

Pro-war US newspaper admits: Bush is a liar

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An unusually candid article in the May 31 edition of the *Washington Post* admits that President Bush is engaged in systematic lying to the American public to further his own reelection. The article, on the front page of the major daily newspaper in the US capital, was based on an extensive independent study of Bush's campaign advertising and the *Post's* own review of public statements by Bush campaign spokesmen.

Citing data compiled by the Campaign Media Analysis Group, the *Post* noted that the Bush campaign has already aired 49,050 negative ads in the top 100 US media market, an enormous figure more than five months before the election. Some 75 percent of Bush's total advertising consisted of negative attacks on his Democratic opponent, Senator John Kerry, while only 27 percent of Kerry's ads were negative.

Even more significant was the deliberate falsification and distortion in the Bush ads. In language which fell just short of branding Bush a liar, the *Post* wrote: "Scholars and political strategists say the ferocious Bush assault on Kerry this spring has been extraordinary, both for the volume of attacks and for the liberties the president and his campaign have taken with the facts."

The *Post* detailed some of the most significant distortions, most of which involve fabricating claims about Kerry's political positions, suggesting that the Democrat intends a wholesale and radical reversal of the Bush administration's policies in Iraq, in the "war on terror," and in domestic social policy. The newspaper concluded: "The charges were all tough, serious—and wrong, or at least highly misleading."

Last week, for instance, in a speech to Republican campaign supporters, Vice President Dick Cheney said that Kerry "has questioned whether the war on terror is really a war at all" and declared that the Democrat has "promised to repeal most of the Bush tax cuts within his first 100 days in office." Both statements are

patently false, since Kerry has unquestioningly embraced the war on terror, promising to outdo Bush in his use of military force and police repression, and has urged only the repeal of the tax cuts for families with incomes over \$200,000 a year, and that without a timetable.

Bush-Cheney campaign chairman Marc Racicot told reporters in a conference call that Kerry had said in a speech that the 150,000 US soldiers in Iraq are "universally responsible" for the torture of Iraqi prisoners at Abu Ghraib. Racicot repeated the claim several times and then refused to answer a reporter who asked him to substantiate the charge.

A Bush campaign memo issued last week charged that Kerry "led the fight against creating the Department of Homeland Security." Actually, the establishment of this police-state apparatus was the brainchild of Democrats like Senator Joseph Lieberman—and Bush initially opposed the effort. Kerry backed the creation of the DHS, disagreeing only with the Bush administration's effort to suspend civil service rules for the new department's employees and deny them the right to union representation, because of the Democratic Party's ties to the trade union bureaucracy.

If Kerry actually advocated such positions as an immediate cancellation of Bush's tax cuts for the wealthy, repeal of the Patriot Act, or a pullout from Iraq, he would likely improve his standing in the polls, which currently show the Democrat with only a narrow lead over an increasingly unpopular incumbent. But as it is, Kerry is firmly committed to maintaining US occupation of Iraq, and only minute tinkering with the reactionary social program carried out by the Bush administration over the past three and a half years.

The critical tone and prominent placement of the *Post* analysis amount to an admission that the methods of the Bush administration represent something qualitatively

new in American politics. This White House has descended to a new low, a level of lying beyond that customary in bourgeois election campaigns in which multimillionaire representatives of the wealthy elite seek to posture as “men of the people” who have the best interests of ordinary workers at heart.

The *Post*, however, fails to draw any conclusions from this insight. It does not pose the obvious question: what else is Bush lying about? If Bush resorts to brazen falsification in his electoral contest with Kerry, why should anyone believe what the administration says about Iraq, about Afghanistan, about its attacks on democratic rights at home, about its domestic social policies?

This silence is no accident. The *Post* is a fervent supporter of the Bush administration’s war policies. It has parroted the White House lies about weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, about alleged ties between Saddam Hussein and Al Qaeda, about the liberating role of the American armed forces in the occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan. These lies have had far greater consequences for the lives of millions of people than the Bush campaign’s slanders of Kerry.

The *Post* has played a key role in the course of the current election campaign, leading the charge against the former Democratic frontrunner, Howard Dean, declaring that any suggestion of a US withdrawal from Iraq would put a candidate out of the “mainstream.” The newspaper promoted Kerry as a pro-war alternative to Dean, and now seems prepared to back him against Bush on the grounds that a change of administration may be needed to regain public and international support for the US occupation.

There is an even more fundamental reason for the *Post*’s refusal to do more than take note of the obvious fabrications by the Bush campaign. The technique of the Big Lie characterizes not only the political methods of this White House in the election campaign, but goes back to its very origins. This is an unelected, illegitimate government, installed not by the votes of the American people, but by the votes of five ultra-right Supreme Court justices.

The leading organs of the corporate-controlled media—the *Post*, the *New York Times*, the television networks and weekly news magazines—collaborated with this quasi-constitutional coup d’état and sought to legitimize the theft of the election. They therefore

cannot probe too deeply into the real import of the brazen and cynical lying by the Bush reelection campaign, which is only a foretaste of what is coming this September, October and November.



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