

[TAC]

PLUS ÇA CHANGE

American Conservative readers will note some changes on our masthead. Taki Theodoracopulos will become founding editor; Pat Buchanan will take the title of editor emeritus. Both of course will continue to write regularly for the magazine. Scott McConnell is assuming the dual role of editor and publisher. These changes decidedly do not imply any shift in our editorial direction. We will be published by the same editorial staff and will pursue the same mission: put succinctly, to raise the banner for an American conservatism that neither lurches aggressively towards hegemony and empire nor acquiesces to open-borders immigration and a free-trade dogma that undermine America's living standards and shatter its culture. In the 26 months that we have been publishing, we have grown rapidly—a trend we expect to continue as the (still) regnant neoconservatism is increasingly rejected by the American people.

[POSTWAR]

ACCOUNTABILITY GAP

The 1700-member Iraq Survey Group has officially wrapped up its hunt for Saddam's weapons of mass destruction. For months, administration officials asserted that the search was still ongoing, using that excuse to circumvent pointed questions during the election season. But it is now official: everything our government said about Iraq's weapons in the months leading to war—Colin Powell's claims before the UN Security Council, George Tenet's assertion that existence of such weapons was a "slam dunk," Condoleezza Rice's musings about mushroom clouds, Dick Cheney's serial fear-mongering, George W. Bush's calls for Saddam to disarm—was false. Eggregiously false. The Pentagon's Paul Wolfowitz said the WMD were the one rationale for invasion that



everyone in the bureaucracy could agree upon—and it is a matter of record that proposals for invading Iraq were laid out many years before 9/11 as part of a strategy to create a more secure environment for Israel. But whatever the reason for the war, whatever the answer to whether administration officials knew they were spouting falsehoods or had succeeded in misleading themselves, the pretense of Saddam's WMD can now be dismissed.

Note the differences with the turmoil at CBS, where four employees were fired for their roles in airing a story substantiated by a forged document. Perhaps the same sort of zeal went into both efforts, a disabling eagerness to see evidence that wasn't there. The consequences of CBS's blunder, if any, seem remote. By contrast, as a result of the false weapons charges about Iraq, a war has killed thousands, maimed tens of thousands, strengthened terrorism in the Mideast, and may break the U.S. Army. We know that until now no one responsible has paid a price. Not Doug Feith, who set up a shop in the Pentagon to disseminate scare stories about Iraq, not Paul Wolfowitz, not Donald Rumsfeld, not Condi Rice, not Dick Cheney, not George W. Bush. Those who have paid are the dead and

wounded American soldiers and their families and the even larger toll of dead and wounded Iraqis. We wonder if those who misled America into a tragic war will forever evade accountability for what they did.

[ECONOMICS]

WHEN LEFT IS RIGHT

It's a mad, mad world and getting madder still when the Right advances government as a force for social betterment (one of the nicer characterizations of our Iraqi adventure) and the Left frets over fiscal profligacy.

The *Nation's* blog recently noted a nifty White House accounting trick: those big-spending Bushies predicted a \$521 billion deficit, but when the red ink reached only \$413 billion, rather than revising their forecast, they bragged that they had cut the deficit by the difference. According to our favorite lefties, "If the fictional \$521 billion somehow falls to \$260 billion, Bush can falsely claim he's cut the deficit in half, thus fulfilling his campaign pledge."

Not that there's much hope for that. Total \$1 trillion in tax cuts, \$500 billion for Medicare reform, another \$100 billion for the war in Iraq, \$2 trillion required to privatize Social Security, countless pork projects and sundry pro-

grams, and with nary a spending cut in sight, odds are that lockbox talk is a thing of the past.

Now it may be that the *Nation's* new role as deficit hawk derives from a chronic inability to applaud anything Republican. But whatever their reason, we find more in common with them than with GOP stalwarts like Sen. Lindsey Graham who, when asked about the budget-busting cost of the Iraq War said, "I hope they ask for something big. ... we are not going to do this on the cheap."

[JUSTICE]

GONZALES: "UNLAWFUL BUT OTHERWISE LAWFUL"

While most critics of President Bush's pick for attorney general have justifiably focused on his role in the infamous White House torture memos, other aspects of Alberto Gonzales's legal philosophy deserve similar scrutiny.

Asked at his confirmation hearings about local police enforcing federal immigration laws, Gonzales amazingly expressed his concern "about a policy that permits someone, a local law enforcement official, to use this authority somehow as a club to harass" people he described as "unlawful aliens but otherwise lawful citizens."

Quite a rhetorical trajectory here: from illegal aliens to undocumented immigrants to "lawful citizens"—the ultimate euphemism from the man bidding to be the country's top law-enforcement official.

[SCIENCE]

GIRL MATH NERDS

Poor Larry Summers, who seems to have believed that being president of Harvard gave him the license to speak his mind. But Summers obviously has not fully internalized the tenets of the great modern American civil dogma, which hold that all conceivable behavioral and other differences between genders or

groups must be the result of discrimination or acculturation and that innate abilities (genes) have absolutely nothing to do with it. (Except for homosexuality, which is entirely a matter of genes, and cultural influence plays no role at all.)

