

Night of the Living Dumb

No question that President Bush has regained some momentum in his quest to retain power. The Iraq war defense put forth by Rudy Giuliani and John McCain at the Republican convention actually silenced media critics for a few days, and the populist Arnold Schwarzenegger painted Mr. Bush as an effective, inclusive leader.

But world events have also helped the President. As terror rises all over the place, it becomes increasingly difficult for the Bush haters to diminish the President's own hatred for the "evil doers."

Iraqi terrorists slaughter a dozen waiters from Nepal. Chechen terrorists hold little children hostage and blow up two airliners. Even France was assaulted, as Islamic terrorists demanded that country rescind its ban on the wearing of headscarves in public schools. At this point, it is almost impossible to make a rational case against an aggressive war on Islamic fascism.

The people protesting the Republican Convention also helped Mr. Bush. With more than a thousand arrests, some cops badly injured, and innocent people harassed, the protestors are looked upon as fanatical and irrational by many Americans. And some of them are. A survey by The New York Sun newspaper found protestors favored a socialistic government more than any other. That kind of attitude is not a help to Senator Kerry.

Increasingly, the visible anti-Bush forces are defining themselves as way out there. A new Zogby poll found that almost half of New York City residents believe some in the Bush administration knew the USA would be attacked on 9/11, and did nothing to stop it. Of course, there's not a shred of verifiable evidence backing up that insane belief. New York City is overwhelmingly anti-Bush, and the rest of country is

noticing the caliber of criticism. If I were making a movie about the irrational Bush haters, I would entitle it "Night of Living Dumb."

The fundamental problem with the anti-Bush zealots is that they desperately want to believe the President is a bad man, and will reject all rational discussion that goes against their thesis. That kind of fanaticism frightens mainstream American voters and creates sympathy for the President. Irrational displays will never win an election. Ask Howard Dean.

A few months ago, I wrote in this space that John Kerry would not be seen in public with the likes of Michael Moore and the other far left bomb throwers, and that has proven to be true. Mr. Kerry knows he must convince centrist voters to support him if he wants to win, and radicals like Moore alienate the center.

If you still don't believe me, consider this: Fox News and your humble correspondent have come under horrific attack from the radical left. But every time a smear book or movie comes out defaming us, our ratings go up. My television program "The O'Reilly Factor" easily won its timeslot in the cable news wars during the Democratic Convention, and we beat the opposition three to one during the Republican gathering.

The more the crazies tell Americans that I am unfair and unbalanced, the more people tune in. Where do I send the gift?

So there has been a momentum shift towards the Bush camp that should last until the debates, which begin at the end of September. Those displays will mean more than all the protests, all the mud slinging and all the spin. Not since Kennedy-Nixon have Presidential debates been so crucial. I can't wait.

The Convention Blues

Covering a political convention is kind of like watching a porn film; you know what's going to happen by its very definition. My coverage of the Democratic Convention in Boston brought tears to the eyes of some television critics who loudly wailed that I was an irresponsible cad for not broadcasting the prime-time speeches on my program. This, of course, is nonsense. Why would I waste time on partisan presentations? My job is to analyze what is going on, not let politicians bloviate unchecked.

The speeches, of course, are broadcast on other TV outlets, as they should be. If you want 'em, you should get 'em. But remember this: Anybody can say anything. Most words are hollow. In politics, sports and dirty movies, it is actions that count. And one more thing, the most dishonest individual on earth can *sound* honest, if given the right script.

So what about the Republican Convention in New York? Once again, I will not broadcast the partisan speeches, because they are agenda-driven. Of course, I'll read the speeches and watch them, if I'm not on the air. Then I'll give you my opinion on what's genuine and what's spin.

Too many Americans are not skeptical enough about what is said to them. Fast-talking con people can hurt you badly. These politicians have a battery of writers parsing every word they say, and their pre-speech rehearsals tend to drain the blood out of their presentations. These people don't talk from the heart, they talk from a script that is designed to rally the faithful, not put forth solutions to problems. So why should we listen?

Curiosity is the primary reason. The only thing really on the line during those speeches is how the politician will perform. And if you can't deliver a pre-packaged speech laid out in front of you on a giant teleprompter after days of rehearsal, well, you may lose a few votes.

The contrived convention display on the part of both political parties isn't offensive to me, it's just meaningless. What is offensive is the debate structure. This year, the Presidential candidates will meet three times, the Vice Presidential guys once. But the format has a tragic flaw. The debate moderator can't interrupt the candidates. So if a guy decides to dodge the question or deliver a false fact or dance around an issue, there's really nothing the moderator can do. And if the questioners point out any spin, deception or obfuscation, they will likely be criticized as being a boorish or partisan.

The candidates, of course, know all this. They also know the likely line of the debate questioning, so once again they can rehearse with their professional "handlers." Whatever happened to just answering a question honestly? Where is Harry Truman when we need him?

So here's a bulletin about the Republican Convention and the upcoming debates: Help is not on the way. Hope is not on the way. Nothing is on the way, except how well the candidates can put across their preprogrammed points.

Obviously, this is not the way it should be. The nation deserves rigorous debate and tough, incisive questioning of the candidates. Our lives could be at stake in this election, and the stage play that has become the election process is certainly not making us any safer.

