

Barbarians At The Gate **by Dan Jacoby**

In the 1980s, we discovered that the Republicans didn't mean it when they claimed to want to balance the budget; instead, they gave us the largest deficits in history – and they're doing it again. In fact, the Vice President himself has said that deficits don't mean anything.

Now we discover that the Republicans don't mean it when they say they want to get government off our backs. It turns out that they only want to get government off the backs of their rich friends.

And that is the true color of the Republican party. It is the party of the wealthy, standing firmly against true middle-class values. It is the party of the privileged, standing firmly against the needs of the people. It is the party of war and mayhem, standing firmly against the ways of civilization.

It is not surprising, therefore, that when John Brady Kiesling, a diplomat with 20 years of experience around the world, resigned on the eve of our invasion of Iraq, he severely criticized the Bush administration's foreign policies. In his letter of resignation, he wrote, "The policies we are now asked to advance are incompatible not only with American values but also with American interests." He went on to say that "we have not seen such systematic distortion of intelligence, such systematic manipulation of American opinion, since the war in Vietnam."

Mr. Kiesling is no liberal puppet; he was originally hired during the Reagan administration. Nor is he an isolationist; he threatened to quit in 1994 when we didn't go into Bosnia quickly enough to suit him. Yet this man who served America for 20 years under four Presidents resigned because "I have tried and failed to reconcile my conscience with my ability to represent the current U.S. Administration."

Now we are "shocked, shocked" to find out from former Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neil that George W. Bush was gearing up to invade Iraq less than two weeks after taking the oath of office. And while the administration has circled the wagons on the issue of Secretary O'Neil's statements, they haven't denied anything. They haven't denied it because they can't.

They also can't deny that President Bush and his people falsely claimed that Iraq was buying uranium for nuclear weapons. They can't deny that Vice President Cheney misled America about Saddam Hussein's alleged weapons of mass destruction. They can't deny that this administration went out of its way to create a link between Hussein and Al Qaeda – a link that never existed. They can't deny that, despite their best efforts to fabricate evidence to the contrary, Saddam Hussein had absolutely nothing to do with the attacks of 9/11.

By the time the election rolls around, over 1,000 Americans will probably have died in Iraq. And that number will continue to climb before we finally get out of that quagmire. As far as their families and the American public are concerned, these brave men and women will have died serving their country. But as far as George W. Bush, Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, Condoleezza Rice, Karl Rove, Colin Powell, Andrew Card and the rest of the administration's top people are concerned, they will have died preserving a lie.

Toward the end of Mr. Kiesling's resignation letter, he optimistically writes, "I have confidence that our democratic process is ultimately self-correcting." We can only guess at what he means by this. But it isn't unthinkable that this Reagan appointee is hoping for a Democratic victory this fall. That would be the good news.

The bad news is that there are barbarians at the gate. The worse news is that they are the gatekeepers.

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