

**THE BLOG****After the “Civil War” War**

By Marty Kaplan

11/27/2006 02:52 pm ET | Updated May 25, 2011

Now that NBC, *Newsweek*, CNN and the *Los Angeles Times* have decided that the civil war in Iraq should actually be called a civil war, the way is open for the MSM to call more things by their true names, rather than their Orwell names. What’s the worst that could happen to the media — Tony Snow has a hissy fit? Rove issues an access-fatwa?

The reclaiming of honest English should include some criteria for calling something “centrist” or “fringe.” For example, if only 8 percent of the country believes that American troops should stay in Iraq for as long as Bush says they should, phased withdrawal must now be characterized as a mainstream position, rather than an extreme view.

Believing that contraception should not be made available to American adults, as the Administration’s latest family healthcare appointee does, or that homosexuality is a sinful lifestyle choice, as the Dobson brigade does, or that global warming is a hoax, as Sen. James Inhofe does, should from now on be called what it is, a radical stand, rather than a “conservative” one.

“Conservative,” in turn, should henceforward be used to describe the things it means in the dictionary — smaller government, less intrusive government, pay-as-you-go — rather than its current usage, which describes an ideology bigger government, less privacy and bloated deficits.

For nearly six years, a supine press has given the Bush Administration veto-power over nomenclature. As a result, we’ve had Clear Skies policies that made clean air dirtier, and No Child Left Behind policies that have left children behind, and missions accomplished that weren’t accomplished, and strategies for victory that weren’t strategies, and “terrorists” conducting faction-on-faction violence with centuries of history behind them. Now, with any luck, the neo-Stalinist era of American political discourse is ending. Imagine what this newfound “civil war” courage could accomplish if it were applied to journalism itself. Did someone say “fair and balanced”?

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