

THE POLITICAL REHABILITATION OF ARI FLEISCHER

Say, has anyone noticed how **omnipresent** Ari Fleischer has been, of late? Obviously, the big news is his pimping for a \$15 million propaganda campaign in favor of death and destruction.

"For those who believe in peace through strength, the cavalry is coming," said former White House Press Secretary Ari Fleischer, who is a founding board member of the group.

But Ari is also, all of a sudden, a seemingly acceptable source of the party line for the beltway media. He's on Fox News accusing Congress of politicizing DOJ. And he's dealing that line to the NYT, too.

"This is a reflection of the fact that the Democrats are on the offensive and have more power than they used to," Mr. Fleischer said Monday, referring to Mr. Gonzales's announcement. "The president doesn't have a lot of armor left, and the fact that they were able to force him out is a chink in whatever armor he has left."

Ari Fleischer has returned from his political exile in the harsh climes of Pound Ridge, NY, it seems (full disclosure: as a teenager, I was about 5 years behind Ari in the Pound Ridge schools).

Does anyone else find the timing interesting? Not so long ago, Ari was flacking for sports figures, apparently unable or uninterested in getting work in DC. But here he is, less than two months after Scooter Libby's get out of jail free card, with \$15 million of Republican money in his pocket to spend.

Two things may explain the timing. First, Tony Snow is getting ready to bolt the White House. And these uncertain times demand a professional liar, not rank amateurs like Scottie McClellan or Dana Perino. And face it, Ari Fleischer remains one of the great liars of this Administration full of experienced (if not convincing) liars.

But the timing almost certainly has to do with the damage Ari didn't do in return for immunity in the CIA Leak case. Sure, Ari did some damage to Libby. But when Fitzgerald bought his pig in a poke, it seemed like he expected—and may have gotten—damaging information on someone else. Ari's lunch date with Libby was just gravy on the immunized testimony. And now that that other person is out of danger, all of a sudden Ari can rejoin his party as a fully functional member of the propaganda corps.

What most amazes me, though, is that it is as if some bureau somewhere sent out a memo alerting the press—somehow they all discovered at the same time that Ari has been rehabilitated by the party.

Update: Ah geez. Here's Ari on the Today Show expounding on Larry Craig's unusual bathroom habits.