

## THE BUSH DEBACLE: CRITICAL REFLECTIONS ON THE FIRST MONTHS OF THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION

Chapter 11 of Douglas Kellner, *GRAND THEFT 2000*

<http://www.gseis.ucla.edu/faculty/kellner/kellner.html>

### AFTERMATH

People would submit to slavery, provided that they were respectfully assured that they still enjoyed their ancient freedom.-- Edward Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*

They underestimated me.-- George W. Bush

George W. Bush was inaugurated forty-third president of the United States on January 20, 2001, greeted with miserable weather and tens of thousands of demonstrators. Although the 700,000-plus protestors earlier forecast in a *Washington Post* (December 22) article failed to materialize, a diverse range of groups assembled in front of the Supreme Court, in parks near the parade route, and along the itinerary itself, greeting Bush with jeers and boos, a rotten egg splattering on the window of the presidential car, and signs that read "Hail to the Thief!" and "Bush Stole It." Protest was so spirited that Bush's motorcade was held up for five minutes at one point, and he was not able to get out and walk until the final leg where all the spectators were paid Republicans who had bought prime seats.

The days before the inauguration were dramatic with revelations concerning Bush's designated secretary of labor, Linda Chavez, and her illegal employment of an undocumented worker from Central America. Chavez had allowed a Guatemalan woman to live in her house and serve as a maid, while failing to pay her, thus forcing Chavez to withdraw her nomination. There were also Internet rumors that the Jeb Bush, Katherine Harris liaison would be uncovered in national tabloids just before the inauguration, but instead Tabloid Nation was treated to banner stories of Jesse Jackson's lovechild and mistress, causing Jackson to temporarily retreat from politics and to cancel participation in a voting rights rally in Tallahassee on inauguration day.

In the days leading up to Bush's coronation by Justice Rehnquist, who had helped seize the presidency for Bush, Bill Clinton cut a deal with the special prosecutor, pleaded guilty to lying in the Lewinsky affair, and was pardoned from further judicial inquisition (at least by the "special" prosecutor). Clinton then pardoned a long list of friends,

supporters, allies, and others, leading to a torrent of criticism, especially concerning his pardon of financier Marc Rich, whose ex-wife had contributed to Clinton's campaign.

In fact, the Bush propaganda machine and the full array of Clinton haters continued their daily assaults on the ex-president, attacking his pardons, gifts he'd received in the White House, his proposed New York office building, and allegations that his staff had trashed the White House after leaving office. The Bush slander patrol also alleged Clinton's people had stolen items from Air Force One on the trip to New York, which appeared for sale on the Internet shortly thereafter. These stories were headlined in the press and endlessly dissected on talk radio, television, and the Internet, overshadowing Bush's early days in the White House. Put in context, it appeared that the stories of White House vandalism were greatly exaggerated, the claim of theft on Air Force One was pure disinformation, Clinton's gifts were not significantly larger than those of Reagan and Bush senior, and, bowing to pressure, Clinton negotiated an office suite in Harlem.<sup>1</sup> There were, however, continued investigations of Clinton's pardons, especially Marc Rich, and Senator Arlen Specter darkly hinted that this deed could win Clinton a retrospective "impeachment," while others threatened legal consequences.

Bush's spin and smear specialist, Karl Rove, was well known in Texas politics for his whispering campaigns to tarnish opponents, and it was clear that the Bush public relations strategy was to tar Clinton and his administration to the maximum so that the Bush crew would look good by comparison. Bush's White House would leak rumors to friendly journalists, or those managing rightwing Web sites such as the Drudge Report, and the stories would quickly circulate and be taken up by the mainstream media; there would then be days of impassioned discussion, and eventually reputable newspapers such as the *New York Times* would publish stories deflating claims, for example, that the departing Clintonites trashed the White House or took mementos from Air Force One. Reporters looking into Clinton's last days in the White House did not find that he took any more gifts or objects from the White House than his predecessors, and W. himself was forced to concede that there was no truth to the rumor that the Clintons had stolen items from Air Force One on their last trip. But the damage had been done, and the Bushites were able to present themselves as a "clean" and virtuous contrast to the departing Clinton administration.

## HARDRIGHT

It's clearly a budget. It's got a lot of numbers on it. --  
George W. Bush

It was clear from the get-go that the Cheney, Bush team was pursuing a hardright conservative agenda, spearheaded by some of the extreme policies that Bush had soft-pedaled in his election campaign, such as a national missile defense system and war on environmental regulation. His most deeply felt and key proposal, however, was to cut taxes, and in a moment of exuberance he increased his proposed cut from \$1.3 trillion to \$1.6 trillion. While economic czar Alan Greenspan, the Ayn Rand enthusiast who many believe runs the U.S. economy, was at first reluctant to support big tax cuts and stressed

the importance of continuing to pay off the deficit, he eventually endorsed the tax cut. As the hogs gathered to feed in the federal trough, the main conflict was over how much taxes would be cut and who would get the most public wealth.<sup>2</sup>

The process recalled the first big Reagan tax cut when David Stockman, budget director, began devising across-the-board tax cuts for individuals, ending with a corporate greedfest that sent the national debt and interest rates soaring. Later, Stockman recalled, "The hogs were really feeding. The greed level, the level of opportunism just got out of control."<sup>3</sup> Indeed, in pondering Bush's brazen tax give-away-to-the-rich program, one might recall the effects of the Reagan tax cut, which helped raise unemployment and interest rates, while the stock market declined and the federal deficit soared.

The first Bush family scandal emerged on February 10, 2001, when it was announced that a Navy submarine "practicing emergency ascent" hit a Japanese fishing boat used to train students, killing nine. It was reported and confirmed by video footage that fifteen civilians were aboard the sub, and although the Navy at first refused to release their names, it was discovered that the group comprised largely Bush supporters who had contributed heavily to his campaign. Some of the civilians aboard were also members of a group headed by Bush's father that was raising money to restore the U.S. battleship *Missouri*, on which Japan surrendered at the end of World War II. It was also later reported that the civilians were at the controls of the sub when it was performing the fatal "maneuver," that the civilians had distracted the crew, and that the ascent was not really an approved military test, but a procedure to entertain the visitors. Japan was further outraged when on April 2, a U.S. nuclear submarine appeared unannounced in a Japanese port, violating an understanding between the countries. Eventually, the U.S. profusely apologized to the Japanese, and will no doubt pay millions of taxpayers' money to amend for the crime, but the crew was let off without a court-martial or harsher punishment, although senior members were disciplined.

These embarrassing stories started to circulate and replace Clinton scandal stories. Wagging the dog,<sup>4</sup> Bush bombed Iraq on February 16, attacking five Iraqi radar and military sites near Baghdad. Although Bush called the assault "a routine mission," Secretary of State Colin Powell admitted a few days later that the undertaking was "more aggressive" than the usual bombing retaliation and that he was surprised over the clamor against the strikes in the Arab world where he was visiting. The British press saw the bombing as a "tribal" attempt in "settling his father's old scores" and warned Britain against getting involved in Bush family adventurism (*Independent*, February 18, 2001). The Pentagon eventually admitted, however, that most of the bombs missed their mark.

By mid-March 2001, it was clear that there were fierce power struggles in Bush's White House, invariably resolved by the most conservative line that Cheney supported. Secretary of State Colin Powell declared that U.S. policy would "pick up where President Clinton left off" on talks with North Korea, while Bush stated flatly that he had no intentions of negotiations with Pyongyang. Similarly, Secretary Powell stated that he supported streamlined sanctions against Iraq that would get UN weapons inspections

under way again, but Cheney expressed doubts about these policies, and conservatives talked openly about taking a hard line and getting rid of Saddam Hussein.

Consequently, a hardright foreign policy reminiscent of Cold War tension at its highest emerged in Bush's first fifty days as president. In the opening weeks, Bush bombed Iraq and heightened tensions in the Middle East, threatened China, told Russia to expect reduced aid, worried much of Europe with his insistent approach to national missile defense (NMD), and made clear that he does not intend to pursue constructive negotiations with North Korea--an alleged missile threat that if reduced would question the Bush administration's harebrained missile plan. Thus, the world has returned to the hard-line Cold War paranoid universe of the military-industrial complex warned about by a departing Dwight Eisenhower, while Dr. Strangelove is alive and well in the U.S. Defense Department, concocting Star Wars missile systems that will cost trillions of dollars and have yet to be proved functional.

Bush, Cheney, and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld had also resurrected the dangerous concept of "rogue state," a concept retired by the Clinton administration, that was sure to increase tensions and the possibility of war. The dangers of the aggressive new Bush foreign policy were soon evident. On March 24, the *Washington Post* published a report that Bush had a meeting two days before with Defense Secretary Rumsfeld who was preparing a report that China had supplanted the USSR as its Number 1 Enemy and should be the focus of U.S. military policy. Some days later, an "accident" occurred when a Chinese plane and U.S. spy plane off the Chinese coast collided, and the U.S. plane, loaded with high-tech surveillance equipment and the latest military computers, made a crash landing on a Chinese off-shore island and the crew was held hostage for eleven tense days as the crew's release was negotiated.

The resulting crisis made clear the consequences of how militarist Bush administration policy and aggression toward perceived "enemies" had created a climate of hostility that could explode at any time into crisis and war. During the initial weekend of meet-the-press offensives by the Bush administration, they put out their more moderate spokespeople like Powell and National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice to explain the administration position to the media and public. Bush, incurring the wrath of the frothing right of his party, was forced to lose face and apologize for the death of the Chinese pilot.

