

Editorial

Is Dick Cheney Cracking Up?

The pressures on Vice-President Dick Cheney may soon lead him to crack up, and could soon be followed by his leaving his job as First Ventriloquist for President Bush. The pattern of behavior Cheney has shown over the past week, in a series of flight-forward interviews and speeches, puts the question right up front.

Cheney started off the week in the Congressional spotlight, as leading Democrats in the both the House and the Senate took aim at the role he played in the assignment of the two huge government contracts in Iraq, to Halliburton, the company which still pays deferred salary to the Vice-President. As evidence poured out, as a result of a hearing held in the House Government Reform Committee, no less a Democratic spokesman than New Jersey Senator Frank Lautenberg called on Attorney General John Ashcroft to appoint a special prosecutor to investigate potential criminal violations by Cheney.

True to his belligerent persona, Cheney himself spent Monday in Florida, where he took the occasion of a speech to reassert his line that Saddam Hussein had “long-established ties with al-Qaeda.”

That assertion, which Cheney has made frequently in order to justify the launching of an illegal, aggressive war against Iraq as an alleged part of the “war on terrorism,” couldn’t have been more poorly timed. It might have gone unnoticed except that the bipartisan panel investigating the 9/11 terror attack issued a staff statement on June 15, which stated that it had found “no credible” evidence of a link between Iraq and al-Qaeda. By June 16, the nation’s press was headlining the panel’s assertion, as a direct contradiction to what Vice-President Cheney, and his puppet President George W. Bush, had been asserting for years.

From all available evidence, the Vice-President went ballistic. On the one hand, he convinced President Bush to defend his statement during a Rose Garden press conference on June 17. Then Cheney himself gave an interview to Alan Murray and Gloria Borger of CNBC. Cheney was particularly vehement about the coverage in the *New York Times*, calling its headline (“The Panel Finds No Qaida-Iraq Ties”) “outrageous,”

and accusing the paper of undermining his credibility and that of “W”.

Interviewer Borger did not let it go at that, but pressed the issue, and the Vice-President got more and more agitated. Cheney’s main point was that there are two separate issues: whether or not there was an Iraq/Al-Qaida link (he insists there was), and whether or not Iraq were involved with Al-Qaida in 9/11. It’s just that the commission had found not evidence of it, he said.

Cheney got unhinged several times in the interview. For instance, when Mohammed Atta came up:

“Borger: Well, let’s get to Mohammad Atta for a minute, because you mentioned him as well. You have said in the past that it was, quote, ‘pretty well confirmed.’

“Vice Pres. Cheney: No, I never said that.

“Borger: OK.

“Cheney: Never said that.

“Borger: I think that is. . .

“Cheney: Absolutely not. What I said was the Czech intelligence service reported after 9/11 that Atta had been in Prague on April 9th of 2001, where he allegedly met with an Iraqi intelligence official. We have never been able to confirm that, nor have we been able to knock it down.”

As Borger went on to ask about the Vice-President’s actions during the 9/11 attacks, Cheney began to bluster about U.S. policy of taking out those who harbor terrorists. Borger interrupted:

“Borger: Mr. Vice President, I don’t think I’ve ever seen you, in all the years I’ve interviewed you, as exercised about something as you seem today.

“Cheney: I was. I admit, Gloria, and you and I have known each other a long time. But I do believe that the press has been irresponsible, that there’s this temptation to take. . .”

“Cheney: Gloria, I don’t feel persecuted. I don’t need to. . .”

In fact, Vice-President Cheney should be *prosecuted*, not persecuted. Or, as he reels from the release of LaRouche’s new pamphlet, and these other attacks, he could choose merely to resign.