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In my opinion

How manipulating words rewrites history

During his speech last week, George W. Bush finally lashed out at those criticizing his decision to go to war. On a positive note, it only took him two years to acknowledge the fact that a lot of people share the view that we were misled into war. On a disrespectful note, he used Veteran's Day as a platform to defend the fact that he sent our soldiers to war for reasons now known to be untrue. On a hypocritical note, he accused Democrats and others who question his motives for invading Iraq of trying to "rewrite history."

At the same time, there was a little scuffle going on in Washington about the literal rewriting of history. In an Oct. 31 press conference, NBC's David Gregory put forth the following statement as a precursor to a question posed to White House Press Secretary Scott McClellan:

"Whether there's a question of legality, we know for a fact that there was involvement. We know that Karl Rove, based on what he and his lawyer have said, did have a conversation about somebody who Patrick Fitzgerald said was a covert officer of the Central Intelligence Agency. We know that Scooter Libby also had conversations."

To which Scott McClellan replied, "That's accurate."

But when the transcript showed up on www.whitehouse.gov, curiously enough, it had McClellan responding by saying "I don't think that's accurate."

You would think this would be an easy enough mistake to correct. Several other independent transcribers including Congressional Quarterly and Federal News Service heard it right and wrote it down correctly. There is also a tape on which McClellan's words are clearly audible. But for some reason, the White House refuses to accept its error.



ARMY FETH
RHETORIC CHECK

Like it always does, the White House has vowed to "stand by their position." They have even gone so far as to contact news organizations to ask them to change their transcripts.

The problem is, nobody else heard the "I don't think" part of McClellan's statement. While "I don't think" is not entirely an unbelievable statement coming from the mouthpiece of the administration, it certainly does not belong in this transcript.

What amazes me is how Dana Perino, spokeswoman for the Office of the Press Secretary and president, can just keep lying. There are several written accounts that prove her wrong, and people can hear the truth for themselves. The video is available for free on the Center for American Progress Web site, www.americanprogress.org. It was also played on NPR. Perino, however, insists that the transcript is correct because "the White House stenographer was in the room and I was in the room," and they both heard "I don't think that's accurate."

Well, maybe they aren't lying. Maybe they're crazy. Or maybe they are so brainwashed with loyalty that they hear only what they want to hear, and occasionally a little more.

This could be the result of the recently mandated ethics refresher courses for the White House staff. After Plamegate, all White House staff members were instructed to

take ethics classes in which they learned what is OK and not OK to give the press. Apparently, if you mess up and tell them too much, the ethical thing to do is to go back and change the transcripts.

Newsweek on Nov. 21 reported that after reviewing the tapes, McClellan said he would request that the stenographers "take another look." He added, "if there's something wrong, we'll correct it immediately."

Well, I just checked, and the White House version still says "I don't think that's accurate."

So, if Scott McClellan says one thing and the official record taken by the White House says another, isn't the administration rewriting history?

Also, a piece in Saturday's Washington Post noted when Bush claimed in his Veteran's Day speech that Congress saw the same intelligence as he did before the war, and that independent commissions have concluded the administration did not misrepresent intelligence, the president might not have been telling the whole truth.

Basically, reporters Dana Milbank and Walter Pincus replied in unison: "I don't think that's accurate."

The White House responded to the article, which pointed out that obviously the president and his staff saw volumes more intelligence than the House and Senate did, with a terse one-pager distributed to the entire White House press core.

Basically, the White House is "standing by their position."

Just who is really rewriting history here? Is it the people who call for honesty and accountability in government, or is it the propaganda-disseminating, talking-points-repeating, ethically-challenged, and altogether dishonest powers that be?

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INBOX

Animal right's activists plan on protesting with produce

Winter's on its way, and it's time to put the freeze on fur.

Tomatoes emblazoned with stickers encouraging shoppers to "throw me at a fur-wearer" have been cropping up in produce aisles. The popular plump red fruit that until now has been known mainly as a harmless ingredient in spaghetti sauce is stirring up the most controversy in its history since the "Is it a vegetable or a fruit?" flap.

Whether you call them tomatoes or to-mah-toes, these veggies are seeing red over cruelty to animals.

Emerald Columnist Amy Feth cannot remain oblivious to the fact that caring people find fur clothing sickening and sad ("Free to wear fur," ODE Oct. 26). Ms. Feth, in this day and age, knowing what we know about how animals have their necks broken or are electrocuted, drowned or beaten for every fur coat or cuff, it takes an astonishingly heartless and greedy person to stand up

in front of the city and promote this kind of animal abuse.

