



Collective Interest Radio:
Politics and Current Events with
More Thought, Less Bluster
Hosted by Sebastian James
and Carl Nyberg

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- [Daily Topics & Commentary](#)
- [The Archive](#)

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And Now, A Word from Our Founders....

By now, the only people still paying attention to this election are the political junkies and those last few brain-dead "undecided" voters. By now, the barrage of political ads are either turned off or ignored. The true believers are turning out to the candidate events. There's no more elbows to twist, no more backs to slap.

Now it's the time to get out and vote. Naturally, I'd like you to vote for John Kerry.

For those who have followed this enterprise in blogging from the beginning, you'll know I was in favor of John Edwards. But the primaries are over, and it's time for teamwork. I am happy to say that the ever-fractionous left is managing to come together in order to get rid of Bush. Hopefully the children will have learned to play together as democrats, liberals, and lefties move forward. There's nothing wrong with disagreement. But to disagree and lose sight of the mission at hand is inexcusable.

I'm not going to go into the ad nauseum reasons not to vote for George W. Bush. Just read the posts and stories below. I'm not going to try to convince you to vote for John Kerry. If you've visited this site, you've seen the numerous links to Kerry's positions on the issues. I believe the readers of this blog are smart people with the initiative to investigate what candidates stand for. Collective Interest is here to help provide the knowledge.

But knowledge without action is a waste. Take action. Please vote for John Kerry on Tuesday, November 2nd.

—Sebastian James

I request you hold President Bush and the Republican leadership accountable for mismanaging our government.

How have Bush and the Congressional Republicans screwed-up? They have consistently miscalculated on the big policy decisions. And faced with evidence the policies aren't working they don't adjust.

1. The federal budget. Bush and the Republicans took the largest surplus in history and created the biggest deficit in history in four years. And they managed to do it in a way that failed to stimulate the economy.

2. The Iraq War. In the modern era big countries don't win when they occupy other countries. The United States was humbled in Vietnam; the Soviet Union in Afghanistan. President Bush got bamboozled by Iraqi expatriates and Neo Con ideologues. The Bush team lied to get the war started and have the chutzpah to imply the US public is somehow fickle for not continuing to support the Iraq War once the lies become apparent.

3. al Qaeda. Three years and 51 days after the 9/11 attacks have we made three-years worth of progress in defeating al Qaeda? How long did it take to win World War II? Bush's team emphasizes using military force and neglects the political dimension of warfare. This shows the Bush team to be completely ignorant of what warfare is. But the Bush team seems to be incompetent even within the narrow milieu of military tactics.

al Qaeda does not threaten the existence of the United States as a great power. However, Bush's reckless spending and over-extending the military in Iraq can turn the country from being a great power to a "has been" great power.

What's particularly galling about President Bush is no one has been held accountable for the big mistakes. If Bush won't hold his appointees accountable, the electorate needs to hold him accountable.

What about Congressional Republicans? Members of the Republican Party show a great deal of deference to party leadership. And the GOP backed the bad policies. Ten years ago the Republicans were railing against deficit spending. Now the GOP has become what it railed against: corrupt, arrogant and irresponsible.

If the GOP suffers a stinging defeat in Congressional races, the next time a president presents a grossly irresponsible budget, members of Congress will think about how the GOP got hammered in 2004. The next time a president calls for an unnecessary war, members of Congress will think about how the GOP got drubbed in 2004.

There is no principled argument that Bush and the Republicans have provided quality leadership to the country. I'm not asking you to vote for Kerry. But I do ask that you do the right thing by not voting for Bush and voting to switch control of Congress from the Republicans to the Democrats.

If the Democrats screw-up as badly as the Republicans we get to hold them accountable in two years.

—Carl Nyberg

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Collective Interests

The Tsunami

Can the Democratic ground game elect John Kerry — and create an enduring progressive movement?
by Harold Meyerson

Thursday, October 28 (LA Weekly)—I have spent the past week observing the official Democratic Party and unofficial 527 field operations in the battleground states of Ohio and Florida. And I have found something I've never before seen in my 36 or so years as a progressive activist and later as a journalist: an effective, fully functioning American left.

Those liberal organizations that already knew how to do politics — the AFL-CIO, the League of Conservation Voters (LCV) and a few others — are doing it better than they have before. Those liberal groups that stayed aloof from elections or phumpered ineffectually are now playing the game like seasoned pros. New organizations have arisen to mobilize sometime voters; the largest of them — America Coming Together (ACT) — will have 12,000 staffers in each of the three biggest battleground states (Pennsylvania, Ohio and Florida) on Election Day.

And most amazingly, all the 527s — ACT, the AFL-CIO, the LCV, the Sierra Club, the NAACP, Emily's List, MoveOn and 25 others — are working together under the umbrella of a single coalition, America Votes. They meet together, plan together, divvy up turf, parcel out messages, coordinate their mailing and phone banking.

Here in Orlando, ACT is getting out the vote in the black and Latino communities, while the LCV targets more upscale white suburbs. The Sierra Club plays the LCV's role in Tampa, where it has a thriving chapter. "On the environmental side, we never figured out how to work together before," says Allan Oliver, who heads the LCV's Orlando operation. "Now, I'm on the phone to the Sierra Club every week; we say, how can we do this better?" The 527s even share their private polling — a common-sense pooling of knowledge that was utterly unthinkable before the prospect of four more years of George W. Bush concentrated the progressive mind. [More](#)

Condi's Dad and the Lessons of War

Thursday, October 28 (PublicEye.org)—When I hear Condoleezza Rice defending the war in Iraq I think of her father denouncing the war in Vietnam. Condi's dad was a Dean in the college of liberal arts at the University of Denver in the early 1970s when I was editor of the student newspaper, the Clarion. His name was John Rice, but no student dared call him that. He was an imposing figure, and we all called him "Dean" Rice.

In her book *Bushwomen*, Laura Flanders traces how Condi Rice was recruited by right-wing Republicans. Flanders recounts how Ms. Rice, speaking at the GOP convention in Philadelphia, said that her father "was the first Republican I knew," and claimed "In America, with education and hard work, it really does not matter where you come from; it matters only where you are going."

That's not what I learned from Dean Rice. I took his class "The Black Experience in America," and continued to attend the seminars with his encouragement. The seminar was built around a series of invited speakers who lectured in a public form followed by classroom discussions. That's where I met Fanny Lou Hamer, a Black voting rights activist from Sunflower County Mississippi, who led the successful challenge to the all-White Mississippi delegation to the 1964 Democrat Convention. That's where I heard Dean Rice explain that he had always refused to register as a Democrat because that was the party of the bigots who had blocked his voter registration when he and his family lived in the South.

