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Freedom Rider
Dead Eye Dick Cheney
by Margaret Kimberley

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"I would like to believe he [Cheney] is sick rather than just mean and evil." – Congressman Charles Rangel

Dick Cheney first emerged in the Bush campaign in 2000 when he was responsible for vetting potential running mates for Dubya. Suddenly the vetting stopped and he became the running mate himself. It isn't clear if the process was all for show or if Poppy Bush decided that Dick would be the best baby sitter for his son. In any case he was the perfect choice to carry out the Bushies' schemes.

Cheney is the Bush administration bad cop. Bush pretends to be the compassionate conservative, while Dick boldly states that we are all going to die if we don't give him our votes. Bush mouths Christian piety, Dick tells United States Senators to go f__k themselves.

Dick was packing heat from the early days of the Bush campaign for president. Now he is packing heat literally. Cheney shot, accidentally we are told, Texas lawyer Harry Whittington during a hunting trip. We didn't get the news from the Vice President's office or the White House. Katharine Armstrong, the well connected hunting party hostess, spoke to Karl Rove and got her marching orders to contact the local newspaper the day after the shooting.

The White House immediately went into attack mode when they were unable to control the story. The only thing that stopped the well-oiled smear campaign against Whittington was news that a shotgun pellet had lodged in his heart. Fear of his death changed the White House tune and sent Dick running to the warm embrace of Fox News.

Harry Whittington is a mover and shaker himself. They are the only people who get face time, no pun intended, with Dick Cheney. Despite his influence, or maybe because of it, Whittington remembered the rules

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of the game. Upon leaving the hospital he said, “Accidents do and will happen,” and expressed sympathy for Cheney. “My family and I are deeply sorry for everything Vice President Cheney and his family have had to deal with.” Whittington knows better than the rest of us the consequences of crossing the Bush team.

On the same day that Cheney talked to Fox News, more photos of mistreatment, abuse and humiliation at Abu Ghraib prison were made public. The photos were a reminder that Cheney and company are not just violent with quails. It was also a lesson about why the Arab and Muslim world are angry with the West.

Depictions of the prophet Muhammad aren't the only cause of outrage. The occupation of Iraq and the never ending assault that is called a war on terror create demonstrations from Egypt to Indonesia, not just cartoons in Danish newspapers.

All of Cheney's chickens came home to roost simultaneously. While Abu Ghraib once again reared its awful head, an independent United Nations Commission on Human Rights urged the Bush administration to close Guantanamo, put prisoners on trial, or let them go.

It is easy to laugh when talk show comedians make jokes about the Cheney shooting. It is harder for most Americans to acknowledge that this administration has been blood thirsty from day one. Hunting accidents among powerful pals are the least of their crimes.

The week before the shooting, Cheney's indicted former chief of staff, Lewis Libby, testified that his “superiors” authorized him to release classified information. If any other administration were involved in so many scandals, it would be time to rejoice at their troubles.

But the Bush administration is unprecedented in its determination to hold on to power and fulfill its agenda. They won't stand by and watch as one of their own is taken out. If they fear impeachment or indictment they will do anything, including go to war, to distract the public and shut up what passes for an opposition.

There are great political benefits in waging war. The corporate media will fall into line. When the bombs begin falling in Iran the same comedians who joke about guns will dutifully stand at attention. The wimpy Democrats will immediately back the president.

Where were the Democrats when this story broke? The Vice President shot someone, said nothing to the public, deputized a private citizen to tell the story, and avoided law enforcement empowered to investigate. Hillary Clinton, the Democrats' lady in waiting, had this hard-hitting analysis.

"A tendency of this administration from the top all the way to the bottom is to withhold information, to resist legitimate requests for information, to refuse to be forthcoming."

Even when the Republicans do themselves in, the Democrats won't take advantage. Her statement could have been even lamer, thank God for small favors.

Cheney is mean and evil. The shooting and the official response are indicative of the way this group works. Like the accident along the highway, it was impossible to ignore this tale. Yet it was a distraction from more serious issues that should have put another party in the White House, or Bush and Cheney on trial for impeachment.

Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo are worse crimes than Cheney channeling Elmer Fudd. They are the reason other countries hate and or fear the United States and they are what makes Cheney truly awful. They will be forgotten until someone forces us to pay attention. By that time the shootout at the ranch will have been forgotten too.

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