

Opinion



Washington Analysis

Bush pushes hard to spur economy

President Bush, who stunned his critics in 2001 by winning passage of the biggest tax cut since Ronald Reagan, is hoping to repeat history with a bolder-than-expected \$674 billion stimulus plan.

But whether he wins or loses in Congress, his strategy is almost certainly aimed at avoiding another bit of history — his father's costly political mistake of appearing to ignore the pain inflicted by the nation's last jobless recovery.

"Too many of our citizens who want to work cannot find a job and many employers lack the confidence to invest and create new jobs," Bush said Tuesday in Chicago, where he unveiled his new package of tax cuts, saying they were needed to bolster a sputtering recovery.

Indeed, the last year's performance bears many similarities to the period when Bush's father was in the White House and the economy was coming out of the 1990-91 recession with economic growth so weak that the unemployment rate kept rising.

The jobless rate returned to an eight-year high of 6 percent in November. Analysts are predicting the rate will head even higher in coming months, probably topping out at 6.5 percent in early summer, before stronger growth starts to convince businesses they can hire back laid-off workers.

Bush doesn't want his 2004 Democratic opponent to enjoy the kind of success Bill Clinton had in 1992 by using a rising jobless rate to convince voters to reject an incumbent president.

Both the size of Bush's new stimulus package — at \$674 billion, more than double what the White House just a week ago had been indicating would be offered — and its component parts, which are weighted heavily toward tax relief for the wealthiest Americans, demonstrate that Bush is not afraid to be bold in pushing his economic agenda.

Bush, who complained last week that critics were using "class warfare" arguments, rejected the advice of some of his advisers to tone down the tax breaks for the wealthy to blunt such criticism.

Instead, he proposed accelerating all the rate cuts scheduled for 2004 and 2006, including those for the top bracket of wealthy taxpayers.

The elimination of federal taxes on the dividends corporations pay investors will cost \$364 billion, more than half of Bush's \$674 billion total package. The joint Urban Institute-Brookings Institution Tax Policy Center estimated that 42 percent of these tax savings would go to wealthiest 1 percent of taxpayers.

The administration, however, is counting on the tax dividend proposal to lift spirits on Wall Street, where investors have been battered by a \$7 trillion drop in stock valuations over the past three years. Some advisers estimate that stock prices could rise by 10 percent with an elimination of the dividend tax.

Bush's plan would provide middle-class tax relief in the form of a \$400 increase in the current \$600-per-child tax credit and acceleration of relief from the so-called marriage penalty that hits two-earner couples.

Other analysts worried that Bush's plan might provide a short-term boost for the economy this year but turn into a long-term drag over the next decade by causing budget deficits to explode and send interest rates soaring. — *Martin Crutsinger, The Associated Press in Washington*

Comments to any opinions expressed on this page are encouraged. Mail them to the Colby Free Press, 155 W. 5th St., Colby, Kan., 67701. Or e-mail td@nwkansas.com or pdecker@nwkansas.com.

COLBY FREE PRESS

155 W. Fifth (USPS 120-920) (785) 462-3963
Colby, Kan. 67701

freepress@nwkansas.com

State award-winning newspaper, General Excellence, Design & Layout Excellence, Column Writing, Editorial Writing, Sports Columns, News, Photography.

Official newspaper of Thomas County, Colby, Brewster and Rexford.

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THE COLBY FREE PRESS (USPS 120-920) is published daily, every Monday through Friday, except the day observed for Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day and New Year's Day, by Haynes Publishing Co., 155 W. Fifth, Colby, Kan., 67701.