Dean Rice may have been registered as a Republican up North, but he taught me about working for progressive social change and opposing institutional racism. He taught me that White people like me enjoyed privileges routinely denied to Blacks. He taught me that the proportion of Blacks serving in Vietnam was tied to economic and social policies at home. And he pointed out that along with this knowledge came an absolute moral imperative to act. [More](#)

Don't Ask Me

Thursday, October 28 (Washington Post)—Three dozen protesters gathered outside the Minneapolis Star Tribune building a month ago. They glowered and pounded on the windows. They carried signs calling the newspaper the "Star and Sickle." They shouted "Liberal!" at staffers leaving the building.

A few days before the demonstration, Ron Eibensteiner, chairman of the state Republican Party, had demanded that the publisher fire Rob Daves, the paper's longtime pollster.

"Hey, hey, ho, ho, Rob Daves has got to go!" the pickets chanted.

A few days later, Eibensteiner amended that request: If you will not fire Daves, at least suspend the paper's 60-year-old Minnesota Poll until after the election.

Daves's offense: a poll the previous week suggested that Democrat John Kerry led President Bush by 9 percentage points in Minnesota while subsequent surveys by others suggested a tie or a narrower Kerry lead.

It's tough being a pollster these days, even in Minnesota. "It's the rhetoric of mean-spiritedness, and it's just gotten worse and worse and worse," says Daves, a mild-mannered North Carolina native.

Across the country, other pollsters are hearing similarly smash-mouth attacks. "The polls are wrong. They are all over the map like diarrhea," rages filmmaker Michael Moore, who took time out from bashing Bush to bash the polls in a posting on his Web site. "You are being snookered if you believe any of these polls." [More](#)

Passion and Election Disputes On Rise in Florida as Vote Nears

Thursday, October 28 (New York Times)—Six days before Election Day, Florida is again struggling with questions about potential voting irregularities, from complaints about missing absentee ballots in Broward County and accusations of voter suppression in minority neighborhoods to concerns about new touch-screen voting machines. Floridians have been standing for as long as three hours to cast early votes in the presidential race, testimony to the unresolved passions of the election of 2000. Interest is so intense that analysts predict that a staggering 75 percent of Florida voters will cast ballots by the time polls close Tuesday evening.

The disappearance of absentee ballots only fed suspicion among Democrats already distrustful of a state government controlled by President Bush's brother Gov. Jeb Bush, with pollsters saying Floridians are already concerned that their votes will not be counted.

The Florida Department of Law Enforcement said Wednesday that it found no foul play after investigating widespread complaints of missing absentee ballots in Broward County. But questions remained about where the ballots had gone and whether the intended recipients would be able to vote. [More](#)

What Could Go Wrong: Part II

Thursday, October 28 (CBS News.com)—A surge in registration in several states and the expected high turnout for Election Day 2004 are stirring worries about polling problems and setting up possible court challenges across the country.

The list of potential pitfalls is motley:

- * New voters may not find their names on the rolls at polling places or may lack proper identification.
- * Some might have to file special provisional ballots, but even these could be discounted if filed in the wrong precinct.
- * There are allegations of registration fraud against both a Republican-linked firm and a Democratic-leaning organization.
- * Civil rights groups suspect that "purge lists" will block eligible voters.
- * Democrats worry about intimidation at the polls. Republicans fret about late-mailed absentee ballots.
- * The top election official in Florida has contacted the FBI about people from out of state casting ballots there.
- * In Ohio, there was even a controversy over the type of paper upon which registration forms must be printed.

Despite the range of obstacles, state elections officials are projecting calm. [More](#)

GOP challenges of Ohio registrations delayed

Thursday, October 28 (Star-Tribune)—A federal judge temporarily stopped hearings Wednesday on Republican challenges of thousands of voter registrations, ruling in favor of Democrats who alleged that the challenges were an attempt to keep legitimate votes from being counted. U.S. District Judge Susan Dlott ruled that six county elections boards should stop hearings scheduled this week in Ohio, a hotly contested state for Tuesday's presidential election.

The Republicans challenged as many as 35,000 registrations after mail came back undelivered, saying they could be fraudulent. About half the challenges were filed in Democrat-heavy Cuyahoga County, which includes Cleveland.

Democrats filed suit Tuesday requesting an order to halt the hearings that county boards of elections had scheduled to determine whether

challenged voters live where they are registered and should remain on the rolls.

The Democrats say the GOP is trying to keep poor people and minority members, who move more often, from voting, and that the GOP is targeting new voters registered by political groups supporting Sen. John Kerry. [More](#)

Most challenges halted

Registration hearings blocked in Cuyahoga County. Summit's to go on

Thursday, October 28 (Akron Beacon Journal)—Hearings on hundreds of challenged voter registrations were set to proceed this morning at the Summit County Board of Elections, despite a federal court order Wednesday that halted the hearings in Medina County and five other Ohio counties.

U.S. District Judge Susan Dlott in Cincinnati issued a temporary restraining order to stop hearings on challenged voter registrations in Cuyahoga, Franklin, Trumbull, Lawrence and Scioto counties as well as Medina County. [More](#)

TV, Money and 'Crossfire' Politics

There's no ideological coherence to partisan positions. But you must support your team. If you don't, it screws up the TV show

Monday, October 25 (Fareed Zakhara.com)—There are no unscripted moments in American politics anymore, certainly not seven days before the presidential election. That's why the talk of Washington last week was a few minutes of spontaneous unrehearsed drama—among TV personalities, not politicians. Comedy Central's Jon Stewart, host of the wicked political satire "The Daily Show," had gone on CNN's "Crossfire" as a guest and complained about the show. "It's hurting America," Stewart said, explaining that "Crossfire" and programs like it were not discussion shows but theater. His hosts seemed stunned—"Come on. Be funny," Tucker Carlson said plaintively. Perhaps it's unfair to single out "Crossfire" for scorn, but on his broader point, Stewart is exactly right. The structure of political life in Washington is increasingly made for theater, partisan fund-raising, polling and consulting—but not for governing. And after a close election the problem is only going to get worse. [More](#)

Violent Crime Down Three Percent in 2003

Monday, October 25 (Washington Post)—Every type of violent crime fell last year with one notable exception: Murders were up for the fourth straight year, according to an annual FBI report released Monday.

After reaching a low point in 1999 of about 15,500 homicides, the number has crept up steadily since then to more than 16,500 in 2003 -- or almost six murders for every 100,000 U.S. residents.

That was a 1.7 percent increase from 2002 and a jump of more than 6 percent since 1999. Still, the latest figure was 29 percent lower than the homicides in 1994.

James Alan Fox, criminal justice professor at Northeastern University, said the recent rise in murders is partly traceable to an upsurge in urban youth gang violence. The FBI report indicates there were 819 juvenile gang killings last year, compared with 580 in 1999.

"It's quite clear that at least in terms of homicide, the great 1990s crime drop is officially over and has been for some time," Fox said. "While this does not signal any epidemic of homicide in this country, we cannot ignore what has happened in the past few years." [More](#)

The Strategy to Secure Iraq Did Not Foresee a 2nd War

Catastrophic Success in Iraq (1 of 3)

Tuesday, October 19 (New York Times)—Gen. Tommy R. Franks climbed out of a C-130 plane at the Baghdad airport on April 16, 2003, and pumped his fist into the air. American troops had pushed into the capital of liberated Iraq little more than a week before, and it was the war commander's first visit to the city.

