

JOE LOCKHART WANTED TO SAY BLOW JOB

In 2007, I was on a panel with Joe Lockhart and Todd Purdum to talk about political news. We talked a lot about how the press' insistence on covering the Lewinsky scandal—when the bulk of the country was pretty happy with the President regardless of who had given him a blow job—led to the crisis of legitimacy that let blogs arise. (To say nothing of the press' coverage heading into the Iraq War.)

Purdum, interestingly enough, maintained that "everyone" knew Clinton was a liar, which is why they covered the Lewinsky scandal so breathlessly. When I asked who "everyone" included, he realized he meant just he and his friends on the bus, that the apparent consensus among those on the bus was never really communicated or proven to the rest of us.

At one point I said, sort of in Lockhart's direction, that they should have just said, "It was a consensual blow job, let's move on" and that might have ended the issue. [see 49:00 to 51:45]

Marcy Wheeler: So, finally you get to the point where, yes, Clinton did not, was not completely forthcoming about a consensual blow job. The other thing that I think could have happened is that a lot of people said but, fundamentally what happened was a consensual blow job between consenting adults. I think it's between Bill and Hillary and Monica Lewinsky. And again, that didn't happen. So those are three things that might have short-circuited the story.

Joe Lockhart: I will say this. I spent two and a half years with great discipline not once using that phrase, and you won't get it out of me today. I think it, I agree with you, but it's

just, it's a mental block. You have no idea how many times I wanted to say exactly that from behind the podium. It's just a goddamn [grimaces face]. I completely agree with that.

I wasn't really imagining the White House Spokesman saying blow job when I said this—just someone. Some prominent surrogate to go out there to say blow job blow job blow job.

It never happened.

And the DC press corps, I think, is apparently still horrified by the possibility that you can just say it, like that, blow job, and in doing so, expose it for all its tawdry but ultimately minor import. Perhaps just saying it like that would break the spell they were under for two years, break the magic of the Presidential blow job. I don't know.

At some point, though, we as a country have to be willing and able to weigh what the Village did in the late 90s against the massive illegality of the Bush White House and, finally, realize there are more important things than a blow job, and we need to take those more important things at least as seriously as that magic blow job that captivated the press for so long under Clinton.

I don't know whether my efforts today helped or hurt those efforts. Next time I'll just repeat, endlessly, torture torture torture. It'll probably cause the same kind of outrage.