

Where was the press when this was going on?

NEW YORK, FEBRUARY 20, 2005 – Perhaps now that “the Gates” have festooned themselves across New York’s Central Park, we can bid adieu to the use of that term to connote political scandal. After Watergate begat Contragate, we have had a cloned procession of almost obligatorily named outrages.

There was Filegate, Monicagate and most recently, we watched Memogate morph into Rathergate.

Now there’s Gannongate.

Its time to close the door on further uses of this metaphor because gates usually open and close but these tend to have become a permanent feature of our political landscape, more revolving than alarming.

At the moment, everyone is smirking about the antics and improbability of a holier-than-thou White House conniving with a planted “reporter” who seems to have doubled as an on-line gay sex-for-hire panderer and practitioner, defiling images, no less, of our macho military warriors with websites like militaryescortsm4m.com.

Ooo wee. Yuk! The red white and blue horror of it all! Has the White House become an outhouse?

And yet, the question lost in all the focus on the sleazy antics of GOP propaganda plant Jeff Gannon/Jim Guckert by a gang bang of bloggers and comedians, including, most hysterically, The Daily Show’s Jon Stewart: (<http://homepage.mac.com/onegoodmove/movies/ds021605bloggers.html>) is where was the rest of the press corps(e) while all this was going on for TWO YEARS?

Why did it take outsiders to expose it? Is it because as Buzzflash argues: “The blogging world did what the lackey mainstream press will no longer do, expose a story that is at the epicenter of the deceit and propaganda media campaign central to how the Bush Cartel continues to control America?”

Where were the other reporters and news rooms with a permanent

presence at the White House Press Room when softball questions and partisan points were being offered up routinely in what were supposed to be press conferences aimed to eliciting truth?

Is this another case of the silence of what Greg Palast calls “the media lambs?”

Weren’t any of our journo “pros” curious about this guy and his weird ways and phony news service operating as a front group for Republican hardliners? He was operating right in front of them but seems to have become invisible.

Was the White House Correspondents Association so busy planning its next celebrity dinner in which to give the President a platform for banal one-liners that none objected to his presence or the favorable treatment this imposter was accorded?

While Helen Thomas and her hard questions were frozen out, deference became the order of the day in a clubby and collegial atmosphere that so typifies the servility and complicity of mainstream media.

Yes, it’s not all the fault of the press. This perception-driven Administration is managing the media and controlling the news as never before.

The Minneapolis Tribune quotes a former government official to the effect that this shill was there because the White House wanted him there. They report: “Bruce Bartlett, a conservative columnist who worked in the Reagan and first Bush administrations, says that “if Gannon was using an alias, the White House staff had to be involved in maintaining his cover.’ In other words, the White House wanted him at those briefings and wanted him to ask his softball questions, most likely to divert attention when legitimate reporters were getting too pushy.”

Whoa, be honest. How many were “getting too pushy?” Very few as far as I could see!

Yes, This is, as the Tribune notes, “part of a pattern by Bush’s minions to construct a phony reality in news coverage.”

But isn’t it also time for our media cognoscenti to acknowledge their own role in getting along by going along?

Even as the Administration plays dirty, has the media played clean? Has it done the job it is there to do?

Does the question even have to be raised?

It is no wonder public faith in mainstream media credibility is fading. Even now, it is easier to knock the Bush Administration – especially when the details

are so delicious. Every hour seems to be bring forth a juicy new all-too incredible-but-sadly-believable salacious anecdote – and counter-rant of righteousness.

Talk about distraction and “diverting attention.” ‘Smirk Smirk, Wink Wink’ is what modern media lives on and feeds off. The deeper problem is there for the press boys and girls to see – if they are willing to look in the mirror.

To their credit, editors at the the Minneapolis Trib did not neglect this largely underplayed aspect of the problem but they did bury the lead in the bottom of their angry editorial with an “unfortunately,” writing: “Unfortunately, too many of the real journalists have gone along meekly. As columnist Michael Kinsley observed, if this White House said two plus two equaled five, there would be no shortage “of media to report both sides of the question.”

“Once it was fairly easy to distinguish real reporters from hacks and charlatans, objective news from partisan rant. That has become increasingly difficult, thanks in part to a Bush White House that finds the confusion useful, to its everlasting dishonor.”

And, let it be said just as clearly, thanks, in “another part” to a corporate media system – an institution, not just an individual – that has made its pact with the devil and is squirming all the way to the bank,

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