Much of the Sunni Triangle was only sparsely patrolled, and Baghdad was still reeling from a spasm of looting. Apache attack helicopters prowled the skies as General Franks headed to the Abu Ghraib North Palace, a retreat for Saddam Hussein that now served as the military's headquarters.

Huddling in a drawing room with his top commanders, General Franks told them it was time to make plans to leave. Combat forces should be prepared to start pulling out within 60 days if all went as expected, he said. By September, the more than 140,000 troops in Iraq could be down to little more than a division, about 30,000 troops.

To help bring stability and allow the Americans to exit, President Bush had reviewed a plan the day before seeking four foreign divisions - including Arab and NATO troops - to take on peacekeeping duties.

As the Baghdad meeting drew to a close, the president in a teleconference congratulated the commanders on a job well done. Afterward, they posed for photos and puffed on victory cigars.

Within a few months, though, the Bush administration's optimistic assumptions had been upended. Many of the foreign troops never came. The Iraqi institutions expected to help run the country collapsed. The adversary that was supposed to have been shocked and awed into submission was reorganizing beyond the reach of overstretched American troops.

In the debate over the war and its aftermath, the Bush administration has portrayed the insurgency that is still roiling Iraq today as an unfortunate, and unavoidable, accident of history, an enemy that emerged only after melting away during the rapid American advance toward Baghdad. The sole mistake Mr. Bush has acknowledged in the war is in not foreseeing what he termed that "catastrophic success." [More](#)

Scientific Integrity in Policy Making

Further investigation of the Bush administration's abuse of science

Tuesday, October 19 (Union of Concerned Scientists.org)—On February 18, 2004, 62 preeminent scientists including Nobel laureates, National Medal of Science recipients, former senior advisers to administrations of both parties, numerous members of the National Academy of Sciences, and other well-known researchers released a statement titled Restoring Scientific Integrity in Policy Making. In this statement, the scientists

charged the Bush administration with widespread and unprecedented "manipulation of the process through which science enters into its decisions." [More](#)

Texas Republican Party Platform 2004

Tuesday, October 19 (TheocracyWatch.org)–

"The Republican Party of Texas affirms the United States of America is a Christian Nation ..."
–State of Texas GOP Platform, 2004

Many Republicans will say that the Texas GOP Platform does not speak for the true Republican Party. Of course there are many notable moderate Republicans, and they will be the ones in public view as speakers at the Republican Convention. There are also a handful of moderates in the Senate who have sometimes opposed President Bush's policies or judicial nominations. But the party as a whole has not distanced itself from Platform, nor has it repudiated the document. From the Boston Globe, July 12, 2004, The GOP's Christian Nation:

Some conservatives in the media have not merely refused to criticize the "Christian nation" plank but rallied to its defense. Interviewing Texas Republican Party chairwoman Tina Berkiser, the Fox News Channel's Bill O'Reilly described the plank as "largely symbolic" response to secularist activists and judges who would throw God out of the public square. On another Fox News show, "Hannity & Colmes," guest host Mike Gallagher suggested that objections to the plank stemmed from anti-Christian "bigotry."

The Texas Republican Party Platform can be read as a blueprint for Bush administration policies, and reflects the values of Dominion Theology. Dominionists believe the federal government should recede into the background. [More](#)

FACING FACTS, THE OTHER DEFICIT

Tuesday, October 19 (Concord Coalition.com)–Conspicuously absent in the presidential campaign and debates has been any sense of urgency about the federal budget deficit. Neither candidate promises to do more than halve it within four years. And in all likelihood, neither's budget plan would do even that.

But there is a looming issue that will compel whoever is elected on November 2 to confront the budget deficit—and perhaps confront it suddenly and painfully. It's the other deficit. It's our current account deficit, which essentially equals the savings we send to foreigners minus the savings foreigners send to us. The Bureau of Economic Analysis reported last month that the current-account deficit surged to \$166 billion in the second quarter, or \$665 billion on an annual basis. That's 5.7 percent of GDP—an unprecedented rate of borrowing that many economists fear may lead to a crash in the dollar and in financial markets. And with record monthly trade deficits in the headlines, the gap could widen even further next quarter.

A large and widening current-account deficit is what happens when a low-savings country runs large and widening budget deficits. It cannot continue much longer. [More](#)

Many of Bush's self-proclaimed achievements still works in progress

Thursday, October 14 (Knight-Ridder)–President Bush has big plans for a second White House term, but he'll also face a pile of unfinished business if he wins in November.

Virtually every item that Bush lists as a signature achievement of his first term remains a work in progress, from the global war on terrorism to his overhaul of the nation's education system. That doesn't mean he's failed. Big changes always take time, and Bush has never shied away from big changes.

Here are the items the president lists as his top accomplishments - and the work still to be done on them. [More](#)

The NASCAR voter that never was

Thursday, October 14 (The Hill.com)–A year ago, "NASCAR dads" were all the rage among political consultants and pollsters searching for a storyline about a group of voters who would determine the outcome of the 2004 election.

But just like other labels, such as "security moms" — married mothers with children for whom terrorism was a defining issue — and "office-park dads," NASCAR dads have not materialized as a decisive voting bloc. NASCAR tracks are located primarily in Republican areas, and they tend to draw Republican fans. [More](#)

Hefley: 'I was threatened'

Ethics committee's actions against DeLay trigger angry response from Republicans

Thursday, October 14 (The Hill.com)–House ethics committee Chairman Joel Hefley (R-Colo.) said last week that Republican lawmakers have threatened him in the wake of his panel's recent admonishments of House Majority Leader Tom DeLay (R-Texas).

Asked what response he has received from House Republicans since two ethics committee admonishments were issued in a span of seven days, Hefley said, "I've been attacked; I've been threatened."

However, Hefley would not reveal who or how many of his colleagues had threatened him, or what retaliation had been threatened. [More](#)

How to Win the 'Netwar' in Iraq

Wednesday, October 13 (FareedZakaria.com)–A willful misreading of reality persists. Only two weeks ago, President Bush described Iraq as being thwarted by a 'handful of terrorists'

If you are looking for good news out of Iraq, there are glimmers. Last week U.S. troops accompanied by Iraqi forces regained control of Samarra in a relatively quick and clean operation. A city that was run by anti-American insurgents is now in the hands of the Iraqi government. American officials hope that this will be the beginning of the stabilization of the Sunni Triangle. But for this latest campaign to work, what will matter most

are postwar operations. U.S. troops will have to work with Iraqi forces to create a stable, law-abiding environment in Samarra (and other cities) and jump-start economic reconstruction. Recall that the U.S. invasion of Iraq was relatively quick and clean, only to be undone by disastrous postwar operations.

