

CHUCK TODD'S LAW

Aside from MSNBC's squeamishness about blow jobs (but not about torture or the murder of teenagers or slobbering racism), here's why, according to Chuck Todd, we cannot have an investigation of the crimes Dick Cheney committed.

1. "I have a couple of roles as a journalist. Of course, number one is to hold government officials accountable, but also report on what they're trying to do, what the motivations are behind what they're trying to do, why they're doing certain things"
2. "This issue, whenever you see the words Cheney and intelligence pop up, and when I use the phrase 'cable catnip', it is when something becomes, when something becomes, whether the two polarized parts of our political society, are very entrenched in their views on this, and believe the other side is completely irrational on it. And so, that's, whenever you have an issue like that, that's what I describe as 'cable catnip'. Because it becomes something that is easy to put on television, because

you can find a left versus right, which is something that cable embraces to a fault"

3. "If you could also guarantee me, that this wouldn't become a show trial, and wouldn't be put, and created so that we had nightly debates about it, [prosecution] is the ideal way to handle this ... if you could guarantee me that we could keep this debate off of television"
4. "We know it's going to turn into a political trial. I'll take that back – we don't know whether it's going to turn into a political trial. That is the experience of how these things have worked in the past, that end up getting turned into a political trial"

That is, we can't hold Dick Cheney accountable for his crimes because the media—including Todd himself—is incapable of reporting the story as anything but a partisan story (in spite of the fact that—Glenn points out—there is bipartisan support for a torture prosecution), which guarantees that any investigation would turn into a show trial.

But it's even stupider than that. Todd says we shouldn't investigate the past administration because if we do the rest of the world might think we're a banana republic (as if decorum and not rule of law is the example the US wants to

set for the rest of the world). For Todd, it's enough that we punish Administrations through the ballot box—but of course, we didn't punish Bush in 2004 after he started an illegal war, and by the time 2008 rolled around, Bush was term-limited and Cheney was not on the ballot, so we have not, in fact, punished the criminals at the ballot box.

In addition, Todd repeatedly says this is an ideological question, because it is not black and white whether Cheney and his torturers broke the law, in spite of:

- The psychologist/interrogator/contractor quoted in the OLC opinion admitting he exceeded John Yoo's guidelines
- The OLC memo's description of CIA HQ ordering up another round of waterboarding for Abu Zubayah when that violated the OLC memo's clear prohibition on waterboarding when the detainee was compliant
- The near-daily White House authorization of torture before John Yoo crafted a memo saying it was legal

These guys broke even the perversion of law they themselves instituted, so there's no question of ideology. To say nothing of the fact that St. Reagan's DOJ found waterboarding to be illegal and Republicans like Phillip Zelikow are among those demanding an investigation.

Which is Chuck Todd, noted journalist's, real problem: he's not aware of the facts. At a time when (as Glenn points out) Nora Dannehy

continues to investigate the US Attorney firings, Chuck Todd declares that firing those US Attorneys was "perfectly legal." He apparently doesn't know—or won't report—the many pieces of evidence that show the Bushies violated the law, and so can conclude that any investigation would be "cable catnip," and so can claim that because the media won't do its homework we can't ask DOJ to investigate either.

In other words, we can't hold Dick Cheney accountable for his crimes because the beltway media can't help themselves but turn any investigation of crimes into a political trial.