

Off the Rails:

Contributed by Greg Palast
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Big Oil, Big Brother Win Big in the State of the Union

There was that tongue again. When the President lies he's got this weird nervous tick: He sticks the tip of his tongue out between his lips. Like a little boy who knows he's fibbing. FULL STORY...

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Big Oil, Big Brother Win Big in the State of the Union by Greg Palast

There was that tongue again. When the President lies he's got this weird nervous tick: He sticks the tip of his tongue out between his lips. Like a little boy who knows he's fibbing. Like a snake licking a rat.

In his State of the Union tonight the President did his tongue thing 124 times -- my kids kept count.

But it wasn't all rat-licking lies.

Most pundits concentrated on Iraq and wacky health insurance stuff. But that's just bubbles and blather. The real agenda is in the small stuff. The little razors in the policy apple, the nasty little pieces of policy shrapnel that whiz by between the appearances of the Presidential tongue.

First, there was the announcement the regime will, "give employers the tools to verify the legal status of their workers." In case you missed that one, the President is talking about creating a federal citizen profile database.

There's a problem with that idea. It's against the law. The law in question is the United States Constitution. The Founding Fathers thought the government had no right to keep track on a citizen unless there is evidence they have committed, or planned to commit, a crime.

But the Founding Fathers didn't imagine there were millions and billions of dollars to be made by private contractors ready to perform this KGB operation for the Department of Homeland Security, tracking each and every one of us to keep tabs on our "status."

These work databases will tie into "voter verification" databases required by the Help America Vote Act. And these will tie to the databases on citizenship and so on.

Will Big Brother abuse these snoop lists? The biggest purveyor of such hit lists is Choice Point, Inc. -- those characters who, before the 2000 election, helped Jeb Bush purge innocent voters as "felons" from Florida voter rolls. Will they abuse the new super-lists? Does Dick Cheney shoot in the woods?

There were several other little IEDs (improvised execrable policy devices) planted in the State of the Union. Did you catch the one about doubling the Strategic Petroleum Reserve? If you're unfamiliar with the SPR, it is supposed to be the stash of oil we keep in case the price of crude gets too high.

Well, the price of oil has been horribly high but Dick Cheney, the official who sits on the Reserve's spigots, has refused to release the oil into the market.

Instead of unleashing the Reserve and busting Big Oil's price gouging Bush will double the Reserve, which will require buying three-quarters of a billion barrels of oil. This is a nice \$40 billion pay-out to Big Oil from the US Treasury. Compare this to the President's health insurance plan which will be "revenue neutral" -- that is, have a net investment of zero.

But the \$40 billion in loot the oilmen will get from us taxpayers for doubling the Reserve is nothing compared to the boost in the worldwide price of crude caused by this massive, mad purchase. While the Congressional audience didn't even bother polite applause for the reserve purchase plan, there's no doubt they were whooping it up in Saudi Arabia. Clearly, the state of the Saudi-Bush union is still pretty good.

But why end on a cynical note? I must admit I was moved by the President's praise of Wesley Autrey, a New Yorker who, last month, threw himself on top of a man who had fallen on subway tracks -- and held him between the track rails as the train passed over them.

While the President properly acknowledged Autrey's courage in saving the man who fell on the subway tracks, Mr. Bush still did not explain why Dick Cheney pushed the man in the first place. Greg Palast is the author of *Armed Madhouse : Who's Afraid of Osama Wolf?*, *China Floats Bush Sinks*, *the Scheme to Steal '08* and other Dispatches from the Front Lines of the Class War. NY Times Bestseller