Paul Bremer has now admitted what has been obvious to many since the week Baghdad fell. "We never had enough troops," he said at a conference, adding that he should have insisted that more were needed. Senior officials who worked with Bremer at the time have told me the Pentagon's civilian leadership staunchly opposed adding more troops and would not allow existing troops to do police work. That explains why American forces did not stop widespread looting and failed to secure ammunition dumps and other critical sites. (Similarly, American troops were not permitted to stop the burgeoning drug trade in Afghanistan.) [More](#)

The dismal science bites back

George Bush comes out worst in our poll of academic economists

Wednesday, October 13 (The Economist.com)—WOULD John Kerry or George Bush do a better job stewarding America's economy? Judging by the polls, voters are not sure. Within the past couple of months both candidates have had narrow leads on the issue. Ask economics professors, however, and you get a clearer answer.

In an informal poll of 100 academics, conducted by The Economist, Mr Bush's policies win low marks. More than 70% of the 56 professors who responded to our survey rate Mr Bush's first-term economic policies as bad or very bad. Fewer than 20% give positive marks to Mr Bush's second-term economic agenda, and almost six out of ten disapproved. Mr Kerry hardly got rave reviews either, but his economic plan still fared better than the president's did. In all, four out of ten professors rated Mr Kerry's economic plan as good or very good, but 27% gave it negative scores. (The complete numbers are available at www.economist.com/economistspoll.) [More](#)

Bush Health Savings Accounts Slow to Gain Acceptance

Wednesday, October 13 (New York Times)—President Bush has made health savings accounts one of his central campaign remedies for the nation's health care problems, but so far employers and workers have been slow to accept the accounts as an alternative to conventional health insurance.

People around the nation are now taking part in the annual enrollment season for health care plans, but only a tiny fraction of employers are offering the new plans. The plans let workers create tax-free savings accounts to use for medical costs, combined with lower-cost, high-deductible insurance to cover major medical care. Most employees who already have health benefits said in an insurance industry survey that they would be reluctant to switch even if they were offered one of the new plans.

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The UnitedHealth Group, for example, the nation's largest health insurer, representing employers who cover more than 18 million workers, expects only about 150,000 of those employees to choose health savings accounts for 2005. Aetna, the second-largest underwriter of employer health care plans, says that only 38 of the hundreds of employers it covers are offering the savings plans for 2005. [More](#)

Bagdad, Year Zero

Thursday, October 7 (Harpers.org)—...The honey theory of Iraqi reconstruction stems from the most cherished belief of the war's ideological architects: that greed is good. Not good just for them and their friends but good for humanity, and certainly good for Iraqis. Greed creates profit, which creates growth, which creates jobs and products and services and everything else anyone could possibly need or want. The role of good government, then, is to create the optimal conditions for corporations to pursue their bottomless greed, so that they in turn can meet the needs of the society. The problem is that governments, even neoconservative governments, rarely get the chance to prove their sacred theory right: despite their enormous ideological advances, even George Bush's Republicans are, in their own minds, perennially sabotaged by meddling Democrats, intractable unions, and alarmist environmentalists.

Iraq was going to change all that. In one place on Earth, the theory would finally be put into practice in its most perfect and uncompromised form. A country of 25 million would not be rebuilt as it was before the war; it would be erased, disappeared. In its place would spring forth a gleaming showroom for laissez-faire economics, a utopia such as the world had never seen. Every policy that liberates multinational corporations to pursue their quest for profit would be put into place: a shrunken state, a flexible workforce, open borders, minimal taxes, no tariffs, no ownership restrictions.

[More](#)

THE ANTICIPATED CORPORATE TAX PACKAGE: WATCH OUT FOR GIMMICKS AND GIVEAWAYS

Thursday, October 7 (Center for Budget and Policy Priorities)—A Congressional conference committee, chaired by House Ways and Means Chairman Bill Thomas, is scheduled to meet late on October 4 to finalize a package of corporate tax changes. The package will raise revenue primarily by repealing an export subsidy that the World Trade Organization has ruled to be illegal, closing some corporate tax shelters, and extending expiring user fees. It will use these savings not to reduce the deficit or to address other national priorities, but to provide a raft of new tax breaks, primarily for corporations.

Chairman Thomas has indicated that the final package will be "revenue neutral." The Senate deserves credit for pushing the House to agree to this goal, as the House-passed package would have explicitly increased the deficit. The key issue, however, is whether this goal will be achieved without resorting to budgetary sleight of hand. [More](#)

A Clash of Goals in Bush's Efforts on the Income Tax

Wednesday, October 6 (New York Times)—As he campaigns for re-election, President Bush is vowing to lead a bipartisan effort to overhaul the personal income tax and make it "simpler, fairer and progrowth."

Almost all experts agree that the current tax code is hideously complicated and often unfair. But they also say that accomplishing any fundamental

change will be hideously difficult, in part because Mr. Bush's goals clash with one another and with some of his own initiatives.
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Republican and Democratic tax experts caution that making the tax code simpler would almost certainly set off a fierce political battle over the issue of fairness, because most options under discussion would shift a substantial share of the tax burden from high-income families to middle-income earners. [More](#)

U.S. Report Finds Iraq Was Minimal Weapons Threat in '03

Wednesday, October 6 (New York Times)—Iraq now appears to have destroyed its stockpiles of illicit weapons within months of the Persian Gulf war of 1991, and by the time of the American invasion in spring 2003, its capacity to produce such weapons was continuing to erode, the top American inspector in Iraq said in a report made public today.
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The report by Charles A. Duelfer said the last Iraqi factory capable of producing militarily significant quantities of unconventional weapons was destroyed in 1996. The finding amounted to the starkest portrayal yet of a vast gap between the Bush administration's prewar assertions about Iraqi weapons and what a 15-month postinvasion inquiry by American investigators has concluded were the facts on the ground.

At the time of the American invasion, Mr. Duelfer concluded, Iraq had not possessed military-scale stockpiles of illicit weapons for a dozen years and was not actively seeking to produce them.

The White House had portrayed the war as a bid to disarm Iraq of unconventional weapons, and had invoked images of mushroom clouds, deadly gases and fearsome poisons. But Mr. Duelfer concluded that even if Iraq had sought to restart its weapons programs in 2003, it could not have produced significant quantities of chemical weapons for at least a year, and would have required years to produce a nuclear weapon.

[More](#) For the full report, [click here](#)

Fact-checking the debate

Wednesday, October 6 (Boston Globe)—Analyzing the statements of Vice President Dick Cheney and challenger Senator John Edwards. [More](#)

Government terrorist warnings boost President Bush's approval ratings, a Cornell sociologist finds

Tuesday, October 5 (Cornell University)—When the federal government issues a terrorist warning, presidential approval ratings jump, a Cornell University sociologist finds. Interestingly, terrorist warnings also boost support for the president on issues that are largely irrelevant to terrorism, such as his handling of the economy. [More](#)

Moose on the Loose

Tuesday, October 5 (Washington Monthly.com)—Bush had a chance after 9/11 to create a bold new politics of national purpose that would make Teddy Roosevelt proud. But he blew it. A modern Bull Moose progressive now finds common cause with Kerry and Edwards.