No Brie for Me

Enough with France. That country is not a friend to the USA, or to peace-seeking Iraqis and Afghans. French President Chirac continues to block efforts by the USA and Britain to bring stability to former dictatorships and make it more difficult for homicidal terrorists to operate. Take a look at Chirac's recent resume:

- Last week, he blocked a newly created NATO strike force from going to Afghanistan to provide extra security for elections. Chirac said: "(the strike force) should not be used for troop shortages on routine operations."
- Chirac continues to insist that any NATO training of Iraqi forces be done outside that country. Of course that would create a logistical nightmare not to mention enormous extra cost.
- In Istanbul last week, Chirac again refused to consider Turkey as an allied partner. You may remember in February, 2003, France vetoed any NATO defense of Turkey in case it was attacked by Saddam.
- According to the London Times, and not denied by Ambassador Richard Holbrooke on my television program, France lied to Colin Powell in the run-up to the Iraq war. Foreign Minister Dominique de Villepin apparently told Powell that France would support military action against a defiant Saddam, and then reneged at the last minute. Many analysts believe that action gave Saddam hope that war would not come, and led to his disastrous decision to continue violating UN weapons inspection procedures.
- Instead of attending the funeral of Ronald Reagan as Tony Blair and others did, Chirac passed on the event even though he was in Georgia 24 hours before the commemoration in Washington, just an hour plane ride away.

Even if one opposes the war in Iraq, a humane, clear thinking person would have to want peace and freedom in that country. But time and time again, Jacques Chirac has made it more difficult for that to happen.

Of course, he is doing it to spite President Bush. But he's also doing it because his approval rating in France now stands at 35%, according to a recent poll. Chirac apparently believes he can rebuild his support at home by being anti-American.

The consequence of that strategy is that American lives are being lost and things are made easier for the terror killers. Iraq and Afghanistan will never be free of totalitarianism unless there is security in those countries. But Jacques doesn't care about that. Jacques cares only about Jacques and I've had enough.

So no more brie for me. No more Evian, Air France, Provence and no more escargot, which I don't like anyway. As a free American, I am using my economic choice to send the French government a message. I am boycotting French goods and services and hope you will do the same. As they say in Brooklyn, which is not similar to Paris, Chirac is a bum.

The big dog and pony D-Day show last month in Normandy was a cynical exercise. Bush and Chirac despise each other and Jacques' hope that W loses in November is driving his agenda. Meantime, innocent civilians get their heads chopped off by terrorists and Jacques can't help out. As his role model Marie Antoinette once said: "Let them eat cake."

There is a slight chance that the oil-for-food scandal will expose France as being a corrupt enabler of Saddam. Remember, the bank where all the bribe money was stashed is in Paris, and some FOJ's (friends of Jacques) made millions dealing with Saddam and his sons. I have little confidence the United Nations will get to the bottom of this but I am praying for a miracle. In the meantime, I have another Brooklynism for the

despicable Jacques Chirac: You know what you can do with your Eiffel Tower, pal.

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The Evolution of Michael Moore

The evolution of Michael Moore's new film is fascinating to watch. After winning an award at the Cannes Film Festival, Mr. Moore returned triumphantly to Hollywood and made this statement to reporters on June 9th:

"We want the word out. Any attempts to libel me will be met by force. The most important thing we have is the truth on our side. If they persist in telling lies, then I'll take them to court."

"Them" were critics who were questioning the accuracy of Moore's charges against the Bush administration. "Truth" is rock solid information which, apparently, Michael Moore was sure he possessed.

But then a funny thing happened on the way to the Metroplex. The Nine Eleven Commission findings clashed with Moore's thesis that the Bushies had done something dastardly immediately after the attack by letting a bunch of Saudis, including members of the Bin Laden family, fly out of the USA while everybody else was grounded. Apparently, that is not

true, at least according to the FBI and the Commissioners, none of whom were jurors at the Cannes Film Festival.

So by June 20, Michael Moore had “evolved” a bit as many in Hollywood tend to do. He said this on an ABC News program: “(The movie) is an op-ed piece. It’s my opinion about the last four years of the Bush administration. And that’s what I call it. I’m not trying to pretend that this is some sort of, you know, fair and balanced work of journalism.”

No mention of truth this time but, as responsible columnists know, all op-ed pieces are supposed to be grounded in truth and facts should be cited in backing up one’s op-ed opinion.

Uh-oh.

But just when Michael Moore was floundering in a sea of skepticism, New York Times critic A.O. Scott came to the rescue with this assessment Moore’s film: “It might more accurately be said to resemble an editorial cartoon ...”

Paging Shrek! In the space of two weeks the Moore movie had gone from truth to opinion to cartoon, albeit an editorial one.

But the hits just keep on coming. Los Angeles Times film critic Kenneth Turan wrote this about Fahrenheit 9/11: “It is propaganda, no doubt about it, but propaganda is most effective when it has elements of truth ... ”

So we’re back to the truth now garnished with “elements.”

I have seen the first half of Michael Moore’s movie and here’s the deal.

It’s slick propaganda that indicts President Bush for a variety of things using cut and paste video interspersed with the opinions of far left people like Democratic Congressmen Jim McDermott and John Conyers. For me, the first sixty

minutes were tedious but I have to interview guys like that everyday so I'm jaded.

Any skilled filmmaker, and Moore is that, could fashion a movie making any American look like a pinhead. That's easy to do. Just get a bunch of video, some people who hate the guy, some factoids that may or may not be true, heat it up with sardonic rhetoric and serve. Presto, Fahrenheit 9/11.

So let's stop with the nonsense. If you want to pay 9 bucks to see Moore carve up the President, knock yourself out. But don't be calling me up telling me about truth, or elements thereof. This is rank propaganda and the American public is welcome to it. It will not evolve any further.