The day after the crews' release, a highly agitated Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld was let out of the cage to emote against China. Rumsfeld was extremely agitated during a press conference in which he attacked the Chinese. His hand gesturing wildly, his foot tapping ferociously, the Strangelovian defense secretary put on display the conservative rage pulsating through his body, wanting to go nuclear. A couple of days later, Strangelove "ordered the suspension of military exchanges and contacts with the Chinese armed forces," and then abruptly reversed the order the next day "after the White House objected, Pentagon officials said" (*New York Times*, May 3, 2001). There are obviously deep divisions within the Bush administration over defense and foreign policy between the hardright and the harder right.<sup>5</sup>

Bush's top-level appointments to foreign policy positions included a who's who of rightwing zealots with a healthy dose of Iran-Contra scoundrels who were friends of his father. Richard Armitage, a close friend of Bush senior, who like the father was heavily involved in Iran-Contra, was nominated as deputy secretary of state, putting a fierce interventionist and Cold Warrior high in the State Department. Armitage has an unusually colorful history and it was quite a shock to see him return to power. During the Vietnam era he was reputed to be involved in the Phoenix assassination program, in which the U.S. systematically assassinated Vietnamese villagers believed to be associated with the Vietcong--former Senator Bob Kerrey admitted his participation in such atrocities but the media failed to make the connection with the Phoenix program and Armitage. The Phoenix program was rumored to be partially funded with drug sales and there were persistent rumors linking Armitage with drug rings and then shady arms dealers in the 1970s--his connections with drug and arms networks emerged again in the bizarre Iran-Contra operation in the 1970s and, guess what!, here we go again (on Armitage, see <http://prorev.com/bush3.htm>).

For UN ambassador, Bush nominated John Negroponte, a former ambassador to Honduras who was heavily involved in covert operations in the illegal war against the Sandinistas and has been accused of directing contra activities in Honduras and suppressing information about the Honduran military's civil rights violations and involvement in the drug trade. For assistant secretary of state for the Western Hemisphere, Bush nominated longtime anti-Castro Cuban American Otto Reich, who was also highly active in the contra war as head of the "Office for Public Diplomacy," a propaganda wing of the government for the contras. Reich has a long list of unsavory connections and there were predictions that his nomination would be blocked (*The Nation*, May 7, 2001; on Negroponte, see "Cold War Stalks Bush's U.N. Pick," *Los Angeles Times*, May 7, 2001).

John Bolton, a relentless critic of arms control, was named by Bush as undersecretary of state for arms control and international security. Jesse Helms endorsed the candidate as "the kind of man with whom I would want to stand at Armageddon" (*Boston Globe*, April 2, 2001), a statement not likely to calm those worried about nuclear war. Those concerned about the effects of genetically engineered foods and biotechnology were not cheered when Bush appointed a Monsanto executive, a leading developer of biotech foods, for the second-ranking job at the Environmental Protection Agency, letting in the foxes again to guard the hen-house. And to properly award his Supreme Court Godfathers, Bush responded to the Scalia, Rehnquist coup by appointing Eugene Scalia, Don Scalia's son, as solicitor of labor, the top legal position at the Department of Labor, while Janet Rehnquist, the Chief Executioner's daughter, was nominated to be inspector general of the Department of Health and Human Services. No subtlety or false decorum for the brazen Bush syndicate, ruled by the law of properly greased hands.

As for Bush administration embassy appointments, *USA Today* (May 4, 2001) reported that "Bush is rewarding Republican donors and loyalists with plum ambassadorships at an unprecedented pace. Of 27 ambassadors announced so far, 22 went to people with political or personal connections and no diplomatic experience." Thus, while appointment

to an ambassadorship usually requires an advanced degree in international studies, fluency in one or more foreign languages, expertise in the history and culture of a region, years of experience in the foreign service, and proven diplomatic ability, in Bush's case it was buds and campaign contributors who got the plums. Major GOP donors who received ambassadorships include Richard Egan, who contributed \$491,100 and was nominated ambassador to Ireland; Charles Heimbold Jr. contributed \$367,200 and was awarded Sweden; and John Palmer got Portugal for \$167,850. Howard Leach, a San Francisco investment banker who put up \$282,000 for Bush and other Republicans last year, was rewarded with France (une scandale: le mec ne parle pas franÀ'Àais!). Leach also was one of W.'s "pioneers"--the insider group of corporate fat cats who collected at least \$100,000 for his campaign.

Bush was also considering awarding ambassadorships to two of his buddies who had supported his major business ventures, helping bail Bush out of failure in the oil business when his company went bust in 1984 and then helping to raise money so that Bush and associates could buy the Texas Rangers baseball team. Former business partner Mercer Reynolds was nominated as ambassador to Switzerland and while it was rumored that biz bud and baseball team owner William DeWitt would also be offered an ambassadorship, Dewitt reportedly said that "he has no intention of following his business partner into striped-pants service for his old pal George W. Bush" (*St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, March 22, 2001).

On the domestic front, Bush's chief of staff, Andrew Card, announced that Bush was phasing out offices for AIDS policy and race relations, but the resulting uproar forced the new administration to backtrack and retract. Bush then called for cutting off aid for birth control and prenatal counseling for women in developing countries, throwing red ideological meat to his salivating anti-abortion fanatics. He next overturned "ergonomic regulation reform" that Clinton had signed, to the great joy of business but to the dismay of labor, and put into jeopardy funding for Advanced Technology, a research-and-development fund for high-tech. To assure continuation of the Clinton wars, Bush's attorney general, John Ashcroft, undertook steps to harass Clinton with investigations of every one of his 177 pardons. On March 16, Bush's legal advisers told the American Bar Association that they wanted to end the group's role as a semiofficial screening panel for judicial nominees, and they geared up to pack the judiciary with hard-core conservatives recommended by the ultraconservative legal group the Federalist Society. Just as on legal issues the hardright Federalist Society emerged as highly influential, it was clear that the conservative Independent Women's Forum was serving as the most powerful force on women's issues. Its project was to attack feminist organizations and cut back the Violence Against Women Act and efforts to help girls in schools, claiming that it is boys, not girls, who are shortchanged in education. The national advisory board of the foundation is headed by rightwing ideologue Christina Hoff Sommers and includes Labor Secretary Elaine Chao, Linda Chavez, and Lynne Cheney as member-emerita. Many members of the organization have entered the Bush administration and others are under consideration. The Bush administration also closed the White House Women's Office of Initiatives and Outreach, signaling an intention to undo the progress made for women during the Clinton

period. The office had encouraged all women, regardless of party affiliation, to participate in government and had encouraged programs that would benefit women.<sup>6</sup>

With divisiveness accelerating over Bush's "faith-based" aid program, key senators attacked Bush's plan to channel more government money to charities, a plan that had religious groups and secularists alike up in arms. On March 13, Bush broke a promise to cut carbon dioxide emissions standards from power plants, a pledge that would have addressed growing global warming but that Bush's supporters in the power industry and conservatives opposed. The next day, Bush called for expanded drilling rights under national monuments, providing another boon to his oil-biz contributors. Bush also declared himself against stem cell research, which would use cells from human fetuses to attempt to find cures for intractable diseases such as cancer and Alzheimer's and which his secretary of health and human services and the entire scientific community support.

On March 20, Bush stopped implementation of new rules scheduled to reduce the level of arsenic in drinking water, returning to regulations adopted in 1942 that allow what is now perceived as a dangerous level of arsenic in drinking water. In another concession to the mining industry, the Bush administration suspended tougher standards for hardrock miners digging for gold and silver on public lands and called for suspension of surface mining regulation that included forcing hardrock miners to post financial bonds guaranteeing that they would clean up water and other environmental damage, leading one critic to claim that "The barbarians are no longer at the gates, the barbarians have taken over."

Revealing what "compassionate conservatism" and his pledge to "leave no child behind" meant in practice, Bush cut child care grants by \$200 million, reduced spending on programs dealing with child abuse by \$15.7 million, planned to eliminate the \$20 million provided by Congress for improved child care and education for preschool children, and planned "to cut to the bone a \$235 million program to train pediatricians and doctors at the nation's children's hospitals" (see [http://www.salon.com/mwt/feature/2001/03/23/child\\_cuts/index.html](http://www.salon.com/mwt/feature/2001/03/23/child_cuts/index.html)). On a hardright freefall, the Bush administration also dropped testing in school lunch programs for salmonella in ground beef, eliminating a program "that caught five million pounds of meat that had salmonella in it last year," and allowed schools to use irradiated beef that many believed to be dangerous (*New York Times*, April 5, 2001).

After a flurry of attacks on their war on the environment, the Bushites checked their focus-group and polling results, pulled back on environmental extremism, and just in time for Earth Day declared that they would follow some of the Clinton environmental regulations. But the message was clear that the Bush regime was paying off their big business contributors and were prepared to undo regulatory gains of the past decade. Big Oil had contributed millions, and the electric utility and coal-mining industries gave nearly \$560,000 to Bush; he responded by refusing to put price caps on oil and energy prices, thus allowing these robber barons to gouge consumers with sky-high profits based on grotesque price hikes, which, if Bush's tax bill went through, would multiply their ill-gotten gain immensely. The forest-products industry contributed \$300,000, and Bush

responded by suspending new bans on road building and logging in national forests, and as he continued to produce policies favorable to his biggest contributors, it was clear that investment in the Bush machine would pay off.

Meanwhile, Bush continued to push his shameful \$1.6 trillion giveaway where 1 percent of the country would reap around 39 percent of the benefits. Furthermore, it had become clear that Bush, traveling more than any president in history to sell his economic and military "plans," is not in charge, and when Dick Cheney had a heart attack in mid-March there was intense concern. Days later the stock market felt the panic, with the Dow falling below 10,000 for the first time in years while the NASDAQ continued to plunge, losing half of its wealth from its high of last year. Every sane economist has attacked Bush's \$1.6 trillion tax-giveaway-to-the-rich, but the dumb son continued to pitch it to large audiences, who applauded lower tax bills as the U.S. economy carefully nurtured over the past decade of sane economics and political policies goes to hell.<sup>7</sup>

It was thus clear that Bush was putting out to the max for his corporate contributors who had funded his campaign. To the energy industry clients who had contributed so much to his election, Bush went back on his pledge to toughen CO<sub>2</sub> emission standards and was even brazen enough to suggest that national monuments in the U.S. National Park System be opened for energy exploration, that drilling underneath monuments is A-OK for the corporate Johns as long as they keep greasing Bush's palms. The credit card industry, which had contributed heavily to Bush's campaign, got its payback in mid-March when Congress approved stricter bankruptcy laws, making it easier for Bush's corporate buddies to seize homes and property of individuals not able to pay debts. And of course Bush's continual pushing of his tax cuts and deregulatory agenda showed that the Whore in Chief was prepared to do anything to please his high-paying clients.

