

## Oh George – You Can't Be Serious!

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*"Democracies have certain things in common. They have a rule of law, and protection of minorities, a free press, and a viable political opposition."* – George W. Bush

Y'know, you've really got to give George credit. There he was standing next to his ol' pal, "Pootie Poot," at a press conference during his recent fence-mending trip to Europe and he never even cracked a smirk when he uttered those words. After a private meeting with the man whose soul Bush had looked into years ago, the accidental leader of the not-so-free world gently chided the Russian leader with words so hypocritical – it was truly astounding. And Bush was actually able to keep a straight face.

I, on the other hand, sprayed a mouthful of coffee all over my TV screen. I really hate it when that happens.

Now, I always thought we lived in a democracy, at least that's what I was always taught in school, but after listening to Bush's description of democracy that day I may have to reconsider things. Although George is big on platitudes when describing "American values," he seems to be completely oblivious to fact that he and his administration have made great inroads towards the destruction of those very things he was rubbing Putin's face in.

I can't imagine what was going through Vladimir's mind — or any other knowledgeable person in that room — as Bush was rambling on about something he knew nothing about. Maybe that little saying about people in glass houses might have come to mind.

Rule of Law?

C'mon, George, give it a rest. You've pretty much broken every one of the Ten Commandments you keep going on about.

Your administration has zero respect for any rule of law. The invasion of Iraq was a violation of international law. Somebody in the White House broke a federal law in the outing of CIA agent Valerie Plame. The GAO stated the use of taxpayer money to make and distribute fake "news" documentaries to further an agenda was against the law. Torture is against the law. Arresting people without charge and holding them indefinitely is against the law. Shall we go on?

This administration has shown more contempt and fear of the rule of law than it has shown any respect for it at all — and the rule of law is one of the basic building blocks upon which the Constitution stands. From stone-walling the 9/11 investigation to withholding documentation of Cheney's Energy Commission participants, the Bush administration has flaunted its disregard of the rule of law as something that shouldn't apply to them.

Its attitude is shamefully in full view when it comes to the horror and bloodshed taking place this very second in Darfur. In early February, members of the Bush administration were sneaking around the UN in an effort to block the prosecution of Sudanese officials responsible for the continuing slaughter of innocent men, women and children in that country.

Why? Because these prosecutions would take place in the International Criminal Court and the Bushies don't want to legitimize that court.

Why? Because the Bushies are **afraid** that, because of their actions, **they** might be dragged in front of that court. Of course, they state that they're concerned about "Americans being prosecuted," but let's get real. The only "Americans" they're trying to protect are themselves.

Rule of law, indeed!

And what's all this about the protection of minorities? Didn't anybody ever tell George that the only reason he is where he is was due to the suppression of the minority vote? Remember the purged voters these last two elections, George? Or the lack of adequate voting machines in predominantly minority districts? How about your pledge to **change** the Constitution to discriminate against a certain minority group in order to "save" the marriages of your gullible flock?

The one that really got me was the reference to Russia 's lack of "free press." He shot that one straight into his good pal Vladimir after the whole world had enjoyed a few weeks of reports about your own tax dollars having been used to pay conservative pundits to do what they would've done for free anyway. And then – imagine if it were Clinton – a fake journalist moonlighted as a gay hooker (er, "escort") using a fake name and spending two years in the White House press room lobbing questions as soft as flower petals at Ari, Scott and George. Meanwhile, the Bush "free press" has been running willy-nilly away from this story because the bloggers who did all the work and broke the story have shown the mainstream corporate media to be the lazy, pandering mouthpieces they truly are.

And just how "free" can the press be when the corporations that own them have other interests?

Let's take, for instance, MSNBC. One of the corporations owning that particular cable news channel is General Electric. GE expects to have approximately \$3 billion of contract work in Iraq by the year 2006, much of that being tied to rebuilding the infrastructure in that country. Now, if the success in fulfilling the terms of those contracts is dependent upon the security of Iraq, how tolerant will GE's shareholders be if a news outlet it owns starts going on about the **insecurity** in that country? Talk about a quagmire.

This was one of the reasons that the corporate heads got rid of Phil Donahue a few years back. "Donahue" was MSNBC's highest-rated show at the time and, despite the micro-managing by the stuffed suits, the ratings continued to show a steady improvement. But with the drums of war echoing in their ears and the Shills and Kool-Aid drinkers at Fox News beating them in the ratings, MSNBC caved completely and

dumped Donahue — using the laughable reason of “low ratings.” Then, in a complete and transparent about-face, they went out and hired the certifiably insane Mike Savage (until his rotten mouth cost him his job) and Joe “what-dead-intern-in-my-office” Scarborough to kind of “balance” their line up. In other words, it was safer to try to outfox Fox than offer a balance against Fox so they sacrificed journalism and open and honest debate for a seat on the bandwagon.

MSNBC isn't the only culprit.

The alleged “free press” (*aka* liberal media) is rife with right-wing apologists like Blitzer, Woodruff and that gawd-awful Howie Kurtz from CNN. Then there's Sinclair's grip on ABC and their owner Disney, who got all shaky legged when it came time to distribute ***Fahrenheit 9/11*** last year – thus depriving shareholders of some big-time profits. There was also the problem of honoring the war dead on “Nightline” because the Sinclair gang felt it was propaganda.

Then, of course, there's CBS selling its own down the river over “RatherGate” while ignoring the fact that the information on those notorious documents has been shown to be accurate by those who were familiar with Bush's AWOL. Then you have CNBC giving neo-newcomer Dennis Miller a job because nobody was paying any attention to him before anyway. I could go on flaying the bones of these dead horses, but I'll leave sadism for those who are really good at it.

I guess, in some ways, one could say that we have a free press. It's free from any accuracy, journalistic integrity and investigative talent. Even Bob Woodward had to admit recently that if Watergate had happened today, Nixon would have gotten away with it.

Now, about this “viable political opposition” nonsense – George is really stretching things. Granted, the lack of opposition is not all George's fault. Let's face it: the majority of the so-called opposition has been playing “footsie” with Bush and the Republicans for over four years now and any time one dares speak up, the GOP hangs 'em out to dry and lets the free press beat on 'em for a week or so.

Of course, it doesn't help matters when you have a snake like Tom DeLay redrawing voting districts in Texas (one district looks like a 300 mile bar-bell) and you have conservative leaders talking about going “nuclear” on the opposition so they can get even more radical right-wing judges appointed. The opposition Bush espoused to Putin that day has pretty much spent the last four years (in his own back yard) being squashed like a bug any time one of 'em slips out from under his faux cowboy boot..

So, in light of the fact that America under King George wildly contradicts his own description of a democracy, I really have to wonder just where I live or what system of government we have now. And I really have to wonder if Bush is so divorced from reality (sorry, I couldn't resist) that he actually believes his statement resembles America today.

If that's the case, I better start keeping a towel or something near my TV set. There's no telling what nonsense will come out of his mouth next.