion dollars in excessive or unjustified Iraq charges that the Pentagon's auditors uncovered. According to a New York Times story, Halliburton did "as well as could be expected" with its \$2.41 billion no-bid contract; said an Army spokesperson, "the contractor is not required to perform perfectly to be entitled to reimbursement."

If I were Ken Mehlman (I can't believe I just typed that), I'd grab and run with this below-sea-level standard. The Republicans who run Washington *shouldn't be required to perform perfectly* to be entitled to stay in power. Iraq? Katrina? Energy independence? Ethics? As long as the GOP does *as well as could be expected* on those fronts — that is, abysmally, miserably, incompetently and criminally — then they should enjoy the same kid-glove treatment that Halliburton's getting.

But why stop there? Don't the Administration and Congress deserve a performance bonus each time one among them is indicted? Since we *expect* them to be morally corrupt, ideologically fanatical, culturally divisive and constitutionally unaccountable, surely they're as entitled to social promotions as those incurious and illiterate students who were nevertheless pushed along toward graduation at low-bar institutions like Andover and Yale.

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