This unreconstructed Bull Moose will run with the donkey in November.

I am an independent McCainiac who hopes to revive the Bull Moose tradition of Theodore Roosevelt, and I support the Kerry-Edwards agenda. Don't get me wrong -- this Bull Moose is not completely in agreement with the Democratic donkey. But the Bush administration has betrayed the effort to create a new politics of national greatness in the aftermath of 9/11.

If John Kerry wins, it remains to be seen whether his administration will be more willing to break with its ideological base than a Bush team that has been slavishly loyal to its corporate paymasters. But there is no remaining shred of doubt that another four years of a Bush presidency would have a toxic effect on American politics. If George W. Bush is re-elected, unlimited corporate power, cynicism, and division will ride high in the saddle. [More](#)

JOHN DELIVERS IN DO-OR-DIE SITUATION

Friday, October 1 (Yahoo News)— It may have been the worst debate that President Bush has ever had — while Democrat John Kerry scored one of his best.

In debates, Bush has a history of being crisp and focused and able to stay right on message, but last night he came across as hesitant and defensive, unable to get his points across clearly.

All year, Kerry has been all over the map on Iraq (news - web sites), flip-flopping on whether he's for or against the war and contradicting himself, but last night Kerry was on-message and unyielding as he insisted he's been consistent.

It's almost as if Bush and Kerry swapped places — it was Kerry who was focused and aggressive while Bush sounded more like the senator, tangled into jargon and using insider phrases like "six-party talks" with North Korea (news - web sites).

Kerry also had a laser-clear way of presenting himself as the agent of change for people who fear America is on the wrong track, summing Bush's program in four cold words, "More of the same." [More](#)

Economy Grew at 3.3 Percent Rate in 2nd Quarter

Wednesday, September 29 (New York Times)—The U.S. economy grew at an annual rate of 3.3 percent in the spring, the government reported Wednesday. That was significantly better than a previous estimate but still the weakest showing in more than a year.

The Commerce Department said the April-to-June increase in the gross domestic product -- the country's total output of goods and services -- was

revised upward by 0.5 percentage point from its estimate just a month ago that the economy expanded at a 2.8 percent pace in the second quarter. [More](#)

It's breaking

Newsradio 780 is now running a story about the Keyes thing. Katie bar the door.

Wednesday, September 29 (Chillinois.com)—Republican Alan Keyes made headlines at the Republican National Convention when he accused Vice President Cheney's openly gay daughter of practicing "selfish hedonism."

He is silent now regarding reports that his daughter is a lesbian. [More](#)

Ransom rumours cloud return of Italy's hostages

Wednesday, September 29 (Reuters)—National joy in Italy at the safe return of two aid workers held hostage in Iraq has given way in some quarters to concern that Rome paid a ransom for the women's freedom. [More](#)

Daily Topics & Commentary:

Thursday, October 28

12:43—It's So Close to the Election, The Bushies Don't Have Time to Police Their Lies

[From ABC/Channel 5, Minneapolis—St. Paul:](#)

News Video May Be Linked to Missing Explosives Story

A 5 EYEWITNESS NEWS crew in Iraq shortly after the fall of Saddam Hussein was in the area where tons of explosives disappeared, and may have videotaped some of those weapons.

The missing explosives are now an issue in the presidential debate. Democratic candidate John Kerry is accusing President Bush of not securing the site they allegedly disappeared from. President Bush says no one knows if the ammunition was taken before or after the fall of Baghdad on April 9, 2003 when coalition troops moved in to the area....

Here's another refutation of the White House's version of facts [in today's NY Times](#):

4 Iraqis Tell of Looting at Munitions Site in '03

Looters stormed the weapons site at Al Qaqaa in the days after American troops swept through the area in early April 2003 on their way to Baghdad, gutting office buildings, carrying off munitions and even dismantling heavy machinery, three Iraqi witnesses and a regional security chief said Wednesday.

The Iraqis described an orgy of theft so extensive that enterprising residents rented their trucks to looters. But some looting was clearly indiscriminate, with people grabbing anything they could find and later heaving unwanted items off the trucks....

Bush is completely exposed on this story. The multiple explanations provided by the Pentagon and administration sources are disproven each day. This morning, according to NPR, the President inferred that the explosives may have been removed before the invasion. Other reports, from conservative sources, say that Russian troops removed the weapons before the war.

But this is video proof that all of the above are lies. More lies from the home of lying liars, the Bush administration.

In speeches, Bush says that "we've captured and destroyed over 400,000 TONS of explosives," to assuage people's fears about how dangerous this batch of HDX and RDX are. To a certain extent this is necessary so as not to frighten the populace. But to equate these explosives with highly dangerous but common military munitions is to say confiscating a six-shooter is the same as a rocket launcher.

Wednesday, October 27

5:11 pm—It's Official: Bush's Only Hope to Win is in the Intimidation of Minority Voters

[This](#), from a reputable GOP polling organization. It would make sense to keep your eyes and ears peeled for more Republican "challengers" in big-city and urban minority precincts. Ohio is now doomed to become a racial powderkeg. Prepare yourself for ugliness on all sides.

But never forget, the Republicans need it to get ugly in order to win. If the they feel victory at any cost is honorable, be ready to hear talk of a Bush "mandate" even if it is proven the GOP achieved victory by using tactics the United States wouldn't tolerate in a third-world country.

What does this say about Bush's commitment to minorities? He's in favor of their rights, until it comes time to make sure they won't vote against him?

What does this say about the Republican Party? They profess American values from one side of their mouth and condone Communist intimidation tactics from the other? Are these the people who should be in charge of the Republic?

How did we get here? Apathy, ignorance, and a host of other sins that allowed this insane political alliance of racists (ex-Dixiecrats), government-haters, and missionaries on a steroid rage. How they rose to so much power without being checked by fellow Republicans, Democrats and the press and the citizenry is amazing, a shame, and a lesson.

Sorry, I'm going on another roll. Would you teach your children to be like this President? What in his character does he have to offer as guide? He's a Christian, but we don't see regular reports of his comings and goings to church. Is he as religious as the modern Christian crusaders want us to believe he is?

He's not Bill Clinton. Boy-o-boy he's no Bill Clinton. Right now, I'd take lies about hanky-panky than lies about how we lost 380 TONS of high-yield explosives. But even more than that, George W. Bush is no George HW Bush, no Ronald Reagan, no Dwight Eisenhower, or no Teddy Roosevelt. Most of all he's no Abraham Lincoln. He is an oddity in the presidential line, like Nixon, but an even more stirring example of what not to do if elected president.