In fact, Bushian politics is simple: You contribute X number of dollars and you get X dollars worth of favors; then you contribute XX dollars again so that the round of public theft of the federal coffers and government-supported extortion of consumers can begin anew to the enrichment of the Bush election team and his corporate-crook supporters. If you contribute enough money, like Kenneth Ray of Enron, you can call the head of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) to dictate policy so that the energy producers and middlemen can maximize their manipulation of supply and demand, extortion of markets, and continuing soaring profits at the expense of consumers and the states; if that doesn't work, you can call Dick Cheney to demand a new head of the energy agency to do your bidding. (This extortion scheme by the Cheney, Bush and Enron Robber Barons was exposed by a June 2001 PBS *Frontline*, "The California Energy Crisis.") The cycle of getting money from corporate contributors, giving them favors, and receiving more money to mobilize votes to win more elections, and then providing a new round of tax breaks for the rich, deregulation, and hardright policies could go on forever, ensuring brazen robbery of federal wealth, shameless pandering to corporate donors, and ever more whorish government in Washington.

The sluttish Bush has long been a for-sale kinda guy. As governor of Texas, he promiscuously consented to the demands of his major campaign contributors, resulting in

the worst environmental record in the country, the gutting of state regulatory agencies, the depletion of the state surplus after distributing large tax breaks to the wealthiest sectors, and a bonanza of special favors to large benefactors. Bush's largesse to his corporate Johns often raised eyebrows, even in the corrupt Lone Star State, and in one case resulted in a full-scale scandal. In what has become known as Funeralgate, Bush tried to get his state regulators to lay off an investigation of Service Corporation International (SCI), whose CEO, Robert Waltrip was a longtime friend and contributor to Bush's father who had also contributed to W.'s campaign. The head of the Texas Funeral Service Commission, Eliza May, however, undertook investigation of SCI's funeral homes, due to complaints about their shoddy service, including using unlicensed embalmers. May requested documents from the company, Waltrip went off in a rage to Austin where Bush, the CEO, and his chief of staff, Joe Allbaugh, met up and within an hour May received a message to call Allbaugh. May was asked by several of Bush's senior aides to call off the investigation; she persisted and fined SCI \$450,000, but the company got a ruling in court from Bush's close ally, Attorney General John Cornyn, that dropped the fine. Shortly thereafter, May was fired; she sued, and questions are being raised about the extent of Bush's role in the case (see Dubose and Ivins 2000: 101, 6).

On May 1, while the rest of the world had May Day celebrations and there was an unusual outbreak of antiglobalization protests, Congress passed the largest tax cut in over 20 years, a \$1.3 trillion reduction, and Chimp smirked with satisfaction. The same day, the Resident-in-Thief announced that he was going ahead with his Star Wars missile defense program, which had already wasted \$100 billion and would cost over \$100 billion more over the next years. On May 2, W. triumphantly touted agreement on a budget plan, allowing federal spending to grow by 5 percent next year. Evidently, someone had forgotten to tell Boy George that Daddy had condemned the combination of a giant tax break for the rich, an increased federal budget, and mushrooming military spending as "voodoo economics," and that it just wasn't possible to do all at once. But once again the nation was engaged in debate over whether a never-tested missile defense system made sense, whether it was wise to declare the end of the ABM Treaty, and how the proliferation of new weapons could be paid for.

The common denominator, of course, is that the rich in general, and the Bush machine corporate and military-industrial complex friends in particular, would benefit hugely from the puppet's largess in federal give-aways, probably the largest and most irresponsible in history. And while Bush attacked Gore and the Clinton administration during the first presidential debate for renting out the Lincoln Bedroom in the White House to donors, Bush contributors who kick in at least \$15,000 to a Republican campaign committee will be invited to the White House for a "private reception" and photo opportunity with Don Evans, secretary of commerce and Bush's previous campaign manager. Big donors also get meetings with Bush cabinet members and can buy "the exclusive opportunity to dine with diplomats and embassy officials." A donor can also buy time with influential GOP senators; for \$5,000 "you can go play golf with Majority Leader Trent Lott next weekend in Hilton Head" (*Washington Post*, May 6, 2001).

There had been much Republican condemnation of the Clinton administration using the White House for fund-raising, so it was not surprising that there was a barrage of criticism in May 2001 when it was disclosed that Dick Cheney was using the vice presidential mansion for Republican fund-raising. As to why the Bush administration did not use the White House, NBC comic Jay Leno explained that Cheney "originally wanted to hold the party at the White House, but the donors that gave \$100,000 . . . said, 'No, no! For the kind of money we're spending, we want to meet the top guy!'"

Thus, the Bush administration was aggressively pursuing hardright social policies to placate its conservative partisans, while providing its corporate supporters and contributors federal money, deregulation, and whatever other favors they had purchased from the Bushites. While rightwing commentators cluck-clucked about Clinton's pardons and hinted that they may have been purchased with donations or payoffs, they turned their back on the whoring carried out on an unprecedentedly brazen and shameless level by Bush, Cheney, and others for sale in the Bush brothel.

While the U.S. media went down on bended knee for Bush during his first 100 days in office, blistering attacks appeared in the global press. In the conservative *Times* of London (April 5, 2001), Anatole Kaletsky wrote a withering critique, arguing: "By simultaneously destabilising global security in China, Korea, the Middle East and Russia, by recklessly abrogating the Kyoto climate change treaty, by bullying his allies in Europe and Asia, by pursuing a tax policy that will turn America into the most unequal society in modern history, George W. Bush is fully living up to my expectation that he would become the worst U.S. President since Herbert Hoover." Polly Toynbee wrote in *The Guardian* (April 4, 2001):

In his own inimitable words, let no one "misunderestimate" George W. Bush. He is the most rightwing president in living memory. If this is compassionate conservatism, what does the other sort look like? In less than 100 days he has turned America into a pariah, made enemies of the entire world, his only friends the dirty polluters of the oil industry who put him there. His foreign non-policy is a calamity, brilliantly uniting Russia and China with gratuitous offence and threat.

*Der Spiegel* in Germany presented a cover story on Bush as "the little sheriff," and referred to the Bush administration as "snarling, ugly Americans." The French Foreign Minister said that the refusal of the Bush administration to abide by the Kyoto protocol is "not so much isolationist as unilateralist." And, showing righteous contempt for Bush administration arrogance and aggression, the UN booted the United States out of the UN Commission on Human Rights for the first time since its founding in 1947, and then took away the U.S. seat on an international drug monitoring body.

Attacking Bush's policies, misstatements, and comportment in office, Jonathan Freedland described the "Presidency of dunces" (*Guardian*, April 25, 2001), concluding that: "It is an appalling record, assembled in less than 14 weeks. What it amounts to is the wish list of the wealth wing of the Republican party, granted in full. Big business does not just have influence over this administration--it is this administration." One-upping his

*Guardian* colleague, Henry Porter complained (May 6, 2001) that the reaction around the world to Bush's speech proclaiming that the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty of 1972 was no longer appropriate "contained a common element and that was indignation that the fragile structures and trust of the nuclear stand-off had been ended by a man with neither the intellect nor humility which this issue requires. Slim Shady and his chainsaw were now in charge of world peace."

The United States was now considered a rogue nation by much of the world. Bush's roguish State Department official Richard Armitage was bombarded by eggs in Korea and once again the "ugly American" was the image abroad of U.S. citizens, thanks to Bush administration unilateralist policy. Bush's refusal to honor the Kyoto Treaty and decades of antinuclear agreements led to criticisms that the United States was exhibiting "hostile isolationism," "great-power greed," and casting itself as an "unrepentant outlaw." A British Labour Party lawmaker called the Bush blast against nuclear arms agreements the "equivalent to launching a nuclear attack whose missiles will land across the globe over the next 30 years," and a variety of groups called for an international boycott of American products (*Los Angeles Times*, March 31, 2001).

During May 2001, the Bush administration warned U.S. citizens about the dangers of traveling abroad because of terrorism, unintentionally signaling the price paid for aggressive U.S. policy. On the home front, since Bush political adviser Karl Rove was a longtime shill for the tobacco industry, there was little likelihood that there would be tobacco protection for U.S. citizens. As energy and gas prices soared and California and other parts of the country faced energy blackouts, Cheney and Bush refused to curb prices or promote any meaningful energy policies, guaranteeing billions for their Robber Baron friends in the oil and energy industry, who would pocket billions more if the Bush, Cheney tax cuts went through, threatening the viability of the U.S. economy.

One of the euphemisms of Bushspeak is the Resident-in-Thief's constant invocation, "I have a plan." In fact, Bush has no plans but to perform his soundbites of the day. The "plans" of the Bush administration are to rob the federal treasury and the people for rapacious robber barons--that includes their own friends, families, and corporate allies. Hence, when you hear Bush intone, "I have an energy plan," or "I have a missile defense plan," be aware that this is a plan concocted by Cheney, Rumsfeld, or others to rob billions, to enrich greedy corporations who in turn will be expected to contribute millions to Bush and the Republicans and to keep the merry cycle of robbery going until people wise up and see they are being ripped off and taken on a ride.

Cheney's "energy plan" amounted to unleashing the oil, gas, and energy industries' ability to increase production without consideration for environmental concerns, which enabled the government to take over private property to build plants and transmission, and which thus undid decades of environmental regulation, without meaningful concern for energy conservatism or alternative energy sources. The theft of federal resources, treasury, and people's wallets was in full swing by summer 2001, along with the hardright takeover of government. All of this was perfectly predictable, and had the media informed the public of the full thrust and destructiveness of the Bush, Cheney agenda it is likely that many

voters would have not fallen for the "compassionate conservative," "uniter and not divider," and "new kind of Republican" Bushspeak with which the tawdry Texan sold his candidacy. But the Bush machine successfully stole the election and could now go on to rob the country.

