

“TRIVIAL POLICY IDEAS”

I'm going to launch into some much more detailed analysis of Scottie McC's book in the next few days. But before I did that, I wanted to establish how deeply Scottie McC is in denial about George Bush—both about his good intentions as a President and his honesty. As I go through the Plame-related and Iraq intelligence stuff, I'll show how Scottie McC is still fundamentally protecting the President, perhaps as much to prevent serious cognitive dissonance on Scottie's own part as to protect Bush.

But for now, I just wanted to point out how Scottie McC tends to interpret anything Bush does in the best positive light, even while condemning the same behavior from others.

In Scottie McC's discussion of the presidential transition, he compares Clinton and Bush in some detail, noting that both got sucked into the "permanent campaign" when in DC. Scottie McC even cedes that Bush embraced the permanent campaign as much as Clinton (which is, after all the point of the book).

There would be no more permanent campaign, or at least its excesses would be wiped away for good. But the reality proved to be something quite different. Instead, the Bush team imitated some of the worst qualities of the Clinton White House and even took them to new depths.

Yet Scottie McC wants to pretend that Bush's permanent campaign was all in service of a grand agenda, unlike (he suggests) Clinton.

Bush did not emulate Clinton on the policy front. Just the opposite—the mantra of the new administration was "anything but Clinton" when it came to policies. The Bush administration prided itself on focusing on big ideas, not playing small ball with worthy but essentially trivial policy ideas for a

White House, like introducing school uniforms or going after deadbeat dads.

Curious that this son of a single mother would insinuate that an overdue federal effort to make sure that families parented by single mothers don't also have to survive on single salaries was "trivial." The effort to ensure that women could collect the child support due them was fundamentally about families and personal responsibility.

Meanwhile, Scottie McC apparently doesn't consider efforts that—he admits—the Bush Administration adopted to appease the Christian Conservative base "trivial."

As distinguished from the broad majority political strategy of consistently governing from the center and not catering too heavily to single-issue or narrowly focused partisan constituencies, the 50-percent-plus-one strategy emphasizes catering to ideological purists. For example, Bush appeased social conservatives by forcefully advocating passage of a constitutional amendment banning same sex marriages as we headed to Election Day in 2004; on another occasion, he dramatically returned to Washington in the middle of the night from his home in Crawford to sign a federal law transferring the fate of Terri Schiavo to the federal courts, thereby invoking the national government in a controversial issue typically handled by the states.

So in Scottie's mind, making sure that children receive the financial support of both parents is "trivial," while the Schiavo intervention was appeasement—but somehow not trivial.

There are, obviously, many more examples where Scottie McC insists on attributing Bush's

failures exclusively to the "permanent campaign" rather than any personal failings. But this comparison really stuck in my craw.