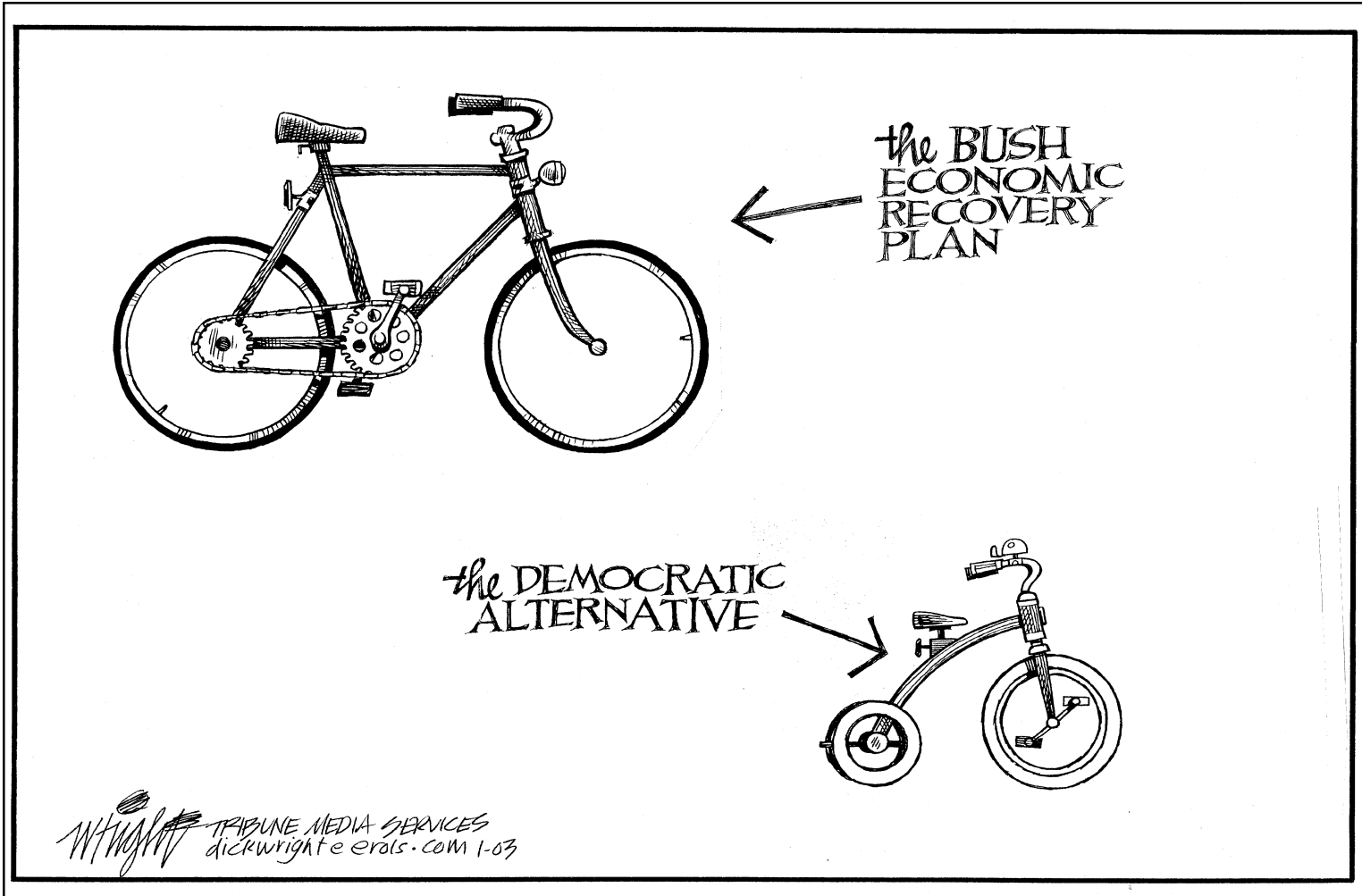
PERIODICALS POSTAGE is paid at Colby, Kan. 67701, and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Colby Free Press, 155 W. Fifth, Colby, Kan., 67701.

THE BUSINESS OFFICE at 155 W. Fifth is open from 8 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Monday to Friday, closed Saturday and Sunday.

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SUBSCRIPTION RATES: In Colby by carrier: 4 months \$32, 8 months \$47, 12 months \$64. By mail with in Colby and the nine-county region of Thomas, Sheridan, Decatur, Rawlins, Cheyenne, Sherman, Wallace, Logan and Gove counties: 4 months \$44, 8 months \$56, 12 months \$72. Other Kansas counties and surrounding states: 4 months \$51, 8 months \$61, 12 months \$75. All other states, \$75, 12 months.

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Winning the war



Jay Kelley
● Speaking My Mind

We just finished a very informative lecture series on angels at church this weekend. Dr. Edward Myers, from Harding University in Searcy, Ark. came and taught on the subject at the Colby Community Building Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

His lectures were more than just informative; he was very positive and upbeat as he presented Biblical truths about God's creation.

He doesn't believe in individual guardian angels; rather that the host of heaven looks out for humanity, in effect giving us multiple guardians. During our time studying Matthew 18:10, however, I was reminded of the tongue-in-cheek hypothesis that some of us may have retired several guardian angels as a result of our escapades!

One of the great things about any sort of series like this was visiting with folks we don't often get to see and meeting new friends.

Several brethren from Hoxie and Oakley, as well as McCook and Wauneta, Neb. were on hand and I got to meet the new preacher at McCook for the first time.

One of the accomplishments of this weekend's lectures was to remind us that there is indeed a war going on that has been raging since creation. Satan has been fighting for the control of the souls of all humanity since the very beginning and, though he was defeated in finality by a Jewish carpenter some 2,000 years ago, he continues the fight until this day.

The war is spiritual, it is true, but it is no less

brutal for that and its results are often found in our material world. World leaders and governments take part in that war on both sides as well, some willingly and knowingly and some out of ignorance.

In the democratic societies of the modern western world, we the people have a bigger part than we might realize. We are the ones who choose our leaders and many times the choice is difficult at best because the guys in the white hats are not always readily identifiable.

Although the lectures had nothing to do with the political aims of world governments, I could not help but be reminded of God's control and his use of even criminal despots in accomplishing his aims.

