

DICK KICKED OVER CONDI'S SOAPBOX

Via TP, Howie Kurtz reveals that the networks don't want Condi anymore.

The secretary of state has always been considered a prize catch for the Sunday talk shows. But when the White House offered Condoleezza Rice for appearances eight days ago, after a week focused on Iraq, two programs took the unusual step of turning her down.

Executives at CBS and NBC say Rice no longer seems to be a key player on the war and that her cautious style makes her a frustrating guest.

"I expected we'd just get a repetition of the administration's talking points, which had already been well circulated," says Bob Schieffer, host of CBS's "Face the Nation," who questioned two senators instead. "We'd had a whole week of that with General Petraeus and President Bush. I thought it was more important to get a sense of where the Senate Republicans were."

Tim Russert, moderator of "Meet the Press," who also hosted two senators, declined to comment on why he turned down Rice.

Given the irrational economy of the Sunday shows, I don't necessarily think this is a good thing. Given Scott Pelley's grilling of Ahmedinejad the other day, it's clear that CBS ("Complicit Behavior in Sadism"?) still welcomes the White House's talking points. So losing Condi means the networks are only eschewing the marginally more sane corner of the Bush Administration, seemingly in favor of the warmongers. Match that with Hillary's hat trick on Sunday, and the Sunday shows remain dominated

by "serious" people, not real dialogue.

Still, it is a minor victory, at least, that the Administration can't just call up and "control the message" on Tim Russert's show anymore. The Sunday shows are still just worthless hot air. But it's a start that they're beginning to worry about being seen as worthless hot air.