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Once again, the media try to con the people into believing Bush won By Bev Conover

April 5, 2001—With each little game the major media, with the exception of the Palm Beach Post, are playing with the Florida ballots in a feeble attempt to legitimize the illegitimate Bush administration, it becomes clearer and clearer, that, if one carefully reads what they are saying, Al Gore won the Sunshine State, was entitled to its 25 electoral votes and should be residing in the White House today.

Perhaps if Kendall Coffey, a former U.S. attorney in Miami, had been the lead attorney on Gore's post-election legal team, instead of playing second or third fiddle to the flamboyant David Boies, Gore would be president today and we would not today be suffering the Bushistas' rampage to reverse engineer their way to the Fourth Reich.

Instead we have headlines from the media's latest creative recount that scream:

REVIEW SHOWS BALLOTS SAY BUSH —Miami Herald, April 4, 2001

Newspapers' recount shows Bush prevailed —USA Today, April 4, 2001

An Analysis of Florida Balloting Favors Bush —The New York Times, April 4, 2001

Another Ballot Review Shows Bush Still Won —Washington Post, April 4, 2001

Ballot Review: Bush Would Have Won Anyway —Los Angeles Times, April 4, 2001

. . . ad nauseum.

Make the headlines big enough, bold enough, and put up charts and graphs, and the people will buy the lie, right? You know the old adage: Repeat the lie often enough and people will believe it.

Obfuscate the issue with claims of inconsistencies in the way recounts that were underway were being conducted when the U.S. Supreme Court halted the process. To paraphrase Poppy Bush's "it's the vision thing" with another of the media's bold-faced lies, "It's the standards thing."

Well, Florida has very clear laws about the way ballots will be designed, when and why ballots are to be recounted by machine and hand, and by whom, and who may apply for an absentee ballot.

Coffey understood these laws. Boies, who focused on "the big picture," did not. It's much like that bloody forest that keeps getting in the way of seeing the trees.

Ironically, buried in the April 4, 2001, Miami Herald is this story:

Law: Check 'defective' ballots

with the subhead:

But officials often ignore code's call for inspection

Herald reporter Jay Weaver wrote, "A revision of Florida's election code in the 1970s calls for county officials to inspect any "damaged or defective" ballot that cannot be tabulated by machine. In 1998, the

Florida Supreme Court ruled that ‘defective’ includes a ballot ‘marked in a manner such that it cannot be read by a scanner.’”

In the next paragraph Weaver pointed out, “Canvassing boards in most of Florida routinely ignore that provision of state law because they maintain they are only required to examine unreadable ballots if there is machine error, not voter error. On Nov. 7, they considered thousands of ballots that did not register a vote for any candidate the fault of voters who incorrectly marked them.”

But Florida Secretary of State Katherine Harris’s boy, Clay Roberts, a Republican who heads the Florida Division of Elections, told Weaver, “It’s hard to know what the right answer is now.”

Might we translate that to mean he know what the right answers are, but if he gives them some folks would be facing a prison cell?

Yet, the law says [section 101.5614 (5)]:

“If any ballot card . . . is damaged or defective so that it cannot properly be counted by the automatic tabulating equipment, a true duplicate copy shall be made of the damaged ballot card in the presence of witnesses and substituted for the damaged ballot. . . .

“If any paper ballot is damaged or defective so that it cannot be counted properly by the automatic tabulating equipment, the ballot shall be counted manually at the counting center by the canvassing board. The totals for all such ballots or ballot cards counted manually shall be added to the totals for the several precincts or election districts. . . .

“After duplicating a ballot, the defective ballot shall be placed in an envelope provided for that purpose, and the duplicate ballot shall be tallied with the other ballots for that precinct.”

Hey, it’s the Republicans who keep yammering about “the rule of law.” Apparently, “the rule of law” doesn’t apply when it’s inconvenient or goes against their candidate.

Weaver further noted, “Tucked into this section is the state’s voter-intent law: ‘No vote shall be declared invalid or void if there is a clear indication of the intent of the voter as determined by the canvassing board.’” Then he contended that law was ambiguous as to what “a damaged or defective ballot” is.

Weaver has an interesting, to say the least, way of contradicting himself when the law clearly states that a damaged or defective ballot is one that “cannot be counted properly by the automatic tabulating equipment.”

Bend . . . reach . . . twist . . .

Yet, in citing *Beckman v. Volusia County*, Weaver stated that the Florida Supreme Court “implied that the more important goal was the canvassing board’s attempt to determine voter intent on those disputed absentee ballots—even if its methods were found to violate the statute.”

So here we have precedent for voter intent, which the Rehnquist Five completely scoffed at in handing the presidency to George W. Bush.

And while the major media were having fun with hanging chad, “stupid” Jews and “illiterate” (okay, they didn’t use that word, but the meaning was clear) blacks, they ignored the issues of an illegal butterfly ballot in Palm Beach County, an illegal ballot in Duval County—where the presidential candidates were spread over two pages, but the instructions on sample ballots mailed to voters said, “Vote every page”—some 64,000 people cleansed from the voting rolls as felons, when the majority weren’t; African Americans thwarted from voting by every means aside from being physically assaulted; absentee ballot applications passed out like candy to political party operatives in violation of the law—and allowing the

operatives to “fix mistakes” on applications—and the acceptance and counting of questionable absentee ballots that weren’t properly signed or didn’t bear the required postmarks.

Despite all the bobbing and weaving of Republican officials and former officials about what the law actually means, Coffey told Weaver, “It suggests that routinely the election supervisors [in Florida] have not been following the law. If you were literally applying the law, then those votes should be counted on election night if they can be discerned with sufficient certainty.”

Now the major media are cranking up for round two: counting the overvotes. It will be interesting to see how they diddle that outcome, too.

Meanwhile, back at the ranch . . . er, in Tallahassee, who in the media is doing anything other than excepting p.r. handouts from the House Rules, Ethics and Elections Committee that just approved bills to “reform” (scary word) the state election system?

If approved by both houses, the bills would do away with punchcard ballots, the old lever mechanical machines and, worst of all, ban paper ballots. The committee proposes to offer the counties, on a competitive basis, \$100 million in interest free loans to lease optical scanners for the 2002 election. Then for 2004, a \$400 million “state of the art” (oh boy) touch screen computer system is being considered.

Once again, one of our most precious rights—the right to vote and have our vote counted—is being entrusted to the hands of private companies that will supply the equipment and hold the proprietary computer codes.

The more things change, the more they stay the same. Or should we say, they get worse?

While optically scanned ballots do leave a paper trail, touch screens don’t. And even with a paper trail, what good is it if the scanners are rigged, and the rigging is subtle enough not to raise questions that result in a manual count of the ballots?

We cannot say this often enough: When they steal your vote, the rest doesn’t matter!

Equally as worrisome is that the committee is proposing that every registered voter be listed in an Internet database allegedly accessible by only election officials and precinct workers. We all know how secure the Internet is, don’t we?