Perhaps the only way to begin to purge this nation of the effects of this particular bunch of Republicans is for them to get uglier and nastier. Karl Rove began in the Nixon administration. Over the next 7 days we need more dirty tricks. We need Rush and Sean to turn up the heat. We need more cynical legislation and manipulation from the House and Senate leaders. We need to see more truths from Iraq being squelched. Most of all, we need to hear more of George Bush's words. We need to hear his stirring words so we can compare them to the reality that faces us. We need these Republicans to follow their tendencies so that ordinary, non-political junkie-types can see the illegitimacy of their beliefs, and the inherent danger their values pose to the Republic.

Tuesday, October 26

3:44 pm—Today, Organized Religion and the GOP are the Biggest Threats to Christianity

The Christian church I have known over the decades has been hijacked by the politically rabid religious right. This is not news, and I know it; but from time to time examples of how far organized Christianity in the United States has bent to the wishes of the shrill and intolerant. The thought that I shouldn't push my religion on someone who doesn't want to hear it will send me to hell. The idea that there is a separation of church and state and a respect for that concept will send me to hell. That I don't hate gays will send me to hell.

It is a shame and a disgrace that religion has become one with politics. My minister should be more worried with my soul than my vote. They are not one in the same, and never have been. The more these modern Christian crusaders are allowed to divide the church and the nation, the more people will see the Christian faith as morally bankrupt. Islam is going through its own process with those that confuse love, faith and hate. For the sake of the Republic and the planet, tolerant people of both religions must win the fight.

What put me in such a flutter? Why a little column I read at [LaShawn Barber's blog](#). It's by a crusader named Doug Giles. In a nutshell, you can't be a liberal (democrat) and be a Christian. The love of Jesus's healing and forgiving grace is just rolling off this guy. The principles of national greatness conservatism ring in his words. [Read these words for yourself](#). They're not very well reasoned, and they're as reactive as any of the tripe spewed by Ann Coulter. But the fact that it comes from a professed Christian make my blood boil.

America is hands down one of the most, if not the most religious nation on the planet. We are also by far one of the most free. Why is it that so many of our citizens feel persecuted? What is it about freedom that terrifies these people? Is it religious freedom? They may make a case that America is a Christian nation, but a stronger case is that America was founded on the themes that settled the New World—religious freedom and independence. It's easy to extrapolate that concept and apply it to Jehovah's Witnesses, Buddhists, and Moonies. It's more difficult to apply it to Satanists. But the crusaders seize upon every instance of the Satanist being able to worship as a threat to the hundreds of thousands of instances Christians and other non-evil worshipping religions have to practice theirs.

One of the things I recall about becoming a Christian is that one must come to Christ on their own, or they cannot be saved. One of the tenets of evangelical Christianity is a mission to spread the Gospel. The dark side of that mission is the Christian crusader either saving souls or slitting throats. Not the greatest decision matrix for a religion based on free will. There's something in the freedom of being able to say "no" that is unsettling to the object of the refusal—not just for missionaries, but for canvassers, marketers, and lonely bachelors as well. "No" is not a character flaw, or the devil's first step into your soul. "No" can be said to what Christian crusaders consider evil as well. Free will applies in both directions. Unfortunately that doesn't play as well to the crusaders.

A long time ago I re-read the writings of St. Augustine. Back in college, his writings were seminal in how I identified and articulated my world view. His philosophy of the "Heavenly City" and the "Earthly City" summed up how Christians, non-Christians, and non-believers could live on earth together. I believe I'll stop at Borders and pick up one of his books again.

Sorry about the tirade....

Tuesday, October 19

5:49 pm—As My Final Post Before Going Out of Town....

Crossfire, please stop hurting America. [Here's the clip](#) from CNN's "Crossfire" that sums up what's bad about today's political journalism. Kudos for Jon Stewart for saying what the rest of us have wanted to for the past decade or so....

See you Monday!

4:11 pm—Found It!

We all know Bush lied during the third Presidential Debate when he claimed he never said he was unconcerned with finding Osama bin Laden. So, after a little digging (thanks BradBlog), I present to you, my readers, a direct refutation of one of the many lies of George Bush.

[Enjoy](#)

I've also attached a new Kerry for President ad, featuring the text, not the video of the president's words. Why just the text? Because the White House scrubbed all record of the briefing from the White House website. Just goes to show you, the honest, straight-shooter is a snake.

[Again, enjoy.](#)

3:33 pm— If This Isn't a Backhanded Compliment, I Don't Know What Is

Below is a [pro-Bush editorial](#) from the Indianapolis Star. Now Indiana is as close as you can get to Georgia above the Mason-Dixon Line, so it should be no surprise that the paper favors "43." But read the words and you will see the voice of moderate Republicans unhappy with how the Bushies have run the country.

In 2nd term, Bush must unify nation by admitting errors, seeking remedies
October 17, 2004

Our position is: President Bush must use a second term to protect and unify the nation.
The tightness of this year's race for president speaks volumes about the unsatisfying choice facing voters: George W. Bush vs. the anti-Bush.

Sen. John Kerry is in hot pursuit of the presidency not because of his Senate record (it's undistinguished), or because of the clarity of his positions (from Iraq to energy policy, the senator has presented opposition without an underlying and consistent vision). Rather, Kerry is running close with the president mostly because he is not the president. George Bush holds the office because he convinced a goodly number of voters four years ago that he would unify an increasingly divided country. He made a convincing case that he would be a decisive leader. He sold himself as the candidate best able to articulate the traditional moral values of Middle America.

His initial response to the horrific terrorist attack that took place in the eighth month of his presidency was resolute, calming and reassuring. He quickly mounted a successful effort to drive the cruel, al-Qaida-harboring Taliban out of power in Afghanistan. Here was a no-nonsense leader at a time that required nothing less.

Most Americans, along with editorials in this space, supported the president's decision to go to war against Iraq.

That's when the president's vulnerabilities began to surface. He accepted flawed intelligence about Iraq and weapons of mass destruction, and when the truth became known, stubbornly refused to acknowledge it. A little more than two months after the war started, he flew to an aircraft carrier in the Pacific and gave Americans the impression the war was all but over. More than 940 of the nearly 1,100 American casualties in the war have occurred since the "Mission Accomplished" sign was displayed on the flight deck of that aircraft carrier.

The task of rebuilding Iraq was poorly planned, and the lack of a coherent approach has been sharply criticized by thoughtful stalwarts of the president's own party, including Indiana's senior U.S. senator, Richard Lugar. The president adamantly refuses to listen to those who question him. He has insulated himself from voices he doesn't want to hear and suggests that those who question his Iraq policies are playing into the hands of the enemy.

Meanwhile, the president, who now labels John Kerry the master of flip-flops, played politics with steel tariffs, presided over an economic policy that is producing huge budget deficits, and expanded Medicare into one of the more expensive social programs ever known. He has mocked his critics, and in the process has proved to be a divider rather than a unifier, feeding the growing national tendency for Americans to work against, rather than with, each other in developing solutions to common problems.

