

Cheney's 'Free Speech' Cages

On a campaign fundraising stop in Portland, Oregon on Jan. 13, Vice President Cheney exploited a recent Federal court decision, in the criminal case of *U.S.A. v. Bursey*, to expand the use of the shamefully mislabelled "Free Speech Zones" to literally cage his opponents. Protesters were not allowed to approach the event at a hotel near the Portland Airport, but were directed by police to a muddy field at least 100 yards away, where they were enclosed behind an eight-foot-high chain-link fence topped with razor wire. Over the last year, the Bush Administration has been implementing a Homeland Security policy of creating pre-arranged vicinity-exclusion zones, designated by Secret Service agents, during campaign speeches and stopovers. Secret Service teams advance-scout the vicinity for vacant lots, ballparks, airfields, and areas that might hold many hundreds or thousands of protesters. The sites are generally located from a block to a third of a mile or more from the

site of the political event, always well out of camera range. The area chosen, is enclosed in portable chain-link, and given the Orwellian designation of a Free Speech Zone. Secret Service then provides local law enforcement with criteria for determining which members of the public may enter the area where Bush is speaking, and which must use the Free Speech Zone. Administration supporters, with their signs, are allowed access to the President, and are present for the media. Other citizens with protest signs are told they must exercise their right of dissent in the Free Speech Zone.

Will Seaman, of the Portland Peaceful Resource Coalition, said of the area where Cheney protesters were caged, "It was completely inaccessible," and a half-mile from the nearest public transit. "It was a marsh," he noted. At one point, dozens of riot police and other officers on bicycle, horseback and all-terrain vehicles massed across from the protesters. They were informed, via loudspeaker, that any attempts to pass or tamper with the barricade could subject them to the use of force, including chemical agents or impact weapons, as well as to arrest and criminal charges.

Bush strategists believe it's time for Cheney to move from undisclosed secure locations to the front lines of the campaign, and a little image repair is in order." She noted, "Critics also view Cheney as the man responsible for the Administration's penchant for secrecy and a hard-liner who helped drag Bush into war with Iraq. Halliburton, the company he once headed, is being investigated for its lucrative Pentagon contracts. Some people wonder whether Cheney will be an asset or a liability in this campaign." She quoted Democratic strategist Paul Begala: "If you're a rich, fat white guy, he's your hero. But he's a very controversial guy. This is what comes with being the most powerful Vice President in history."

The *Los Angeles Times* was generally kinder to the Vice President, although reporter Maura Reynolds wrote, "Democrats and other critics paint Cheney as a dark, insidious force pushing Bush toward war and confrontation. But that doesn't bother the vice president. 'What's wrong with my image?' Cheney asks with a laugh. He contends that he operates in public when it serves the Administration's agenda, and in private when that is more effective. 'Am I the evil genius in the corner that nobody ever sees coming out of his hole?' he asks. 'It's a nice way to operate, actually.'" The interview transcript shows Cheney trying to soften his profile as the super-hawk who sought out cooked intelligence to justify war with Iraq. He admitted he asked tough questions, but denied he relied on "stovepiped" intelligence from Iraqi dissidents to sell the war. On the Paul O'Neill flap, Cheney grew defensive, denying charges that he is the real power in the Administration, responsible for the policy disasters; but making clear the former Treasury Secretary is no longer a friend.

Cheney's soft-peddling lasted exactly 72 hours. On Jan. 20, his war-party prints were all over President Bush's State of the Union address. And on Jan. 22, he showed up at the Conservative Political Action Committee (CPAC) annual conference in Washington, and delivered his standard lying rant: still linking Saddam Hussein to Al-Qaeda and the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001; and vowing that U.S. inspectors will sooner or later find those vast quantities of weapons of mass destruction that he and his neo-con minions cited as the reason for war.

Documentation

CIA Veterans Demand House Action on Leak

This letter was sent by ten retired CIA officers to Speaker of the House Dennis Hastert (R-Ill.), House Majority Leader Tom DeLay (R-Tex.), House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Cal.), Rep. Porter Goss (R-Fla.), and Rep. Jane Harman (D-Cal.), and the ranking Members of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence.

Dear Mr. Speaker:

We the undersigned former intelligence officers in the