The regiments of dogma enforcement are in a tizzy because at a conference last month, Larry Summers suggested that one reason few women became top science and math professors at leading universities is innate sex differences. One female prof walked out, Harvard faculty committees sent letters of protest, and there were suggestions that alumnae would suspend donations. As of this writing, Summers still has his job.

But scholars have long puzzled why women—who tend to do on average as well or better than men on the SAT—have a much lower percentage of top math scores. One researcher who has pursued the question is Patti Hausman, whose Ph.D. thesis looked at the data of 12,000 girls in the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth. Hausman examined girls who did exceptionally well on math and spatial reasoning tests, comparing them to a control group of girls who did generally well.

The high math, high mechanical girls were different, tending to be taller, thinner, and having a later onset of menstruation. Most strikingly, they had much higher rates of miscarriages and stillbirths than the control group. Hausman's research suggests that the development of the "math" part of the brain may be inhibited by the female hormone estrogen and that women who have high math abilities have a harder time passing them on to future generations.

Of course, the science here (as Hausman herself asserts) is tentative and speculative, and the research into how hormones might affect different kinds of intelligence remains an open field. But if the dogma enforcers have their way, such research will never be carried out. ■

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Richard Nixon's Revenge

The hired hands CBS picked to investigate its "60 Minutes" debacle may deny it till the cows come home. But liberal bias ruined the career of Dan Rather—and CBS News.

The CBS of Walter Cronkite's salad days is gone. And the beginning of the fall of network news can be traced to that era, right down to the day and month.

After his address to the nation on Nov. 3, 1969 that called on the "silent majority" to stand by him for peace with honor in Vietnam was savaged by network anchors and commentators, an infuriated Richard Nixon ordered his staff to respond.

Vice President Agnew was sent to launch the counterstrike. On Nov. 13, in a speech in Des Moines that Teddy White called one of the most masterful forensic discourses in U.S. history, Agnew tore into media liberal bias and demanded to know why a tiny handful of men, elected by no one, were deciding the news for the American people.

Broadcast on all three networks, the speech was a sensation. Tens of thousands of telegrams poured into the networks and their affiliates, applauding what Agnew said. By Monday, *Newsweek* and *Time* had the network anchors on their covers. The issue of liberal bias cohabiting with immense media power was on the table. It never came off.

A week later, Agnew launched the second strike on the *Washington Post* and *New York Times*. The White House was now in a mortal struggle with the self-styled "adversary press."

Teddy White retells the story of that five-year battle in his *Making of the President, 1972*. In that year, as White reported, Nixon triumphed over the media. But in 1974, he was broken by Watergate. As he said in exile, "I gave

them a sword and they ran it right through me."

By 1975, the liberal media establishment could claim to have played a central role in bringing down a president and ending—or losing, depending on your point of view—a war. But the secondary explosions from Agnew's attacks had impacted.

What he had done was to strip the false flag of neutrality from Big Media and expose it as a co-belligerent in the political wars, no longer entitled to any immunity from attack. Reed Irvine's *Accuracy in Media* came into being to monitor the liberal press.

Then, beginning with the *New York Times*, newspapers yielded to the attacks on their fairness by creating op-ed pages and adding conservative columnists to prove to readers they were unbiased. The networks began running Left-Right debates.

Then came the talk shows. "Agronsky & Co." in Washington had tilted left. The new "McLaughlin Group," with this writer and Robert Novak joining Jack Germond and Mort Kondracke, tilted right.

In 1981, the *Washington Post's* dominance of the capital was broken by the *Washington Times*. Republicans and conservatives now saw their concerns raised in the Beltway press and could read a dozen columnists who shared their convictions and opinions.

Then, suddenly, Ted Turner's all-news cable channel was on the air. While CNN did not live up to its billing as an alternative to the Big Three liberal networks, its all-day format insured the Right would

get a hearing, "Crossfire," first of the national Left-Right daily interview-debate shows, was launched.

In the 1970s and the Reaganite 1980s, many AM stations went news-talk. Conservative commentators became popular, then dominant. In the 1990s, Rush Limbaugh exploded onto the national airwaves. Today, there are dozens of nationally syndicated radio talk shows and scores of well-known local radio commentators. Almost all are conservative, populist, or libertarian.

The 1990s saw the breaking of CNN's monopoly of cable news with the birth of MSNBC and Roger Ailes's FOX News, which is as receptive to conservatives as Howell Raines's *New York Times* was to liberals.

At the same time, the Internet came into its own. Now, millions of Americans have favorite websites and blogs they read before even picking up the morning paper or tuning in to Katie Couric.

All the while this was happening, the audience for network news was shrinking, and the steady barrage of criticism of its liberal bias from cable and conservative critics and columnists of the Right was continuing.

In September, Dan Rather, using fabricated and forged memos, fired a head shot at the president of the United States. The gun blew up in his face. The rest is history. At CBS, they know today that their power is disappearing, their audience is departing, and their credibility is shot. Conservative perseverance exposed the liberal bias, and technology killed the monopoly.

Somewhere Richard Nixon is smiling. Somewhere Spiro Agnew is laughing. I will not ask Dan Rather where they are—as he and CBS are just not "fair and balanced" on this question. ■