Yet for all of that, John Kerry has failed to mobilize any significant passion in support of his approach to leading the country. He has not offered a convincing case that he can do better.

Walk down the street and ask the first person you see what Kerry stands for, and chances are the person won't know. Look at Kerry's lengthy Senate record and try to find strong consistent leadership. It doesn't exist. Look for a record of creative lawmaking and you'll come up empty. Kerry has not demonstrated a consistent and resolute philosophy. Rather, he has done what has been necessary to get elected and re-elected to the Senate, and to position himself as the anti-Bush.

The president has faced enormous challenges since he took office in January 2001.

The country was headed into a serious recession, which by itself would have shaken the confidence of Americans. Then came the Sept. 11 attacks, the most serious attack against Americans in the country's history. Despite that, new jobs are now being created; the unemployment rate and the rate of inflation remain under control. Our schools are more accountable because of the president's No Child Left Behind initiative, and education performance is improving. The huge federal government apparatus is functioning well, led by a competent and experienced team of Cabinet officers intent on keeping the reach of the bureaucracy under control.

Most important, America and Americans are more vigilant against the terrorist threat. The terrorist community and the world political community know full well that America is prepared to do what is necessary to remain secure. That's because of the leadership of George Bush, who despite his many flaws has remained steadfast and determined at a time when the country has had a critical need for just those qualities.

This is not a time to take a risk on untested and poorly defined leadership. It is not the time to change course on the economy. It is not the time for new, expansive and expensive government programs and regulations.

It is time for experience and resolve, which is why George Bush should be re-elected for a second term. Without a re-election facing him, the president can move to do those things he said he would do in his first presidential campaign: He can work to unify the country. He can listen to and respect people who disagree with him. He can acknowledge errors, and what he will do to remedy those mistakes. Accomplishing those things are what true leaders do. They are things this president must do during his second term.

It's too bad for these perfectly reasonable people that if Bush wins, it will be more of the same.

10:26 am—Sorry for the Link Farm...

Lots of stuff going on in the day job, and I'm taking off for 3 days on business.

Alan Keyes proves he's an ass once again...[here](#)

Karl Rove's history of winning dirty...[here](#)

Thursday, October 13

9:28 am—Now That Kerry Three-peat Bush , We Get to Hear Bush Scream "Liberal" for the Next 20 Days or So

It's no big thing that Kerry whooped the President in 3 of 3 debates. What strikes me as I listen to people give their take on the debate, how Bush supporters repeat his words in a rote fashion. I heard a guy on NPR this morning say "he (Kerry) is shifty, he's got no record," and then continued on as if he memorized Bush's attacks on Kerry. I guess if you do yell things loud enough at some people, they listen.

The first thing I did this morning was to hit the Washington Post's Debate Referee. It's a great fact-checking format; complete with video, a brief summation of the spin and it's refutation, as well as links to past WaPo stories. [Check it out here.](#)

Now with the final debate out of the way, we will get to see and hear the last of Karl Rove's master plan. You've heard it before, in a thousand different races across the country. "**LIBERAL! LIBERAL! LIBERAL! LIBERAL!**" To me, this only goes so far and for so long. Kerry pretty much negated the attack during the debates. The tactic doesn't have as much hold as it did in the late 80's and 90's. With nothing else for Bush to run on, perhaps this is all they have left in the tank.

Lastly, I was looking through Google News this morning and saw [this piece from Reuters](#):

"Bush takes one-point lead over Kerry"

Being the curious person I am, I opened the story only to find this little nugget toward the bottom of the piece:

"The new tracking poll found 51 percent of likely voters believe the country is headed in the wrong direction, with only 42 percent saying it is headed in the right direction. Nearly 49 percent said it was time for someone new in the White House, while 46 percent wanted to re-elect Bush."

Clearly Rove hasn't handed out enough Kool-Aid. Combine that with the fact that incumbents poll closer to the actual vote they are going to receive, and you just may get a Kerry victory. I believe the African-American vote will be the key.

Tuesday, October 12

2:28 pm—The Republic Needs The Media To Get Back to Basics

The letters below are from Reed Hundt, Former Chair of the FCC and speaks volumes as to how far the media, especially network and cable newscasters have moved away from the theory of "fair and balanced." The letters were sent to the head of Sinclair Media an ABC affiliate company, on their preemption of network programming in order to air an anti-John Kerry documentary, titled "Stolen Honor." The documentary focuses on Mr. Kerry's 1971 Congressional testimony criticizing the Vietnam War. The film features former U.S. prisoners of war saying Mr. Kerry's comments led their Vietnamese captors to treat them more harshly.

Read Hundt's letter from [10/11](#), and [10/12](#)

The piece is being spun by Sinclair as news. It has the backing of a POW group that has combined with Swift Boat Veterans for Truth to create a new hybrid group, now called "Swift Boats and POW's for Truth." Sinclair is preempting ABC network programming to air this documentary. Local affiliates have been mandated to air it, and it must run in the time slot handed down from upper management. There are various efforts underway to induce Sinclair into not running the documentary.

What strikes me about Hundt's letters is that Dem or Repub, the things he speaks of are exactly what is missing from the TV news media today: a presentation of the issues of the day.

"Because in a large, pluralistic information society democracy will not work unless electronic media distribute reasonably accurate information and also competing opinions about political candidates to the entire population."

These words are simple and perhaps obvious. But the electronic media is ignoromg the truth of these words, and are unwittingly creating networks where like-minded people can find political information tailored to their point of view. The continued good health of the republic requires news, not commentary.

But the real story, is not in whether it airs or not. Sinclair's aim is to create animosity among the Republican base about the "liberal media." This cynical process disregards what viewers want in their news. Hundt's words speak to these values and further illuminate how the lack of moderation is working to split our country.

My thanks to [Talking Points Memo](#)

Thursday, October 7

4:04 pm—At Least The Bushies Weren't Around During the Cold War

Were GWB president during the early 1960's, the planet may never have survived the decade. Especially when I read this:

"President Bush said today that he was right to order the invasion of Iraq last year despite a new report by his chief U.S. weapons inspector that shows the country did not possess the weapons of mass destruction that were the original rationale for the war..."

Take the doctrine of preemptive war, combine it with a chief executive that is never wrong and you can almost feel the heat from the mushroom clouds. [Here's the rest of the article.](#)

Wednesday, October 6

5:09 pm—Here's a Top Ten List

[Bush/Cheney Top Ten Lies](#)

7:51 am—These Guys Kill Me...

Read [and](#) [wince](#). How could the Vice President screw this one up so much? As soon as he said it, I knew there'd be a thousand press operatives checking it out. This is how easily they lie. Do we really need 4 more years of this kind of intellectual laziness?

Tuesday, October 5

12:19 pm—People Write Me With the Darndest Things....