It also came to mind that our opponent will use, if possible, well meaning and religious people to accomplish his goals.

Too many times we get confused in deciding who is good and who is evil based on one or two

specific acts and we forget to look at the whole picture.

We also forget, at times, that a good economic and foreign policy mean nothing if we are not people of integrity and faith.

We, meaning all humanity, do have one thing going for us. God has left us an owner's manual, if you will, in the Bible.

It is more than simply a book of rules and it is much more than simply a book of high ethical standards handed down by good, but uninspired men who were ahead of their time.

Within its pages, we not only have the prescription for victory in this eternal war that rages around us and of which we are a part, whether willing or not; we have examples of others who fought the battles, some victorious and some not.

Ultimately, we are all in the war, whether we want to be or not. The war's end will be both final and eternal for all involved, so it is important.

One of the great weapons our opponent has is the art of spin.

He is a liar and, in fact, the father of all liars, so spin is a natural weapon. The Bible is not only the best anti-spin device ever developed; it is the only anti-spin device that works.

Perhaps it should be our first line of defense.

A. Jay Kelley speaks his mind on politics, ethics and morals from time to time. His e-mail is jkelly@nwkansas.com.

The snooper-duper spying machine

Here it comes - another Gooberhead Award, presented to those in the news whose tongues are going 100 miles an hour ... but who forgot to put their brains in gear.

Today I've got a Double Goober for you! Both our winners are excited about a Big, New, Whiz-bang Technological advance they call "Total Information Awareness."

The T.I.A. is another fine product brought to us by those fun-loving techno-wizards at the Pentagon, and you should become totally aware of their latest gizmo, because they definitely plan to include you in their fun.

T.I.A. is a super-sophisticated, super-fast computer system that is designed to scoop up every last detail of every transaction that you and I and everyone else makes. Your bank withdrawals, prescriptions you buy, books you check out, trips you make, documents you file, Web sites you visit, emails you send, your job records, com-



Jim Hightower
● Another Viewpoint

plaints you make to authorities, complaints made against you — all of it is to be dumped into what T.I.A. enthusiasts call "a virtual, centralized grand database," which will be available to various local, state, federal, and international agencies.

Sound like fun? Surely they're kidding, right? Nope. It's all part of Bush's Homeland Security Act, just passed by Congress.

Iraq crisis calls for quality journalism

As America moves toward war, it's essential for journalists to dig into their work as if they were soldiers themselves, with their lives potentially on the line-and for the Bush administration to respect the crucial role journalists play in our democracy.

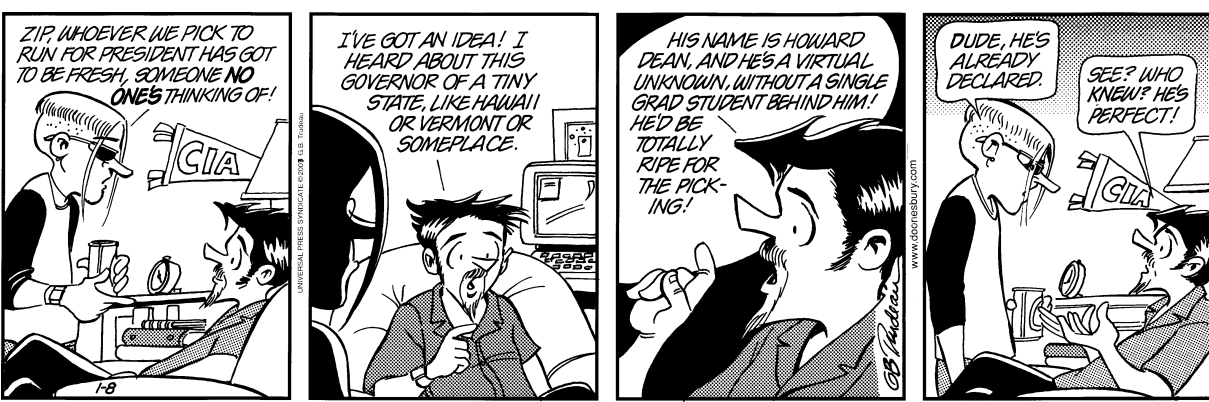
Journalists are supposed to challenge powerful interests and entrenched ideas. They are supposed to ask tough questions and demand hard-to-get information. They are supposed to insist on seeing evidence to support the veracity of unsubstantiated claims-whether they come from the highest-ranking government officials or an everyday person.

Citizens rely on journalists to expose the facts. As the Iraq "crisis" bubbles near the boiling point, we need journalists and our leaders to step

Jason Salzman
● Guest commentary

up to the plate. If they don't, we need to let them know about it. This is no time to tolerate lazy or sloppy work, from reporters or officials. From journalists, keep an eye out for these three common shortfalls:

1. We don't want journalists swept up into a patriotic frenzy.
2. We don't want journalists presenting images provided by the Pentagon without background information.
3. We don't want journalists repeating simplistic polling results.



Doonesbury
● Gary Trudeau