Fur-wearers be warned: Vigilante veggies are ready to paint the town red. If you still wear fur — despite the fact that animals are bludgeoned, electrocuted, poisoned, gassed, shot and have their necks broken just so you can look old, fat, or really cheap — you'd better be prepared to meet your 'mater. No mink stole or raccoon wrap is safe from a pulpy projectile that's gone to seed.

For more information, please visit PETA's Web site FurIsDead.com.

Curtis Taylor
Eugene

ExxonMobil not interested in environmental awareness

In the past year, many of us have commented on the brutality of gas prices. Individual oil companies are choosing to rip off consumers and destroy the environment. One single company is at the root of many of the problems in this massive, market-dominating oil

industry: ExxonMobil.

ExxonMobil is one of the most profitable companies on the planet (\$25 billion in '04), so wouldn't you hope it would return a portion of its income toward research in renewable energy? Nope. What about helping fund research on vehicle emissions and their effect on climate change? Not a chance. Even worse, the company is proved to have spent \$15 million since 1998 on confusing the public as to what exactly causes global warming (otherwise known as "junk science"). With such a high net income, they wouldn't possibly consider drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, would they? Once again, wrong! Of the top oil companies, ExxonMobil is the only one still intensely lobbying to drill in the Refuge.

Please consider all this when filling your tank next time. A difference can be made. Exposureexxon.com for more information.

Sean Mis
University student

Editorial

FDA biases no reason to block access to Plan B

Emergency contraception, also known as the "morning after pill" or Plan B, has become an important tool for many college women to help prevent unplanned pregnancies. Effective if used up to 72 hours after unprotected intercourse, Plan B is the first progestin-only emergency contraceptive to be approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, according to the University Health Center, which prescribes the pill.

Emergency contraception is relatively available to women here at the University. But its status as a prescription drug limits other women's access to this helpful form of birth control; in May 2004, the acting director for the FDA's Center for Drug Evaluation and Research rejected an attempt by the pill's manufacturer to make Plan B available over-the-counter, citing safety concerns.

Yet this month, the Government Accountability Office, a nonpartisan investigative arm of Congress, concluded in a report that the FDA's decision ran counter to accepted protocol. We are pleased by this revelation, and we hope it will lead to the FDA to make Plan B more accessible to women everywhere.

The report outlines several disturbing and "unusual" aspects of the FDA's decision, indicating that certain FDA officials' personal biases affected it. Foremost, the report states that the acting director's decision was "novel" and different from the way 67 proposed prescription-to-OTC decisions were made by the FDA from 1994 to 2004. According to the report, he said his concerns about the potential for "risky behaviors among younger adolescents resulting from increased access to Plan B" influenced his decision to put the application on the fast-track to nowhere.

No contraceptives, either over-the-counter or prescription, approved by the FDA have age restrictions, according to the report. Further, the FDA has not required any pediatric studies for past approvals.

Moreover, some FDA staff allege that "they were told by high-level management that the Plan B OTC switch application would be denied months before staff had completed their reviews of the application." Officials deny the allegations, with one saying the agency was "tending" or "thinking of going" toward rejecting the request.

High-ranking FDA officials who reviewed the application to change the pill's status also did not sign the decision for Plan B because they disagreed with it, according to the report.

These deviations from standard policy suggest the acting director and others were personally invested in preventing teenage girls from engaging in sexual activity. Such moralistic logic has no place in a government regulatory agency.

We certainly condemn unprotected sex that physically or emotionally endangers either partner. But present rates of teen pregnancy and abortion suggest that young people continue to engage in unprotected sexual activity. Making Plan B more accessible might cause some people to engage in more risky behavior, but we shouldn't prevent responsible teenagers, or anyone else, from having access to this contraceptive.

CORRECTION

Because of an editor's error in "Richards shines in Oregon defeat," published in Monday's sports section, Chelsea Wagner was misidentified at the beginning of the article as Chelsea Richards. The headline refers to Gabrielle Richards.

The Emerald regrets the error.

As part of International Education Week, the 7 p.m. film on Thursday is now scheduled to be shown in PLC 180, according to updated information from the International Resource Center.

OREGON DAILY EMERALD LETTERS POLICY

Letters to the editor and guest commentaries are encouraged, and should be sent to letters@dailyemerald.com or submitted at the Oregon Daily Emerald office, EMU Suite 300. Electronic submissions are preferred. Letters are limited to 250 words, and guest commentaries to 550 words. Authors are limited to one submission per calendar month. Submissions should include phone number and address for verification. The Emerald reserves the right to edit for space, grammar and style. Guest submissions are published at the discretion of the Emerald.