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A Case for Impeachment

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Posted on Jan 30, 2007

By **Robert Scheer**

Not all lies are created equal. It is understood that there is a chasm of importance between little white lies and big black ones. Most would agree that lying about a consensual sexual affair, even by the president, is of significantly lesser concern than lying about the proliferation of nuclear weapons as an excuse to take the nation to war.



AP Photo / Lawrence Jackson

President Bush presents former CIA Director George Tenet the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

How then is it possible that a Republican-controlled Congress impeached President Bill Clinton over his attempt to conceal marital infidelity but that a Democratic-led Congress will not even consider impeaching this president for far more serious transgressions against the public trust? That is the question that arises from early revelations in the trial of Lewis "Scooter" Libby, Vice President Dick Cheney's former chief of staff.

This case's importance lies not in the narrow charge that Libby committed perjury in testifying about his role in the outing of CIA operative Valerie Wilson; that was merely one facet of a far-ranging plot to deceive Congress and the public about perhaps the most important issue of our time: the prospect of terrorists obtaining a weapon of mass destruction.

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Annie Nelson on the 'Fuel That Doesn't Kill Us'

The infamous 16-word State of the Union claim by President Bush that Iraqi President Saddam Hussein had sought to obtain enriched uranium from the African country of Niger was known to be based on fraudulent documents at the time Bush used this and other false evidence to make his case for war.

The Libby case testimony, centered on the chicanery of the vice president, certainly suggests that impeachable offenses occurred at the highest level of the White House. Just how conscious the president was of the deceptions conducted under his authority, what he knew and when he knew it, is precisely what an impeachment trial would determine.

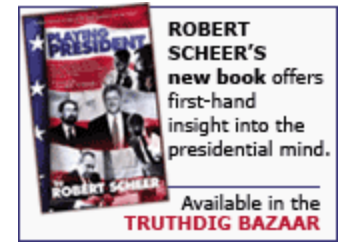
Consider the testimony concerning White House use of former CIA Director George Tenet in the cover-up of the president's distortions. The record is unmistakably clear that the CIA and other intelligence sources warned the White House before the president's speech not to make the bogus Niger claim, and that the reference had been voided out in a previous speech. Yet, after Ambassador Joseph Wilson exposed this fact more than a year after the invasion, Cheney orchestrated a new deception to shift the blame to Tenet.

That is the smoking-gun revelation in the testimony of Cheney's former spokeswoman, Cathie Martin, a Harvard-educated lawyer who still works in the White House. Her word is that of a sophisticated and top-level White House insider and, as described by the Washington Post, one that offers a devastating glimpse into the moral depravity of this administration:

"At length, Martin explained how she, Libby and Deputy National Security Adviser Steve Hadley worked late into the night writing a statement to be issued by George Tenet in 2004 in which the CIA boss would take blame for the bogus claim in Bush's State of the Union address that Iraq was seeking nuclear material in Africa. After 'delicate' talks, Tenet agreed to say the CIA 'approved' the claim and 'I am responsible'—but even that disappointed Martin, who had wanted Tenet to say that 'we did not express any doubts about Niger.' " Tenet later was awarded the nation's highest civilian honor, the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

Certainly this deliberate corruption of the integrity of the CIA, the nation's premier source of national security information, rises to the level of "high crimes and misdemeanors," which the Constitution holds out as the standard for impeachment. And can there be any more egregious example of betraying the oath of office of the president to uphold the Constitution than his deceiving Congress from the very well of the House on the reasons for going to war? The Constitution clearly delegates to Congress, and not to the president, the exclusive power to declare war, and deceiving our representatives in making the case for war is a far more important crime than the perjury charge against Libby.

Testimony already has established that Libby was nothing more than a pawn used by Cheney in the vice president's constant and ferocious campaign to trick the nation into war



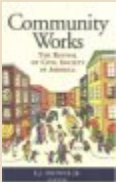


**Susan McDougal:
The Woman Who
Wouldn't Talk**

—not a totally surprising quest for a man who had served as CEO for a corporation that has profited so obscenely from the Iraq agony.

Cheney, like some Daddy Warbucks cartoon character of old, has been so blatant in his corruption of the nation's second highest office that we seem to have become inured to further revelations of his evil influence. Instead of being shocked, we are more likely jaded by even more examples of the man's use of his office to persistently undermine our democratic heritage. Too bad he wasn't cursed by an overactive libido.

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A Progressive Journal of News and Opinion. Editor, Robert Scheer. Publisher, Zuade Kaufman.

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