

Everything They Feed Us:

All the recent claims, counter claims and reclaims of the presidential campaigns has me running away from the idea of running for office. But I am thinking of offering my services to one of the political parties as a strategist. You know who that is. That's the person who cooks up the talking points, spins the news, rewrites history, science and whatever else needs a twist in the service of the Party.

More than any other quality the strategist must have absolute grasp of the all important political truism that "They'll believe anything". One needs to be fearless, and without scruples, in his devotion to the notion. "They'll believe anything" must be seared into the strategist's soul (or whatever has taken his soul's place). It must be an article of faith which forms the basis for every decision, every press release and every speech. Never, ever lose sight of the idea that "They'll believe anything".

In addition to embracing the 'Anything' concept one must become versed in the art of making one's points loudly and repeatedly. You've got to hammer over and over what it is you want the voters to believe. This is nothing new. Every strategist from Cicero to Goebbels to Rove has recognized the value of redundancy, loud redundancy. Say it as loud as you can, then repeat it, then say it louder and then say it again. Sooner than later it will sink into enough brains out there, millions of folks, who will believe anything.

In the recent years and months we've swallowed some amazing stuff; stuff that will look mighty naïve or even stupid when we get a few years down the road. Let's see now; "It's a slam dunk, Iraq has weapons of mass destruction." "Drilling in American coastal waters will produce cheaper gasoline soon." "Global warming is just another debatable theory." "America does not torture." "The economy is sound." "What we need is better border fences." "Mission Accomplished." The list goes on and on. It will continue to go on for as long as there is an audience needing simple, comfortable answers to life. It will be effective for as long as so many people would rather trust a leader than think something through for themselves. I guess that means it will go on forever.

The edge walkers and whack jobs that show up at campaign rallies are only the icy tips of a significantly larger population. This larger population has the same tendencies towards paranoia and bigotry as the nut ball has but they still have the self control not to yell "Kill him!" at the opposition. There are still a significant number of people who believe that Obama is an Arab or a Terrorist or a Commie. Think of them as the sort of intellectuals who follow "Bat Boy" in the Enquirer, much like the folks who lucidly discuss Professional Wrestling. These are the folks who keep the strategists working long hours to cook up what might be believed next.

Skepticism, the scrutinizing of material presented as facts, is not their cup of tea. Paranoia, the fear of the unfamiliar, is. Paranoia is such an easy approach to take because it's so emotionally satisfying (I know the truth and they don't) and it requires only the flimsiest of information to launch it down the toboggan run to dumb. Middle name Hussein = Arab Terrorist. Saw it on TV = It must be true. See? It's easy. It would be funny too, if it weren't dangerous.

Strategists love paranoia. They love fear and insecurity and weakness because the dark emotions are the ones that are easiest to appeal to. All you have to do with people who are even a little under informed and uncertain is to tell them who it is that's causing all their problems. Use the Wall Street Banker, the TV Pundit or the Tall Black Guy; it doesn't matter. Point the finger, keep it simple, and target someone they're not sure of. It always works; it's human nature. An appeal to the dark side is so much more cost effective, so much more bang for the buck. The strategist can do so much more political damage twisting a tale from the past than he can by painting a positive future.

It's too bad. It's too bad that we reward them with our credulity and our votes. It's too bad that some of us will eat everything they feed us.