

**THE BLOG****Barnes to Snow: Stonewall**

By Marty Kaplan

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To celebrate the announcement of Fox's Tony Snow as White House press secretary, Fox had Fred Barnes and Juan Williams on to speculate about the impact.

Williams said that, because Tony had worked for various media outlets, he knows what reporters need, and he'll give them what he can, which will mean a better working relationship between the administration and the press.

Barnes would have none of it. The last thing Tony should be, he said, is Mr. Nice Guy. If Snow is asked about his paper trail of comments criticizing Bush, now circulating among those pesky bloggers, Barnes said he should tell reporters that he's not going to comment on any of that, nosiree; his job now is to serve the president, not to rehash the past.

It's refreshing to have the Faustian bargain of serving this administration made so explicit. In exchange for Snow's gaining immortality — which in this era means being on television so much that his post-Bush speaking fees will exponentially soar — all he has to give up is everything he stands for. Those anti-Bush cracks? Inoperative. Next question.

The problem with the McClellan robot wasn't that he was clueless about what was going on in the West Wing; it was that he wasn't charming enough, that he couldn't be reprogrammed with a new set of "...ongoing investigation that is ongoing..." loops, that he seemed to have lost interest in attempting to convince the press corps that they had any reason to believe him.

But as Snow's Fox colleagues attested, McClellan's successor is amiable and good-looking (the two essential signs of gravitas). When Snow stonewalls the press, they'll know he's a true insider, and that he's doing it out of professionalism, not because he's a scared chipmunk. With Bush's approval rating approaching Nixon's, it's comforting that this White House understands the priority of filling not just Scott McClellan's shoes, but Ron Ziegler's.

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