From a consevative friend of mine:

"Here's another one: Kerry says regarding stem cell research that W puts sciences aside in the interest of a Extreme Right Wing Ideology. Apparently he is unaware or unconcerned that it's a serious sin to advance fetal stem cell research, as taught by the Catholic Church (and many others) that he claims to be a member of. Can't have it both ways, John. Infuriates me!

Typical of liberals, faith means nothing, except when trying to get votes. Just make it known you don't agree and leave the church....but its about votes"

My reply:

"The catholic church does not (and should not) dictate domestic policy, as their priority is to furthering the faith instead of the republic.

The Catholic church has strict rules against killing others, and the Pope has personally asked presidents not to send armies to kill people. If the first Bush would have taken the Pope's advice, there'd have been no Desert Storm. If Clinton had taken his advice, Milosevic would still be in power. The list goes on for topics domestic and international.

The president needs to be president first, then a follower of church doctrine. People thought that JFK would do the bidding of the Pope because of his Catholicism. Bush wants us to vote for him because he will do the bidding of the Southern Baptist church.

I could get into ideology, like the house bill to require incoming federal judges to swear the infallibility of the Bible, but I won't."

Friday, October 1

4:35 pm—This Day Job is Kicking My (insert noun here)...

As you may or may not know, I write my posts on-the-fly at work, which is no mean feat considering my new responsibilities here. I have meant to apologize for any crudely thought out posts, and here's my opportunity. I work for a catalog company, and am a newly minted manager (whee.), which means I'm doing nothing like what I was doing ever before. Back when I had a comfort zone, it was easier to take 20-30 minutes at almost any time to post. But, it is a challenge to go on a writing spree about what occurs to me. Usually these sprees begin within 5 minutes after I see something on the internet, in an email. or after speaking with a co-worker. Sometimes I'll get hopped up about something on the morning commute.

Anyway, I'd also like to thank you for reading this daily diatribe. According to the stats, 52 people each day stop in for a minimum of 30 minutes in a single visit. Which amazes me. And humbles me as well. Thank you very much for your support.

7:48 am—John Kerry Did A Little Ass Whoopin' Last Night....

No matter the GOP spin, Kerry kicked Bush all over the stage. Two more like this, and say hello to the new "44". More to come.

Wednesday, September 29

1:40 pm—Behold, What a "Handful" of Insurgents Can Do

From the folks at the New York Times

Tuesday, September 28

8:00 am—Face-off

Thursday is the first day of the rest of John Kerry's political career. The tried-and-unfortunately-true method of mercilessly attacking your opponent is working, as the Bushies have not hidden when their lies about John Kerry were uncovered. The media, more interested in the race than the crooked trainer fixing it, blithely lets lies pass under their blinkered eyes. Perhaps they'll get what their corporate bosses want—censorship, reliable ratings, and no controversy. But that's another rant for a different day.

The debates are Kerry's last chance to beat George W. Bush. I'll say a full third of Bush's support is from people who don't want to vote for him, and are looking for a reason to. Mano-a-mano is a way to show them.

I'm thinking that Karl Rove will undoubtedly get Kerry off guard by baiting him. Some kind of rhetorical opening that looks inviting, but is nothing more than a trap. As I have said earlier, Bush's expectations aren't much higher than 2000. So he can't show up and string together a complete sentence and leave. He will have to defend himself.

And to me making Bush defend himself is the key. Screw the format, go for his throat. Make him respond to 3 points for every point he makes against you. For each point Bush responds to, counter with 3 more points. Bush will try to hang Kerry on his Senate record. Take it and assail Bush on his record. It should be easier to unnerve Bush than otherwise. The question is whether Kerry has the skills to bob-and-weave Bush's wont to deliver the knockout punch.

Call Bush a liar to his face. Point out the lies on Medicare, Social Security, Iraq, healthcare, taxes, his political machine and other valid points. Challenge his manhood with the Swift Boaters. That's how you get to Bush. Take the fight to his strong suit, his manhood, his macho. If Kerry can do that, he can beat Bush. *8/29 Update: Apparently the people at the San Francisco Chronicle have followed the president's words since 2003 and found him to be a flip-flopper. Information like this article can beat George Bush.*

Monday, September 27

4:56 pm—How To Survive a Bush Reelection

Fight as we may, what will we do if Bush wins? Flee the country? No. Stay and fight? Yes.

But we must be prepared to admit that the country is shifting. Some of my lefty-er friends believe that underneath it all is an electorate hypnotized by the shiny dangling pocket watches of the Right. If you break their concentration, then they'll come back to their senses.

Don't bet the entire farm on it. The country is moving to the right. It is only natural after a domination by the left. There is more emphasis on how government and the public sector can do things more effectively. What can government let go, and what they need to keep their fingers in. Old-style patronage is on its way out. People want more bang for their tax buck. They understand that religion has a place in life.

One of the challenges to Democrats, progressives, and liberals is to use the basic strengths of these expectations, and combine them with Democratic and progressive ideals in order to offer solutions. It is the only way to shorten this historical cycle; and it can be the way to ensure that this cycle strengthens the republic instead of weakening it.

What do I mean by that? Think of Teddy Roosevelt. Roosevelt's "conservative" ideas led to trust-busting, government getting into the business of preserving the environment. Lincoln's "conservative" ideas led to the survival and victory of the republic. Nothing wrong with that. But were Lincoln or T.R. running against George Bush or Tom DeLay, they'd be labeled dirty liberal-ite turncoats. Sad, but true. There's nothing wrong with "conservative" ideas. In fact, if you strip away the rhetorical labels, they are the same things we teach children. Thrift, responsibility,

kindness, citizenship. What vexes liberals (and some conservatives) these days is that the conservative ideas we've had to suffer through for the past 20 years have been not much more than lies and pyramid schemes cloaked in public and personal virtues.

Progressives, Democrats and liberals should be pushing for reform. Change is the only constant in the universe, no matter what judicial conservatives say. Societies that do not change die. And societies that embrace the rich and powerful at the expense of everyone else rot away from the inside and die. Just ask one of the czars, were they alive.

This batch of Republicans is leading the country down the wrong path. Of course the path is lit with neon lights reading "fiscal responsibility," "seperation of church and state," individual responsibility," and the like. But there is nothing beyond the slogans. This is where progressives can and should seize the opportunity.

As liberals, we have lived through welfare reform and seen that it was not the end of the world. Since we led the reform, we had the opportunity to set the terms. And at the end of the day, welfare reform has been one of the signature programs of the late 20th century. We must remember lessons like this as we move deeper into the first decade of the new millenium.

Knowing what we know about the electorate, what our values are, and the pulse of the people, we can find new ways to fix what's wrong. Trying to embrace solutions of the past are as useless as trying to move the country back to Prohibition. We must take the best lessons of history and combine them with the solutions that technology and new thinking offer us each day. This is how we will survive a Bush victory, how America will rally from the harm he will do, and how our republic will prevail.

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