

# Activists Should Not Be Journalists

A few weeks ago in this space, I opined that partisan journalism was getting out of the control in America, and that ideological fanaticism was badly damaging journalistic standards because, in some cases, facts were being altered to fit the agendas of certain reporters and commentators. Now comes more disturbing news about the news.

According to an article in The New York Times Magazine, a non-publicized meeting was held in New York City early last December, attended by Senator John Kerry and a number of liberal leaning journalists including CNN's Jeff Greenfield, Newsweek's Jonathan Alter, Richard Cohen of the Washington Post and Frank Rich of the aforementioned New York Times.

Now this pow-wow might have been just an innocent 'get to know you' soiree, but there are hints it might have been quite something else. One of the attendees, Jim Kelly, the managing editor of Time Magazine, was quoted as saying that Kerry was asked a number of times about his vote on Iraq and, according to Kelly, "by the third go-round the answer was getting shorter and more relevant."

The "third go-round?" That sounds like coaching to me but I could be wrong.

Maybe the Senator simply wasn't making himself clear. What I'm not wrong about is that more than a few so-called journalists have turned into "activists," people who are dedicating themselves to getting a certain party or person elected and are using their positions in the media to do it.

There is nothing wrong with news organizations endorsing a candidate or a columnist writing about his or her political preferences. But actively participating in political campaigns

by coaching candidates and strategizing with them is absolutely against every journalistic standard, and it is happening, usually under the radar.

John Kerry invited me to his Nantucket home a couple of years ago, and I went over to chat with the Senator and meet his wife. Nice time. We both have deep New England roots, and that's what we talked about. I stayed away from politics, and so did he. Nothing wrong with a journalist getting a personal look at a Senator.

But let's face it, with the rise of entertainers like Rush Limbaugh and other radio talk show people who openly root for the Republicans, those on the left feel they are at a disadvantage. Thus, we now have that vacuum being filled by some opinion journalists who never met a left-wing cause they didn't espouse. Again, fanatical news analysts are allowed, even though they're boring. But crossing the line into actively helping a political campaign cannot be tolerated by any news operation.

The exposure of the liberal journalists who met with Kerry received scant attention from the media. Can you imagine if executives from The Fox News Channel, The Wall Street Journal, and The Washington Times had gathered at Camp David for a little slap and tickle with W? ...and nobody was told about it? And The New York Times found out about it? Can you say **PAGE ONE BOLD FACE HEADLINE?**

So, you, as a news consumer, should know that American journalism is becoming increasingly partisan, and that ideologues on both the right and the left have infiltrated the news business at very high levels. But remember this: passionate news analysis is one thing—abusing the public trust is quite something else.