By late May, it was clearly apparent that Bush was a divider and not a uniter, as Senator Jim Jeffords (R-Vt.) jumped parties, abandoning the hardright Republican blitzkrieg and providing ecstatic Democrats with the control of the Senate. Suddenly the Hardright Cheney, Bush Express encountered obstacles to stacking the courts with rabid conservatives, undoing environmental regulations of the past decades, creating a space-based missile system, and providing unlimited resources and favors to their corporate contributors while screwing everyone else. Most important, one of Bush's Big Lies was unraveling, in the exposure of his false claim that he had been able to work in Texas to bring Republicans and Democrats together to "get things done," and that he would do the same in a "bipartisan" fashion in Washington. In fact, in Texas Bush twisted the arms of conservative Democrats to go along with his hardright agenda and those who did not he ignored. In Washington Bush's plan was to pick up a couple of conservative Democrats for his hardright agenda, which required that all Senate Republicans stay on board the Far-right Express. When Jeffords and other moderates balked, they were subject to ferocious attack, driving Jeffords to abandon the Republicans, with others threatening to leave.

Bush had also campaigned on "changing the tone in Washington," and after his first 100 days he repeatedly bragged about how he *had* changed the tone in Washington. In fact, Bush's administration began with blatant lies and personal attacks on departing Clinton staff members, who allegedly trashed the White House and Air Force One upon leaving office, setting up a propaganda frame that the unruly and immature Clintonites had left and that order and decorum had been returned to Washington with the arrival of the Bush administration. In fact, George W. Bush, Karl Rove, and other of Bush's political advisers are among the most vicious, vengeful, and uncivil in U.S. politics. Bush and Rove have a history in Texas of viciously going after their opponents, often with slime and lies, as in their successful campaign against Ann Richards (see Dubose and Ivins 2000). Bush/Rove were notorious in the Chotner/Atwateresque dirty lies slandering of John McCain in the South Carolina primaries where they leaked ugly stories that McCain was unbalanced as a result of his imprisonment in Vietnam, that he had betrayed Vietnam veterans, that his wife was an addict, and that they had a black child (they had indeed adopted a dark-skinned daughter whose picture was circulated in South Carolina; see Simon 2001: 109ff). When Jim Jeffords left this disgusting cabal of slimers after repeated attack and bullying, and threw the balance of power to the Democrats in the Senate, he was subjected to an unparalleled barrage of insults, vilification, and even threats on his life--behavior typical of the Bushites who had "raised the tone" and created a "more civilized" Washington.

It was also clear by May 2001 that Bushspeak was not only the rhetoric of campaigning (see chapter 9), but constituted Bush's mode of governmental discourse as well. Bushspeak involves blatant Big Lies and cooking statistics. As Princeton University

economics professor and *New York Times* economic columnist Paul Krugman argues: the "fiscal predictions that enable Bush to pay for his tax cut and contingency fund are not mere errors but deliberate efforts to deceive the public. The Bush administration understands better than anyone that if its math were honest, its tax cut could never pass." Krugman argued that the Bush figures were misleading in terms of its budget projections for a surplus; the amount of money needed for meeting Social Security and Medicare obligations; and the budgetary impact of the tax cut on the federal budget and paying off the deficit.<sup>8</sup>

Throughout the selling of this tax cut, its advocates have engaged in a disinformation campaign unprecedented in the history of U.S. economic policy--misrepresenting who would benefit from the plan (pretending that a tax cut mainly for the rich is actually aimed at the middle class) and understating its effects on revenue. Indeed, the pretense that taxes can be sharply cut without undermining the fiscal integrity of the nation has been maintained through a financial fakery that, if practiced by the executives of any publicly traded company would have landed them in jail. . . . This is white-collar crime, pure and simple. We should call in the Securities and Exchange Commission, and send the whole crew . . . to a minimum-security installation somewhere unpleasant. (May 27, *New York Times*)

Bush had derided Gore's tax cut that would most benefit low-income and middle-class families who needed tax breaks and would support energy-efficiency and other socially valuable ends as "only benefiting special people, only those they want to choose," while Bush's plan "would benefit everyone." In point of fact, Bush's tax scam pays off those upper-income people and corporations who the Bush gang chooses, although no one has yet figured out exactly who is going to benefit the most in what informed commentators have derided as the most confusing and gimmicky tax bill in memory. There is little doubt, however, that Bush's major contributors and allies have made sure that *they* are getting the breaks, that the benefits will go into their bank accounts, while the public is bamboozled and flim-flammed by Bushspeak and the Bush propaganda machine.

A study by the Citizens for Tax Justice reported that almost half of those in the bottom 60 percent of income earners will receive no tax rebates, while the top 20 percent of taxpayers will get the full promised rebate, with the top 1 percent getting the lion's share (*Washington Post*, May 31, 2001: A7). A *Business Week* commentator derided the bill's "gimmickry and false promises, describing it as "the most disappointing piece of tax legislation I've ever seen" (June 1, 2001). *USA Today* cited Robert Greenspan, director of the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities, who concluded that: "None of us can remember any major budget or tax bill in recent history that comes close to this bill in the magnitude of budget gimmicks included" (May 31, 2001). Other critics noted how the tax bill will bust the current budget and allows no allocations for promised defense programs and education (*Washington Post*, May 28, 2001: A1). Bloomberg.com cited a former IRS commissioner who described it as "the most confusing bill ever" and a *Christian Science Monitor* commentator described it as "one of the most convoluted pieces of legislation ever produced by the peculiar machinery of Washington fiscal politics" (June 7, 2001).

And subverting his own plan to have faith-based charities replace welfare and social programs, the bill eliminated \$90 billion in charitable tax breaks!

During the weekend of June 2,3, while all hell was breaking out in the Middle East, Bush retreated to Camp David with his parents and two teenage daughters, who had been busted for attempting to buy alcohol with a fake ID the week before, with the wild(er) twin, Jenna, facing jail due to Draconian Bushian Texas legislation that three criminal citations for drinking could land teenagers in jail thanks to a "zero tolerance" bill in Texas passed by Bush. Returning to the capital on Sunday night, Bush rushed to the event that was of utmost importance to his presidency, playing T-ball on the White House lawn with Little Leaguers and Hall of Famers. Meanwhile, violence escalated in the Middle East, energy prices soared, California faced energy blackouts, and poll support plunged with an ABC/*Washington Post* poll showing Bush's overall rating dropping 8 points over the past month, with 58 percent opposing his energy policies and 40 percent viewing the Democrats takeover of the Senate as "a good thing," while only 20 percent perceived the Republican loss as "a bad thing."

Bush's promises and rhetoric in his December 14, 2000, "victory speech" in Austin, Texas, after Gore's concession, make an instructive contrast to the reality of his administration. Bush promised to "set a new tone" in Washington and to overcome "the bitterness and partisanship of the past." Bush did set a new tone--which was to increase bitterness and partisanship as a result of his hardright agenda. Bush promised in his victory speech a bipartisan agenda that would first pursue education, and then social security and medicare reform, followed by tax cuts, since on the former issues there was more bipartisan agreement. In reality, Bush pushed hardest for his divisive tax cuts and antienvironmental and anticonsumer energy program, benefiting his wealthiest and most powerful contributors.

Bush promised in his victory speech to "work hard" for the bipartisan agenda, and while his handlers have worked very hard for his hardright agenda, Bush keeps slacking and limiting his involvement to cosmetic appearances and salesmanship, just as he did for seven years in Austin. Bush had the audacity in his victory speech to quote Thomas Jefferson and speak of commitment to a "sense of purpose," to "stand for principle," and to "do great good for freedom and harmony." So far, Bush's purpose has been to enrich the feeding-trough of his richest corporate contributors; his principles are to follow the hardright and screw the moderates; and the "freedom" he has promoted involves the untrammelled sovereignty of oil, gas, and energy producers to gouge consumers and states to the maximum, and the freedom of corporations from pesky environmental regulations that blocked their raping of the land and irresponsible exploitation of natural resources.

In the area of foreign policy, Bush evoked "American responsibilities" and the "promise of America" (a phrase used by progressive Herbert Crowley). In reality, Bush pursued a highly irresponsible politics of unilateralism that renounced global environmental treaties, rejected arms limitations treaties, recklessly pushed ahead to build a missile defense system strongly opposed by U.S. allies, and accelerated tensions with Iraq, North Korea, China, and Russia to generate "enemies" that would justify a missile defense

system and increased military spending. During a June 2001 trip to Europe, Bush was savaged by the foreign, and even U.S. press, for his policies, encountered demonstrations against his administration, and has clearly emerged as the most embarrassing U.S. president in recent history, held in contempt by a growing number of world leaders and peoples.

And as for the "reasonable," "honorable," and bipartisan" politics that Bush promised in his victory speech in Austin and January inauguration speech, the Bush administration has proven itself to be the most dishonorable and mendacious in recent history. Already Bush has broken all of his promises in his December 13 Texas Legislature speech where he first defined his presidency. Bush's "political strategist," Karl Rove, joins Nixon's campaign manager, Murray Chotiner, as the sleaziest political operative in history, the master of the slime and slander--a technique that Rove honed in Texas politics, applied to John McCain in the Republican primaries and then to Al Gore during Election 2000, and aimed at the Clinton's as they left office. Rove is not only the numero uno slime maestro in U.S. politics, but is the most consistent and radical proponent of the Big Lie since Goebbels and Hitler. Lying is not just an accidental side-policy of Bushian politics, a normal business-as-usual where white lies and bending the truth are part of political normalcy (Wink! Wink!), where everyone does it and no one could expect norms of truth to govern all the time. No, Bushspeak lying is Big-Time Mendacity, the Big Lie as the politics of everyday spinning, lying as the very substance of Bushspeak.

