

SCOTT MCCLELLAN TESTIMONY: ROVE IS A LIAR AND CHENEY AN OIL-HUNGRY WAR- MONGER



I confess to being underwhelmed with the work HJC did with Scott McClellan's appearance before the committee today. I'll do a post later (once I've recovered from a terrible day for Democracy) on what I think was missed. But I'll start with the positive—what I consider the highlights of the hearing.

Conyers started the hearing right, IMO, by introducing the meat-grinder note, showing that as Cheney was pressuring Bush to have Libby exonerated, Cheney was thinking of Bush's order that Libby "put his neck in the meat-grinder." Conyers also made the case—which I made here—that Mukasey should turn over the reports from the Bush and Cheney interviews (doing anything else is really cooperating the ongoing attempts to cover-up the Libby case). Of course, HJC could have made a more compelling case that it needs the reports had they don't a better job of explaining why the reports would be the only way to answer urgent questions about the leaks. But, aside from Chairman Conyers, no one on the committee made a concerted effort to present the abundant evidence that Cheney **and** Bush were involved in the leak of Plame's identity. For example, when Jerrold Nadler asked McClellan whether Bush and Cheney had any knowledge of Libby's involvement in the leak, he didn't introduce that evidence that Cheney, at least, did, and Bush may have as well.

NADLER: Do you know when the president gave instruction to cover Libby's rear end, did he know about Libby's

involvement? Scott didn't know that.

Perhaps the best use of the hearing time came from (unsurprisingly—he usually excels in hearings) Artur Davis. Davis, who is from Don Siegelman's state, got McClellan to admit that Rove not only would—but has—lied to protect himself from legal jeopardy and political embarrassment.

Artur Davis Let me circle around a person, Rove. You stated Rove encouraged you to repeat a lie. Indicated you've known him for some time. Committee extended invitation to Rove. I'm willing to talk, only if no oath, no cameras, no notes. Based on what you know does it surprise you that Rove wants limitations on circumstances.

SM An effort to stonewall the whole process.

Davis Would you trust Rove to tell the truth if not under oath.

SM Can't say I would

Davis Not under oath.

SM I would hope he would. I'd have concerns about that.

Davis Did testify before GJ under oath. You don't believe he told the complete truth to the GJ.

SM I don't know.

Davis Karl only concerned about protecting himself from possible legal action. **Do you believe he is capable of lying to protect himself from legal jeopardy.**

SM He certainly lied to me.

Davis **Do you believe he is capable of lying to protect himself from political embarrassment.**

SM he did in my situation, so the answer is yes. [my emphasis]

While this may not help the Plame-related oversight, it's an important admission, especially as HJC moves to get Rove to testify to the committee about Siegelman and other related issues.

Hank Johnson did a good job of getting McClellan to admit that the Libby commutation was unusual and could rightly raise suspicions about why Bush had commuted Libby's sentence.

Hank Johnson Over 5000 requests for commutation. Of those, prior to Libby, Bush granted 3 petitions for commutation. He actually denied 4108 of those, others closed without presidential action. Reluctance to grant mercy is consistent with Bush's conduct wrt death penalty cases. All of a sudden we've got White House confidant Libby. An attempt to silence Libby. A misleading of American public. On the same day that Libby found out that Appeals Court would not reverse the judge's decision, Bush issued a commutation, without consultation of his own DOJ he decided to issue consultation of that prison sentence. Do you believe that?

SM I can understand why people view it that way.

Johnson Any reason to think that would not be reasonable scenario.

SM We haven't had any answers to those questions.

Finally, one other good use of the hearing was unrelated to Plame: when Betty Sutton got McClellan to admit that Cheney's rationale for the war may have been a desire to get control over Iraq's oil.

Sutton VP may have viewed removal of Saddam opportunity to give US more control over Iraq's oil reserves.

SM Hard to know what VP's rationale was. If Iraq didn't have large reserves, wouldn't have been on the national security radar.

Sutton Anything specific?

SM VP's involvement in energy issues.

Well there you have it—confirmation of two things we've known all along. Rove is a liar, and Cheney an oil-hungry war-monger.

At least we accomplished that much.