

BP ADOPTS THE PUBLIC FACE OF DICK CHENEY

✘ I mean that headline more metaphorically than literally. But I do find it really really telling—and really really bad taste—that BP just hired Cheney’s former campaign press flack, Anne Womack-Kolton, to head its American media relations.

BP has hired a former top aide for Vice President Dick Cheney to be their new spokeswoman. Anne Womack-Kolton has been hired to be “head of U.S. media relations.” A rising star in the Bush-Cheney White House since the 2000 campaign, Womack-Kolton served as Cheney’s press secretary during the 2004 election before running public affairs in the Bush Department of Energy.

Now Reuters, which first reported this, paints the move as an effort to better respond to the overwhelming influx of inquiries. But I wonder if there isn’t something more to this.

First, as this DKos diary notes, Womack-Kolton had the honor of defending Dick Cheney’s Energy Task Force, particularly its secrecy.

Administration spokeswoman Anne Womack responded to the GAO lawsuit by sounding the same righteous tone: “We are ready to defend our principles in court. This goes to the heart of the presidency and to the ability of the president and vice president to receive candid, discreet advice.”

Then there’s the legal nuance of this. Womack-Kolton was working for Brunswick Group, which BP retained as early as May 4. So she’s basically just moving in-house from the crisis communication firm that BP had already hired. Perhaps this is a testament to BP’s need to get

better coordination in-house. But I can't help but wonder whether there's some other reason. Does being a BP employee as opposed to a consultant's employee change Womack-Kolton's legal protection, for example, during upcoming lawsuits?

Whatever the reason for bringing Dick Cheney's own flack in-house, perhaps this will bring a new level of honesty to BP's response. What could be more honest, after all, than putting Dick Cheney's face on this disaster?

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