We now see in retrospect that Bush was never a compassionate conservative, he is a hardright radical whose record in Texas, and so far as president, shows no compassion whatsoever for the poor and oppressed, for workers and working mothers, for children and the aged, for prisoners and the wayward, or for the environment or democratic polity. The Bush administration has no compassion toward anyone except the tobacco companies, the oil and energy companies, and the Republican Party and Bush crime syndicate that steal as much as they can from the federal treasury to reward their allies and contributors in the theft of an election, Grand Theft 2000.<sup>9</sup>

#### THE FLORIDA RECOUNT (Cont'd)

The great thing about America is everybody should vote. --  
George W. Bush

While the media and the political establishment were eager to get on with business as usual, in response to criticisms of illegitimacy and complaints about the election, the Republican mantra was "get over it." In a visit to William Daley's Chicago just after the inauguration, Bill Clinton congratulated Daley on the Gore campaign and said that Gore would have won the election if the votes were counted. In early February, the new head of the Democratic National Committee, Terry McAuliffe, attacked the Florida fiasco and promised "voter intimidation hearings all over the country" and broad electoral reform. Web site democrats.com posted Al Gore's steadily increasing margin of victory in Florida, as news organizations inspected the ballots in various regions of the state.

Many media and political organizations wanted to count the ballots after the Supreme Court halted the tallying of the never-counted undervotes and awarded the presidency to Bush by a five-to-four decision. While there were some Republican attempts to end the "inspection" of the ballots after the premature closing down of the vote counting, Florida's "sunshine laws" allowed inspection of ballots, and many media and political organizations paid local counties for the right to examine them. Hence, a wide range of groups undertook to see who would have prevailed if a fair hand count had been taken of the ballots throughout the state of Florida.

The first count of untabulated ballots in Lake County after the election by the *Orlando Sentinel* found 376 discarded ballots that "were clearly intended as votes for Gore," with another 246 such ballots showing votes for Bush, which would have yielded Gore a gain of 130 votes (December 19). Gore gained 120 more votes than Bush in a recount of Hillsborough County's disputed presidential undervotes done by the *Tampa Tribune* (December 30). The *Orlando Sentinel* undertook further recount operations, tallying overvotes as well as undervotes in some "inspections." They found that overvotes were regularly yielding more votes for Gore even in Republican-dominated counties that had optical-scan systems. Mickey Kaus concluded in an article in *Slate* that had Gore pursued a statewide recount of under- and overvotes he would have won in a walk (December 28).

While initial inspections focused on the undervotes that the Florida Supreme Court had mandated should be counted throughout the state of Florida, a consortium of eight press organizations (*New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Wall Street Journal*, Associated Press, Tribune Company, CNN, *St. Petersburg Times*, and *Palm Beach Post*) planned a recount of the overvotes as well as the undervotes. A study by the *Washington Post* (January 27, 2001) in eight of Florida's largest counties of the overvotes had indicated that Gore's name was punched on more than 46,000 of the double-punched ballots while Bush's name was punched on 17,000 of them.

One group, democrats.com, was also counting overvotes, and in an inspection of overvotes in Gadsden County they found forty smudged ballots for Gore, eliminating the vote, and no smudged ballots for Bush, leading the group to suggest "official misconduct." Focusing on evidence of voter fraud, group members examined overvotes where punching out an extra chad or marking an optical scan would eliminate votes; they were suspicious that a large number of overvotes deprived Gore of so many votes.<sup>10</sup> The group was also searching for evidence of a concerted effort by unregistered and ineligible members of the Cuban community to vote for Bush in retaliation for the Clinton administration's seizure of Elian Gonzalez and his return to Cuba. A rightwing group, Judicial Watch, was also investigating voter fraud in South Florida involving felons who voted for Gore (on these surveys, see Anthony York, "The Florida Recount Continues!" *Salon*, January 17, 2001).

Surprisingly, an inspection by the *Palm Beach Post* (January 14, 2001) of the 10,600 previously uncounted ballots in Miami, Dade County revealed that Bush would have picked up six votes and that the majority of undervotes appeared to register no choice. A later inspection funded by the *Miami Herald* and *USA Today* indicated that Gore gained

only 49 votes in the recounting of the 10,644 Miami, Dade undervotes. These results suggested that the Republican "bourgeois riot" that stopped the Miami, Dade manual counting of untallied ballots was not necessary and that had Bush agreed to the recount of the four counties proposed by the Democrats he might have narrowly won.<sup>11</sup>

However, an array of inspections throughout Florida suggests that Gore would have decisively won if the Florida Supreme Court recount had not been stopped. A study by the *Palm Beach Post* (January 27, 2001) indicated that examination of the 4,513 ballots declared "no vote" in Palm Beach County showed that closer inspection and a liberal chad standard would have yielded Gore 682 votes. A *Miami Herald* study (January 28, 2001) revealed that spoiled ballots that had been invalidated because of misalignment between card and ballot holder had cost Gore 316 votes; the report indicated that there was evidence of both machine error in the ballot alignment problems and voter error. An *Orlando Sentinel* (January 28, 2001) inquiry concluded that in a study of discarded votes in the state's fifteen counties with the highest rate of error Gore would have picked up 366 votes. A later survey by the newspaper in Orange County (February 11, 2001) disclosed that Gore would have picked up a net gain of 203 votes from inspections of 799 ballots rejected by voting machines.

Many of the votes were lost in smaller, rural areas that accounted for 8.6 percent of the state's lost ballots. The *Orlando Sentinel* inspection indicated that an optical-scanning system used in fifteen of Florida's sixty-seven counties resulted in 5.7 percent of all ballots being rejected, compared with a 3.9 percent rejection rate in counties that used punch cards, due to voters writing in the names, erasing votes, or making other errors. Thus, while the punch-card machines regularly created undervotes, the optical-scan system seemed to be generating large numbers of overvotes.

On April 4, 2001, the *Miami Herald* and *USA Today* released their recounts of the entire undervotes in Florida and their headlines, repeated in the Associated Press, *New York Times*, and most major newspapers, suggested that results indicated that Bush would have legitimately won the election if all undervotes throughout Florida had been counted. But closer inspection of the story showed that the study claimed that if the loosest interpretation was used that counted every uncounted ballot with a hanging chad, indentation, or dimple, that Bush would have won by 1,665 votes. Whereas if the strictest standard that only counted clear punched-through had been used, Gore would have won by three votes, and if the more liberal standard had been applied in all counties, including Broward and Palm Beach, Gore would have won by 393 votes. Critics of the papers' recount argued that two courts in Florida had dismissed the most lenient standards and noted that if the overvotes had been counted it would have been a clear victory for Gore (a full recount of undervotes and overvotes by a consortium of major newspapers has not yet been completed).

The *Miami Herald/USA Today* inspections of the ballots suggested that assumptions of both the Bush and Gore camp were erroneous in regard to where their respective votes might be found in the uncounted ballots. The April 4 results indicated that many would-be Bush voters had made mistakes in their ballots, as had Gore voters, raising again the

issue of voter literacy and the need for voter education. An April 5 *USA Today* follow-up on the recount indicated that: "Voters in Florida's majority-black precincts were nearly four times as likely to have their 2000 presidential election ballots invalidated than voters in precincts that are overwhelmingly made up of white voters." A *New York Times* report on April 5 headlined that "Counties Can't Account for All Ballots Reported in 2000," noting that "only 8 of the 67 Florida counties were able to produce for inspection the exact number of undervotes they reported on election night" and that 330 undervotes were missing in Orange County, 137 in Hillsborough, and 67 in Pinellas, disclosing once again the diciness of Florida's antiquated system of voting.

Most startling, however, were studies conducted by the *Orlando Sentinel*. On May 7, 2001, they reported that more than 10,000 mismarked or torn absentee ballots that counting machines couldn't read were duplicated to feed into voting machines and tabulate, more than 2,400 in Escambia County alone. This means that local canvassing boards took ballots that were torn, smudged, and even mangled in which they could discern "clear intent" and reproduced the "intended" votes on clean ballots so that machines could tabulate the votes and the votes could be counted. Since this operation was done primarily in Republican counties and since Bush dominated absentee ballots by a 2,1 margin, hundreds, maybe thousands, of votes were "manufactured" for Bush!

The previous day, May 6, the *Orlando Sentinel* published an article that documented how the optical-scan machines were not properly programmed to identify misvotes and provide the possibility of correction, especially in poor districts that were largely African American. They found that thousands of votes were wasted in poorer Florida counties because of misprogramming of optical scan machines, "bad pens," and other machine errors, costing Gore scores of votes.

Vote counting was extremely chaotic in Florida after the initial dead-heat election. Although all 67 counties were mandated to recount the ballots after the election night draw in Florida, Nick Baldick of the Gore campaign claimed that in 20 Florida counties the recount never took place (Simon 2001, 259), while a *Washington Post* study concluded: "18 of the state's 67 counties never recounted the ballots at all. They simply checked their original results. To this day, more than 1.58 million votes have not been counted a second time" (June 1, 2001: A1). The *Post* study also pointed out that although some counties had sophisticated technology designed to catch ballot errors, some switched off the mechanism. "Eight counties printed Spanish ballots for large blocs of Hispanic voters, but one elections supervisor chose not to do so. In 26 counties, ballots were disqualified if people voted for a candidate and wrote in the same candidate's name on their ballots" (June 1, 2001: A1).

