

**THE BLOG**

Drudge's Strategy, Strategy's Drudgery

By Marty Kaplan

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Over the past several days, the Bush-lovin' Drudge Report has been dribbling out EXCLUSIVE! excerpts from *Strategy*, published by the Bush propaganda firm Regnery, and written by Bush lapdog Bill Sammon, the longtime White House stenographer for the Moonie-owned Bush house organ, the Washington Times. (I guess Fox's invitation to this party got lost in the mail.)

It's hard to figure out which is more hilarious: this noise-machine's triumphalist Bush rhetoric (which is more suitable to Kim Jung-Il than to a president whose ratings are in the toilet and whose own party leaders are abandoning him), or the most recent Scammon-Drudge press release under this headline: BUSH CHEERS DECLINE OF MAINSTREAM MEDIA, RISE OF ALTERNATIVE PRESS.

"The old way of gathering the news is slowly but surely losing market share," Bush explains. In case anyone's forgotten, the old way is the once-proud profession called journalism, whose practitioners patiently dug up verifiable facts. The new way of gathering "news," the one Bush is applauding, is this: *Making it up*. Substituting he-said/she-said for the effort to figure out what's true. Putting bloviators on the federal payroll. Mistaking a food-fight for marketplace of ideas.

Says Bush to Sammon: "I think what's healthy is that there's no monopoly on the news. There's competition. There's competition for the attention of, you know, 290 million people, or whatever it is. And the amazing thing about this world we live in is that there's a kind of free-flowing, kind of bulletin board of ideas and thoughts out there in the ether space, sometimes landing on somebody's desk and sometimes not, but always available. It's a very interesting period."

(The ether space is, you know, where the internets live.)

Hooray for all those "ideas and thoughts out there," says our president. What he means is: hooray for Drudge, Coulter, Hannity, O'Reilly, Malkin et al. But that's not an "alternative press"; it's an alternative universe.

Sure, an abundance of opinion is swell, and the blogosphere breaks the monopoly on megaphones. But the only way to break up a "monopoly on the news" is more journalism, not more propaganda; more independent media companies, not more gigantic media conglomerates; more investigative reporting, not more subpoenaed and jailed

reporters and whistleblowers; more government openness, not more official secrecy; more respect for the idea of truth, not more nihilism about the notion of reality.

No matter how much Karl Rove may wish it to be the case, newsiness — thank you, Stephen Colbert — just ain't the same thing as news.

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