



THE BLOG 08/13/2008 05:12 am ET | Updated May 25, 2011

Why Americans Hate Journalism, Part 62



By Marty Kaplan

Ron Suskind's new book reports that in 2003, the White House ordered the CIA to forge a letter to "prove" that Iraq had a hand in 9/11 and that Saddam was buying yellowcake uranium from Niger for his WMD program with the help of Al Qaeda.

When this came up on MSNBC, moderator Chuck Todd asked Politico's Mike Allen whether this would lead "the anti-war crowd" in Congress to call for impeachment. Allen replied that it would "give the lefty blogosphere something to grab onto."

And so, in less time than it takes to say "Dick Cheney," the subject is changed from what would be one of the most outrageous violations of the Constitution in the history of the Republic to a left/right issue. Instead of taking a breath to consider the merits and consequences of Suskind's charges, MSNBC's It's-Always-Super-Tuesday-Over-Here reframing machine instantly transforms a shocking allegation about the abuse of power into a piece of political football, a tactic, an occasion for the players in the grand political theater that cable news says Washington really is to assume their designated roles, like a Punch and Judy show.

Only it's not that funny, is it? I don't imagine that the families of the tens of thousands of American soldiers killed and wounded in Iraq think that wanting to hold the president and vice president accountable for breaking the law means you're part of "the anti-war crowd" (meaning, the un-kewl kids). If the White House asked the CIA to cook up this disinformation aimed at the American people, why shouldn't the righty blogosphere, too, be up in arms? Why doesn't every American, regardless of political party, have a stake in the truth and the rule of law?

I know, I know: that's not Chuck Todd's or Mike Allen's jobs. Unfortunately, the closest that the MSM usually comes to weighing the evidence is saying: Ron Suskind charges X, and the White House denies it. This is what is now called reporting.

Follow Marty Kaplan on Twitter: www.twitter.com/martykaplan