Further, it was reported that in 8 counties, mostly Republican, there were manual recounts after the first machine recounting, gaining Bush hundreds of votes, even though the Republicans did everything they could to block the manual recounts in the four largely Democratic counties that the Gore campaign had requested. While there had been no formal requests of either side of counting overvotes, Jackson County tallied overvotes on election night, boosting Bush's total (Tapper 2001: 452). Although a ferocious battle

went on in public over the tallying of absentee ballots, many of which did not contain legally required signatures, witnesses, or postmarks, some Republican counties quietly added illegal absentee ballots to the totals, leading a *Washington Post* reporter to conclude: "Without his Thanksgiving stuffing, Bush would have fallen behind. Gore would have had a lead of 22 votes--a lead that could have changed the entire public relations dynamic" (2001: 133). A later *Washington Post* inspection of the ballots found that many military absentee ballots were counted which were mailed after the required November 7 election date and that scores more were counted without postmarks. The *Post* even found a sailor who admitted mailing his ballot a week after the election hoping to help elect Bush and discovered that his ballot was found to be tallied in the Duval County results (June 1, 2001)!

Edward T. Foote II, chancellor of the University of Miami and co-chair of a task force appointed by Florida governor Jeb Bush to study the election, concluded: "It was different systems, with different standards, different technology, different expectations and different procedures. . . . That's a prescription for nonequality of treatment." From this perspective, had the "equal protection" clause of the Constitution been applied to the Florida votes, the entire state's voting results and electors should have been thrown out as fundamentally flawed! Indeed, a report on the 2000 election by the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights concluded that Florida's conduct of the 2000 presidential election was marked by "injustice, ineptitude and inefficiency," singling out Gov. Jeb Bush and Secretary of State Katherine Harris "for allowing disparate treatment of voters" (*Washington Post*, June 5, 2001: A1). Summarizing the "key findings," the *Post* noted:

African Americans were nearly 10 times as likely as whites to have their ballots rejected. Poor counties populated by minorities were more likely to use voting systems that rejected larger percentages of ballots than more affluent counties.

Some Hispanic and Haitian voters were not provided ballots in their native languages, and physical barriers sometimes kept disabled voters from entering polling sites.

There were no clear guidelines to protect eligible voters from being wrongly removed as part of a statewide purge of felons, people with dual registrations, and the deceased.

Elections supervisors in the counties with the worst problems failed to "prepare adequately" for the election or demand adequate resources.

The Florida Division of Elections failed to educate Florida's residents on the mechanics of voting.

The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights report, *Probe of Election Practices in Florida during the 2000 Presidential Election*, was published on June 7, 2001, and contains a damning indictment of the Florida system of voting and rich detail on the problems and

irregularities in the Florida voting-process, singling out Jeb Bush and Katherine Harris for criticism. Bush and Harris and the Commission's Republican members attacked the report, which the Commission made available to the Justice Department for possible criminal investigation and posted on the Internet for the public to scrutinize (see [www.usccr.gov/vote2000/flmain.htm](http://www.usccr.gov/vote2000/flmain.htm)).

However one interprets the recounts, it is clear that a large number of ballots were not counted, votes were manufactured in dubious ways, and the Florida vote revealed, in the words of *Miami Herald* reporter Martin Marzer, "a world of imprecision and chaos" (April 4, 2001). Both the optical-scan method of voting and the punch-card system produced thousands of ballots in Florida where votes were not counted, revealing a system of voting in crisis and needing serious remedies.

The confusion uncovered in some of the ballot inspections and recounts points to obvious voter literacy problems, and indicates that serious efforts must be undertaken to ensure that individuals learn how to vote. Indeed, one of the scandals of Election 2000 is that Governor Jeb Bush of Florida vetoed a \$100,000 state allotment for voter education, while approving a \$4.3 million budget to purge felons from the voting list, a procedure that eliminated thousands of eligible voters, mostly poor and African American. The political bias involved in such decisions is obvious and was arguably part of a Bush,Harris campaign in the 2000 election to minimize potential Democratic voters and maximize Republican ones in a systematically partisan distortion of the state election process.<sup>12</sup>

Contrary to popular perception, the punch-card system--with the hanging and other chads--was not the worst offender in disenfranchising Florida voters. Ballot design was also crucial, with the infamous Palm Beach butterfly ballot helping to produce more than 19,000 overvotes. The two-page ballot in Duval County helped generate 20,000 overvotes. Moreover, it was accompanied by a sample ballot that wrongly advised citizens to "vote on every page" and contained on the second page the phrase "write-in candidate," which led many voters to scrawl in the candidate's name and have their vote thrown out because the machine rejected it. In fact, optical-scan machines threw out votes where citizens had used pens or markers rather than pencils, had tried to erase a vote and change it, or had smudged the ballot (there is also the possibility of systematic mischief in the producing of overvotes, as some suspected had occurred in Florida).<sup>13</sup>

It is thus clear that the current U.S. electoral process is highly flawed and requires new technologies, voter education, and a more professionally supervised electoral process. The Republican-dominated U.S. Congress got off to a slow and unpromising start on vote reform. Speaker Dennis Hastert (R-Ill.) proposed a bipartisan House select committee to review a range of issues from voting technology to the Electoral College, seeking new legislation to bring U.S. elections into the twenty-first century. The *Roll Call* reported, however, that Bush had been warning House Republican members against Hastert's reforms, at the very moment when he was assuring members of the Congressional Black Caucus that he favors electoral reform (February 5, 2001). Republicans said that Bush feared Democrats would use the panel to revisit the Florida recount melee and question

his legitimacy. Democrats in the House and Senate have promised their own electoral reform measures, with Democrats calling for hearings, but so far there is no consensus on how to proceed or what to do.

The bottom line, however, is that the Bush team did everything possible to prevent the votes from being counted, to manufacture votes for their candidate, and even to prevent votes for Al Gore to be cast. They stole the presidency in Grand Theft 2000 through the machinations of a slim majority on the Supreme Court, thus casting in doubt the legitimacy of Bush's election and putting in crisis the U.S. system of democracy. As of summer 2001, it appears that much of the independent auditing of votes after the U.S. Supreme Court and Bush-machine theft of an election suggests that Gore won the plurality of votes in Florida, as well as the national popular vote by more than 500,000 votes. Election 2000 thus represents one of the great thefts and political crimes in U.S. history and should be investigated. Who, then, was most responsible for the Theft of an Election, and what might be the consequences of this crime?

### GRAND THEFT 2000

I didn't, I swear I didn't--get into politics to feather my nest  
or feather my friends' nest. -- George W. Bush

In concluding my tale, I recognize three sets of villains who emerged to pull off the Theft of an Election. First are the members of the Gang of Five on the U.S. Supreme Court who halted the recount in Florida mandated by the Florida Supreme Court and then ruled for Bush in a split five-to-four decision that is certain to be one of the most controversial in U.S. history. The conservative partisan five who stole the election for Bush are clearly enemies of democracy and have been condemned by Vincent Bugliosi (2001) as criminals. On January 13, 2001, 585 law professors published a statement in the *New York Times* comparing the Supreme Court justices who voted to stop the manual recount to propagandists who suppressed the facts and acted as "political proponents for candidate Bush, not as judges." The legal documents from Election 2000 were collected in a Brookings Institution publication, *Bush v. Gore* (2001), which contains legal rulings and commentary, supplemented by a Web site.<sup>14</sup> As Justice Stevens remarked in his dissent, confidence in judges as arbitrators of law will be indelibly harmed and the legacy of the Rehnquist Supreme Court has been deeply tarnished by the highly partisan and problematic decision to intervene in the election and select Bush president.

Second, the Florida Republican Party and in particular Governor Jeb Bush and Secretary of State Katherine Harris emerge as brazen thieves who abused their authority and did everything possible to help Bush win, engaging in highly problematic and perhaps criminal procedures before the election, and then doing everything in their power to block the manual recounting of ballots and to rush to certify Bush during the Florida ballot wars. Harris was rewarded for her labors with an appointment to the prestigious Council on Foreign Relations, but both her political future and Jeb Bush's are in question, potential victims of their abuse of their offices to get George W. Bush elected.

Reports indicated special anger of citizens of Florida over the suppression of their votes in the election. The *St. Petersburg Times* published a series of articles on February 19, 2001, that documented the anger of black voters, more than 80 percent of which complained that blacks' ballots were disproportionately rejected or not counted during the election; one in three claimed that they or someone they know personally was denied fair access to voting. Many believed that "it was Jeb Bush and his cronies" who denied their vote and vowed to help defeat him in coming elections. A *Miami Herald* article (February 18, 2001) likewise reported that Democrats are "still bitter" and "irate" over the vote and "leaders hope they can turn feelings into power at the polls."

Third, it was the Bush dynasty that was behind, led, and fueled with cash and raw power the Republican coup d'état. Bush senior cronies and partners in crime James Baker and Dick Cheney, and their armies of political operatives and lawyers, engineered the strategy and tactics in the pilfering of the presidency, the Bush machine raised the money to finance the coup, and the Bush family was able to establish itself as one of the premier political dynasties in U.S. history. The theft of the 2000 election revealed the Bush dynasty to be utterly ruthless, amoral, mendacious, and Machiavellian. As noted in this study, the Bush machine effectively organized its constituencies, ranging from group troops in Florida and elsewhere to high-powered lawyers and partisan Supreme Court justices, to grab state power in a coup as ruthless as that of the Bolsheviks.

In fact, the villainies just cited are overlapping, held together by the money and influence of the Bush machine, which had at its disposal conservative judges, the Florida state apparatus, vast legal resources, political operatives, an aggressive punditocracy, and compliant media institutions. Grand Theft 2000 was highly daring but also risky for the Bush machine, whose brazen seizure of state power opens the possibility that Bush family members will be rewarded for their endeavors by thorough investigation of the family history, the full range of scandals that family members have been involved in, and their checkered personal, political, and economic past--as well as whatever present scandals they are involved in.

Previously, George Bush senior and Lucky Junior had truly been Teflon politicians with the media going down "on bended knee" to avoid embarrassing them. Now books, articles, and Web sites have copious information on the Bush family that could lead to their thorough vilification and downfall.<sup>15</sup> It is a mark of the family hubris, and perhaps the drive and ambition of George Bush senior, that the Bush dynasty took the risk of exposure and its consequences by pushing the obviously unqualified W. the Shrub to seek and steal the presidency. In a media and Internet society, information is not as easily controlled as in previous generations. Many politicians have been brought down by the media in recent years, and Bill Clinton has been--and continues to be--subject to perhaps the most sustained media scrutiny and assault of any president in history, creating the precedent that presidents and ex-presidents are fair game for political blood sport.

