

Editorial

Hang Iraq Albatross on Cheney's Neck

American soldiers and Iraqi civilians are dying daily due to the decisions by that lead chicken-hawk, Vice-President Dick Cheney, to lie and pressure the U.S. government into an illegal war against Iraq. The damage will get much, much worse, if the opposition to the drive for a U.S. imperialism does not force through the removal of President Bush's svengali.

Cheney, of course, was one of the most vociferous advocates of the illusion that Iraqis were going to welcome American troops as "liberators," and he clearly acted to suppress intelligence to the contrary. This week the incoming chief of U.S. Central Command, Gen. John Abizaid, declared that the troops are facing a "classical guerrilla-type campaign." Already, besieged soldiers are being quoted saying they'd like to see Rumsfeld resign; who knows what they'd like to do to Cheney. As far as we know, the Vice-President has not come forward to apologize. Instead, he's organizing a "defense" of the intelligence hoax that has created this disaster.

Scandals around Dick Cheney's behavior are hardly new. He's been one of the nastiest, most secretive, and venal characters in Washington. One of the most prominent scandals was his protection of financial/energy pirate Enron, whose looting of the U.S. economy continues to have devastating effects. Cheney's profiteering at Halliburton has also gained some notoriety, in light of the almost breathtaking way in which the former Secretary of Defense handed over contracts to this private firm, and then moved to benefit from them by becoming Halliburton's CEO.

On July 13, a new such scandal touching the Vice-President came to light, by way of an investigative report in the London *Observer*. According to this news item, the U.S. occupying power in Iraq has devised new plans to grab the revenue stream from Iraqi oil production, and stick it in the pocket of U.S. contractors (like Halliburton). Again, we see the imprint of the venality of Dick Cheney.

In a piece called "Pipe Dreams of Iraqi Oil," the *Observer* reported that the U.S. occupying force has already begun *exporting* freshly pumped oil from Iraq.

While the capacity is only a bit above 300 thousand barrels a day, the local U.S. officials, including Halliburton executives, are determined to push it up to 3 million barrels per day as quickly as possible. A four-day conference was held in Baghdad recently at which Halliburton's subsidiary Kellogg Brown and Root, and the Army Corps of Engineers discussed how this could be done.

But it's going to take years to raise the capacity this high—and the profiteers, like Halliburton, want *money now*.

The current sales of oil are being priced at \$5 less per barrel than the standard, according to the *Observer's* reporters—apparently in order to sell—but the monies (remember the line that the oil belongs to the Iraqi people?) are going straight into the U.S.-controlled Development Fund for Iraq. This is the fund that pays out billions of dollars in cost-plus contracts for none other than Dick Cheney's colleagues at Halliburton and Bechtel.

But the current slow flow of oil can't really supply enough money for the profiteers, so, the *Observer* reports, "voices within the U.S. Administration have come up with a novel solution." We quote: "The U.S. Export-Import Bank, a government trade promotion agency, has launched a campaign for securitization of future Iraqi oil receipts to pay for the reconstruction work of foreign contractors."

In other words, the United States will essentially sell a proportion of Iraq's oil receipts from the future! Cash now, oil later, putting Iraq deeper into debt.

The *Observer* names Halliburton and Bechtel as part of the lobby that is pushing the scheme which will "simultaneously will solve Iraq's funding gap, take the funding pressure off an overstretched U.S. budget, and provide the security of payment that can attract the finest U.S. contractors to work in the unstable country."

A scheme truly worthy of an Enron pirate, or a proponent of a Roman-style U.S. Empire, like Dick Cheney. Cheney, the linchpin for all the current Administration's criminally insane schemes, must be dumped now!