

Chicken-Hawk Hunts Tame Pheasants

On Dec. 8, Vice President Dick Cheney made a quick round-trip to Western Pennsylvania for a game-shoot at the Rolling Rock Hunt Club, associated with the home estate, "Rolling Rock," of the Mellon Family in Westmoreland County east of Pittsburgh. The logistics of Cheney's private trip and the pretense of his "hunt" have raised ire in the region. His motorcade shut down Route 30, the Lincoln Highway, for a time, and involved contingents of state, county, and local police as well as Secret Service. The day began with two Gulf Stream V jets—one of them being Air Force 2—arriving at Arnold Palmer Regional Airport before 8 a.m.; then a convoy of several Chevy Suburbans and a Humvee proceeded to the private club in Ligonier Township in the Laurel Highlands.

The "hunt" was arranged in the same way as the famed Mellon fox hunts: The prey are pen-raised, and released at points along the way of the "hunters," so they will be sure to bag something, regardless of how drunk they might be. Details of the arrangements for Cheney were kept secret, but reports are that some 500 pen-raised pheasants were released, and several dozen ducks for the morning hunt. Cheney and his party of nine killed 400 of the pheasants. Cheney is said to have killed 70 ringnecks himself, and more mallards than they could count.

This is Cheney's second trip to a private hunt on the

Mellon lands; he was there in November 2002. The *Tribune-Review*, published by Richard Mellon Scaife, reported that Cheney's "press secretary at that time said hunting and fishing are among Cheney's favorite activities, and that his previous visit included breakfast, lunch, and cocktails after the hunts. Cheney was accompanied on that outing by a group of companions from Texas." His companions this year were kept secret. The Rolling Rock Club's manager said, "We are a private club, and we do not talk about our members." Cheney's spokesman, Kevin Kellem, refused to release photographs, or give any details. He said, "The birds don't go to waste, they go to hunger-relief charities," but he would give no locations nor names.

Cheney's fundraising jaunts usually involve private meetings with fat-cats, but no public appearances. He doesn't meet any constituents, no-hand-shaking, no mixing with the people. But his motorcades tie up traffic; the cost of extra local police is borne by local taxpayers; and the cost of his travel is carried by national taxpayers. All this is raising considerable ire, as well as money—\$12.9 million for the Bush-Cheney ticket since June, with 32 stops:

- *Rocky Mountain News* (Denver), Nov. 7: "Cheney Motorcade Stalls Traffic."
- *Buffalo News*, Nov. 19: "Cheney's Lucrative Visit Comes at a Cost to City." A columnist demanded that Cheney's campaign should pay the \$10,000 extra cost for police overtime, since all he did in the city was to steal in and steal out with the money.
- *Cleveland Plain-Dealer*, Nov. 25: "Cheney Visit Raises \$750,000, Along With Voices of Protest."

1995, he aggressively sought out more government business from this lucrative spigot he and Halliburton had teamed up to turn on, and is credited with nearly doubling Halliburton's government contracts during his five-year tenure that ended in 2000.

Cheney has falsely claimed that he severed all ties with the company in 2000. "I have no financial interest in Halliburton of any kind and haven't had, now, for three years," he said, on the Sept. 14 edition of NBC's "Meet the Press." Sen. Frank Lautenberg (D-N.J.) showed Cheney's claim to be a lie, with a Congressional Research Service report demonstrating that the stock options and the deferred salary that he is receiving from Halliburton, in fact, constitute a substantial financial interest. The CRS report, released by Lautenberg on Sept. 25, states that a deferred salary "is a not a retirement benefit or a payment from a third party escrow account, but rather an ongoing corporate obligation paid from company funds. If a company were to go under, the beneficiary could lose the deferred salary." Cheney also holds 433,333 unexercised Hal-

liburton stock options, on which he has signed an agreement to donate any profits to charity. The report says, "Should Halliburton's stock price increase over the next few years, the Vice President could exercise his stock options for a substantial profit, benefitting not only his designated charities, but also providing Halliburton with a substantial tax deduction."

The CRS study reports that "deferred salary or compensation received from a private corporation in the reportable year is considered as among the 'ties' retained in or 'linkages to former employers' that may 'represent a continuing financial interest in those employers, which makes them potential conflicts of interest,' and must be disclosed as employment relationships and outside earned income." The study shows the same is true of "benefits . . . such as deferred compensations."

Senator Lautenberg had, very presciently, charged on Oct. 2 that Halliburton was not only winning huge Iraq war contracts, but padding them. He said that Halliburton had had "a September to remember," with their contracts doubling from \$700 million to \$1.4 billion just before the bidding process