Thus, while the mainstream media has so far taken a dive on critically examining W. and the powers behind the throne, the alternative press and Internet sources are diligently amassing information on the Bush dynasty. Robert Parry, an investigative reporter who

broke crucial Iran-Contra stories documenting Bush senior's involvement in the affair, criticized the Democrats and corporate media in the 1990s for not pursuing the multifarious scandals involving George Bush senior, who had been under investigation for some of the greatest political scandals in U.S. history. The Bush scandals included the "October Surprise," in which the Reagan, Bush team allegedly negotiated a deal with the Iranians in 1980 to prevent release of the U.S. hostages and a triumphant return that might have boosted Jimmy Carter's presidential hopes; instead, Carter undertook a failed rescue attempt that many believe was sabotaged by U.S. operatives connected to the Bush clique.

Parry argues that the Iran-Contra operation, in which arms were funneled to the Iranians later in the 1980s, was a payoff for this deal. He claims that information was uncovered from French and Russian intelligence sources that placed officials of the Reagan, Bush ticket in Paris during the alleged negotiations with Iranians to hold the Americans hostage until after the 1980 election, and there have been persistent reports that Bush himself was involved in the deal. There has also been a wealth of evidence that George H. W. Bush was centrally involved in the Iran-Contra affair, but this information has been largely ignored by the mainstream media.<sup>16</sup>

Moreover, upon concluding his presidency in 1992 after his defeat by Clinton, Bush senior pardoned members of the Reagan administration who had been accused of crimes in Iran-Contra, including Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger and others, infuriating special prosecutor Lawrence Walsh, who wanted to question these men concerning George Bush's involvement.<sup>17</sup> The Democrats, in turn, did not investigate these pardons and failed to follow up on scrutiny of Reagan, Bush era crimes, with George Bush allegedly at the center, thus opening the way for the later comeback and ascent to power of Bush's son.

The Democrats and a complicit media have a history of letting the Bush family off the hook for investigations and failing to pursue their many scandalous activities. There was no Democratic uproar over George Bush senior's pardons of Iran-Contra criminals, or of other disgraceful pardons noted below. Similarly, after Election 2000 there have been no Democratic Party hearings concerning the theft of the election in Florida, the many irregularities in the election, and the civil rights violations of those denied their votes. The Republicans, by contrast, held Congressional hearings, taking the media to task for calling Florida for Gore early in the evening and other alleged mistakes and miscalls that allegedly benefited the Democrats (though there was not a Republican peep about the scandal of calling the election prematurely for Bush, thus making him the presumed winner whose victory was being plundered in the postelection struggles). Moreover, the Republicans are holding hearings on the Clinton pardons, pursuing his every misdeed, even after he has left office, while the Democrats in 1993 let Big Bush I off the hook, preparing the way for Little Bush II.

Criticizing Bush senior's presidential pardons upon leaving office, Joe Conason noted in a February 27, 2001, *Salon* article that not only did Bush pardon a series of Iran-Contra criminals who could have implicated him in high state crimes and treason, but he also

pardoned a Pakistani heroin trafficker; oilman Armand Hammer, who had contributed heavily to his campaign; and Orlando Bosch, a notorious anti-Castro terrorist who was serving jail time for having entered the United States illegally and who many believed was guilty of many terrorist crimes, including a 1976 explosion of a Cuban airliner that killed all seventy-six civilians aboard. Conason noted that these shocking pardons hardly received any press coverage or political discussion, a sharp comparison to the avalanche of coverage of and congressional hearings over Clinton's highly problematic pardons.<sup>18</sup>

It is indeed one of the scandals of U.S. journalism and scholarship that there have not been more investigative reports and exposés of Bush family financial shenanigans, political misdeeds, and generations of outrageous behavior, going back to Prescott Bush's support of the Nazis and his fortune from investment in a bank that did business throughout World War II with the German fascist regime (see note 1 in chapter 5). The presidency of George W. Bush provides an excellent occasion for research into the history and crimes of the Bush dynasty, and a key challenge for American democracy is getting the media and those concerned to take up this long overdue task.

## NOTES

1. For a typical ripe rightwing account of these stories, see Deroy Murdock, "Scamalog: Waiting in Vain for the Clintons' Final Insult," *National Review Online* (Jan. 31, 2001; [www.nationalreview.com/murdock/murdock013101.shtml](http://www.nationalreview.com/murdock/murdock013101.shtml)). Within days, these rumors of the Clinton team trashing the White House and stealing from Air Force One presented by the right as news were exposed as mere disinformation by the Bush propaganda ministry. *Fox News* was especially egregious in spreading the disinformation. Dubiously truthful and rarely balanced or fair, Brit Hume described the "looting" of Air Force One as a "raid" on the plane. His *Fox News* partner-in-lies, Tony Snow, a syndicated columnist and former presidential speechwriter for W.'s father, wrote that the White House "was a wreck." He claimed that Air Force One, after taking Clinton and some aides to New York following the inauguration, "looked as if it had been stripped by a skilled band of thieves-or perhaps wrecked by a trailer park twister." After listing missing items, including "silverware, porcelain dishes with the presidential seal, and even candy," Snow fumed. One story, however, published by David Goldstein in the *Kansas City Star* (May 17, 2001), "No Truth in White House Vandal Scandal," indicated that a report by the General Service Administration (GSA) concluded that none of these reports, leaked by the Bush White House, had any basis in fact.

2. Curiously, Bill Gates Sr. and a group of 120 mostly Republican and conservative billionaires signed a petition opposing the excesses of Bush's tax-cut program. See Joan Walsh, "Plucrats to the rescue!" (*Salon*, Feb. 15, 2001). Joshua Micah Marshall suggested in an *American Prospect* note (Feb. 12, 2001) titled "Shameless, Brazen and Disgusting" that the words applied to Clinton's behavior during his last days in the White House could usefully be applied to Bush's tax-cut proposals.

3. The Stockman quote was in a much-discussed interview with William Greider, "The Education of David Stockman," which recorded Reagan's budget director's

disillusionment with "supply-side economics" and the Reagan administration's compromises with corporate forces. See the discussion in the Walsh article cited in note 2 above. In an article on Bush's tax "plan," Bob Herbert ("Voodoo Redux," *New York Times*, Mar. 1, 2001) recalls that in Lou Cannon's biography of Reagan, James Baker, then Reagan's secretary of treasury, regretted that budget deficits had "gotten away" from the Reagan administration and that he wished "he had paid more attention to the consequences of the tax cuts." In fact, the Reagan administration doubled the previous national debt, while Bush senior in his four disgraceful years doubled Reagan's doubling. As Yogi Berra would say, it's déjà vu all over again.

4. *Wag the Dog* was a 1998 film in which a president, resembling Bill Clinton, was involved in a sex scandal with a young intern and constructed a mythical Albanian enemy to undertake military action against during the closing days of an election campaign in order to distract the press and public--action that Clinton himself arguably undertook upon occasion. The phrase "wagging the dog" thus became a code word for military action to sidetrack attention from political embarrassment and to mobilize the public into patriotic support of the president--a political strategy, one might note, that Ronald Reagan also successfully employed with his Grenada invasion, Libyan bombing, and other well-publicized military actions that distracted the public from domestic or other political problems.

5. The China flip-flopping incurred the wrath of the ultrahard lunatic right, which deplored that China had "brought the United States to one knee." But others in the Bush administration had a different perspective on China. For instance, W.'s uncle Prescott Bush, head of the U.S. Chinese Chamber of Commerce, might have reminded W. of the multibillions to be made in business deals with the Chinese if Strangelove could be refrained from going to war with them; Prescott Bush is the son of the Bush family scion Prescott Bush, H. W.'s father and W.'s grandfather, who amassed the family fortune with the bank that financed and laundered money for National Socialism (see chapter 1).

It also came out that Bush's Secretary of Labor Elaine Chao is a China supporter. As head of the Heritage Foundation, Chao was allegedly involved in firing a research analyst, Rick Fisher, who had published studies harshly critical of China when Heritage Foundation donor Maurice "Hank" Greenberg, a pro-China lobbyist, complained. Chao's father is Chinese-born, on friendly terms with the current regime, and owner of a shipping firm that does business with China. In addition, Chao is married to rightwing Senator Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.), who had received thousands of dollars in campaign donations from Greenberg and who is himself a member of the China lobby (see <http://www.worldnetdaily.com/news/article.asp?ARTICLE--ID-21 359>).

In addition, Lawrence Kaplan notes that many prominent members of the Republican establishment, including former National Security Advisers Brent Scowcroft and Henry Kissinger, both of whom represented companies eager to do business with China, were looking to profit from Chinese markets, like Uncle Prescott, and were not seeking war (see "Sorry. Behind the Administration's China Cave," *The New Republic*, April 23, 2001). A week later, Kaplan reported that most of the U.S. rightists, who would have

gone ballistic if Clinton twice apologized to the Chinese, praised Bush's "diplomacy" because they recognized that Bush was largely promoting a hardright agenda and thus should be supported (see "Cavemen. Why the Right Backed Bush on China," *The New Republic*, April 30, 2001). In any case, there are deep divisions in the Bush administration between those who want to maintain an extremely belligerent posture toward China to legitimate proliferating defense expenditures and those who want to profit from its gigantic potential markets.

6. For a critique of Hoff Sommers and the organized rightwing attack on feminism, see Hammer, forthcoming.

7. As the stock market tanked in mid-March, worry circulated about the possibility of Bush's policies destroying the progress of the previous eight years. See Joan Walsh, "Dubya's Mad-Dog Economics: Who Says This Surplus-Squandering Hothead Is Conservative?" (<http://www.salon.com/politics/feature/2001/03/16/bush/index.html>, March 16, 2001), and Herman M. Schwartz and Aida A. Hozic, "Who Needs the New Economy? Bush's Bias toward Industrial Dinosaurs Is Strangling America's High-Tech-Driven Growth" (<http://www.salon.com/tech/feature/2001/03/16/schwartz/index.html>,

March 16, 2001). While some worried that Bush's own loose talk about "recession" and a "sputtering" economy was sending out messages that were contributing to lack of investor confidence in Bush and his economic policies, there were plenty of reasons to worry about Bush and the economy: (1) Bush is a most inexperienced economic manager, with serious deficiencies in understanding the global economy; (2) members of the Bush, Cheney gang immediately revealed that they were going to give their favored contributors whatever benefits they desired, independent of the benefits or costs for the economy as a whole; (3) Cheney's weak heart could go out at any time, creating chaos in the Cheney, Bush administration; and (4) the tax cut that is at the center of Bushnomics is perhaps the riskiest and most reckless "plan" proposed in modern history. Good reasons to worry.

8. See Paul Krugman, "Going for Broke: The Bush Tax Cut Is a Lie," *The New Republic* (May 21, 2001); Krugman expanded his argument in a book *Fuzzy Math* (2001). See also Jonathan Chalt who argued: "The debate over the Bush tax cut has been shrouded in a fog of cant and untruth. . . . The tax cut's advocates have produced a series of distortions, misrepresentations, and outright lies intended to convince Americans that the tax cut primarily benefits the poor and the middle class, or at least to demonize those who would suggest otherwise. "Going for Gold," *The New Republic* (May 21, 2001).

9. For documentation of the horrors of Bush's first hundred days, see [http://](http://members.aol.com/kgar41/horror.html)

[members.aol.com/kgar41/horror.html](http://members.aol.com/kgar41/horror.html); for daily documentation of the atrocities of the Bush administration, see the Web sites listed in Introduction, note 3. As the dialectic moves forward, new Web sites worth checking out to chart the antics of the Bush administration are appearing such as <http://www.smirkingchimp.com/> with the telling motto: "Ask not at whom the chimp smirks, he smirks at you." There are also a variety of

sites that compile humor, including cartoons, animation, and other cultural forms ridiculing Bush and his cronies; two sites posit links to a wealth of Bush satire material: [www.allhatnocattle.net/cream--of--the--crop--links.htm](http://www.allhatnocattle.net/cream--of--the--crop--links.htm) and [www.linkcrusader.com/anti-bush.htm](http://www.linkcrusader.com/anti-bush.htm) media.

10. See Sharman Braff, "The Florida Overvote: Tragic Mistake, or Katherine Harris with Tweezers?" ([www.democrats.com/view.cfm?id-1730](http://www.democrats.com/view.cfm?id-1730)). This article indicates that study of the pattern of overvotes shows suspiciously high numbers of overvotes in five counties, with a large number of Gore, Bush double votes that would be hard to explain without the hypothesis of machine tampering whereby votes are run through machines a second time, which double-vote to eliminate votes. Double votes were especially high in Duval County, a Republican stronghold with large numbers of black precincts in which there were many reports of African American voter harassment on election day and many double votes that had appeared. Suspiciously, Duval initially resisted the request of independent groups to study the ballots.

11. The Bush administration made the *Miami Herald* tabulation of the undervotes appear to suggest that Bush legitimately won the Florida vote, and many newspapers and conservative sources repeated the spin. Of course, it was the manual recount of the entirety of Florida's undervotes that the U.S. Supreme Court halted, and most evidence so far suggests that Gore would have won handily had all undervotes been counted and that if overvotes were inspected that had evidence of the voter indeed choosing Gore (by writing in his name, for instance), Gore's lead would have soared.

12. On February 23, 2001, Jeb Bush released a fifty-four-page advisory report that recommended replacement of punch-card ballots with optical scanners, but the report did not address the failure of optical scanners in producing overvotes, or the need for voter literacy. The Florida legislature did pass a voting overhaul bill on May 4, 2001, calling for the elimination of punch-card ballot machines and their replacement by optical scan machines, and the Georgia governor signed an election reform package that requires touch-screen voting in the state by the 2004 presidential election. Greg Palast warns, however, that many states undertaking voting-reform projects are repeating the disastrous mistake of Florida, which hired a company to undertake computer-aided purging of centralized voter files to eliminate dead voters, felons, and others. Palast argues that "the likely result will be the elimination of a lot of legitimate voters and an increased potential for political mischief," urging that local precincts take charge of the updating of their list, and not the state. See "The Wrong Way to Fix the Vote," *Washington Post* (June 11, 2001). *The Nation* established a Web page with links to voter reform efforts and stories concerning the need for reform (see <http://www.thenation.com/special/2001electoralreform.mhtml>).

13. Jake Tapper alleges (2001: 404ff.) that Al Gore himself was pushing the rumor that voting machines could be programmed to eliminate one out of ten votes for him, an irregularity that allegedly surfaced in the 1988 Florida Senatorial election (see chapter 3, note 3). Tapper completely dismisses the possibility, however, suggesting that Gore was going over the top--*X-Files* conspiracy whacko--by suggesting such a thing. However,

experts have been long aware of the possibility of rigging Votomatic counting machines. In 1988, Ronnie Dugger published an article in *The New Yorker* (Nov. 7, 1988) about the potential for fraud, citing many proofs of error in computer voting systems. He noted that in the 1988 Senate election in Florida between Republican Connie Mack and Democrat Buddy McKay, that in McKay's four Democratic stronghold counties, there were 210,000 people who voted for president but did not vote in the U.S. Senate race. In a comparable U.S. Senate race in 1980, three of every 1000 presidential voters did not vote for senator whereas in the disputed 1988 election, 14 out of every 1000 did not vote for senator (Tapper explains this by noting that the Senate election that year was placed at the bottom of the ballot [405], a not totally convincing explanation).

Interestingly, Dugger published an article titled "Rage against the Machine. How Safe Are Our Voting Machines?" in *The New Republic* (December 4, 2001) that argued again that there are copious examples of serious voting machine errors and the potential for fraud. He cited many voting machine experts who acknowledged the problem and such reports circulated through the Internet during the Battle for the White House, such as a study by Jonathan Vankin, "Vote of No Confidence" ([www.conspire.com/votefraud.html](http://www.conspire.com/votefraud.html)). Hence, there is clearly the possibility that Votomatic and other computer tabulating systems could be rigged, there are examples of fishy tabulation throughout recent history, and many experts kicked in during the Election 2000 debates indicating the possibility of fraudulent rigging of computerized voting machines. Thus, this is a significant issue that should have been investigated as to whether there might have been computer fraud in the Florida tabulation wars.

14. See the collection of key legal documents in a Brookings Institution Web site (<http://www.brookings.edu/bushvgore/>) and an accompanying book (2001), which provides context and legal commentary. I have drawn upon published commentary on the controversial Supreme Court ruling and have found the sharp criticisms of the decision by Ronald Dworkin, Vincent Bugliosi, and Bruce Ackerman especially helpful and convincing.

15. On Bush senior, see the appendix and sources in Kellner 1990; on Bush junior, see note 4 and the material assembled in [www.bushwatch.com](http://www.bushwatch.com), [www.consortium.com](http://www.consortium.com), and [www.moldea.com](http://www.moldea.com). There is enough material in the background of the Bush dynasty for ten Watergates.

16. This information is archived in Robert Parry's Web site, [www.consortium.com](http://www.consortium.com), and many more investigative reports critical of the Bush family are found in sources cited in note 15 above. In my 1990 book, *Television and the Crisis of Democracy*, I include in my appendix references to investigative reports and books on Bush's involvement in the October Surprise, the Iran-Contra affair, and other scandals that were documented and discussed in the alternative media, but with few exceptions these were ignored in the mainstream media during the 1988 campaign in which Bush won the presidency. In my 1992 book, *The Persian Gulf TV War*, I document Bush senior's role in arming the Iraqi military in the 1980s and his support for the Iraqi regime up to the eve of Iraq's invasion of Kuwait; earlier, Bush had been a supporter of Manuel Noriega in Panama, until,

evidently, Noriega crossed him, and the 1990 Panama invasion followed. As I have argued in this book, George W. Bush likewise received a pass for his and his family's misdeeds during the 2000 election. Were the mainstream media to discuss Bush family scandals with a fraction of the attention lavished on the Clintons, it is conceivable that the dynasty's rule would come to an abrupt end, and they would be forced to seek asylum in Kuwait or Panama.

17. James Ridgeway in the *Village Voice* (Feb. 27, 2001) also criticized Bush senior's last-minute pardons of Iran-Contra criminals, noting that they included:

Weinberger, who faced an impending trial on five criminal charges of lying in testimony before Congress and in criminal investigations.

Duane Clarridge, formerly in charge of European covert operations for the CIA, who faced seven charges of lying to congressional investigators and the White House Tower Commission about shipping U.S. missiles from Israel to Iran in November 1985.

Elliott Abrams, a former assistant secretary of state, who pleaded guilty to twice withholding information from Congress in the midst of the scandal.

Robert McFarlane, former national security adviser, who pleaded guilty to cover-ups on four misdemeanor charges.

Clair George, former CIA deputy director of covert ops, who was convicted on criminal charges of lying to Congress. (<http://www.villagevoice.com/issues/0109/ridgeway.shtml>)

The full text of Bush's pardon is found on <http://news.findlaw.com/cnn/docs/>

[pardons/bush/bushironcontraprnds.pdf](http://news.findlaw.com/cnn/docs/pardons/bush/bushironcontraprnds.pdf); for an account of the "serial terrorist" Orlando Bosch, who Bush pardoned, see <http://onlinejournal.com/Special--Reports/Smith030101/smith030101.html>.

18. In a March 4, 2001, *New York Observer* article, Joe Conason adds that Bush senior also pardoned three of his Texas oil industry and corporate buddies, who had committed bank fraud, tax evasion, and other corporate crimes.

Goto my homepage: <http://www.gseis.ucla.edu/faculty/kellner/kellner.html>