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Media Research Center's Monthly Members' Report

The Axis of Arrogance

DEAR MRC MEMBER,

When President Bush used the term "axis of evil" in his January 29 State of the Union speech, network correspondents pitched a fit. It tells what he — and we — are up against in the global war on terror.

Reporters from ABC, NBC and CBS, as well as the nation's elite newspapers, found the President's direct language alarming. Didn't he know that calling Iraq, Iran and North Korea "evil" would hurt diplomatic efforts? The President, the network news divisions suggested, was just too unsophisticated when it came to these matters.

There was next to no discussion of the issue.

For the next three weeks the networks fixated on the "axis of evil" phrase and provided an open forum for those opposed to it. The networks seemed more determined to promote the liberal ideology of selected "talking heads" than to report news, offering yet another example of the New York-Washington "axis of arrogance" that has existed in the media for quite some time.

The MRC news analysts began tracking the slanted coverage immediately, comparing how much time the networks spent discussing the phrase versus how little time was focused on the governments in question.

Our analysts reviewed all 37 network stories

that mentioned "axis of evil" on *ABC World News Tonight*, *CBS Evening News* and *NBC Nightly News* from January 30 through February 19. Only five of those stories (14 percent) focused on Iraq, Iran, or North Korea, compared with 73 percent whose main focus was negative reaction to the President's declaration. In framing their stories, reporters invariably cast the "axis" comment as inflammatory



Roll Call's Morton Kondracke discussed the specifics of the MRC's "Axis of Evil" study on FNC's *Special Report with Brit Hume*.

and those unhappy with the statement were interviewed at a much greater rate than those pleased with it. Of the 19 experts interviewed by reporters in the stories, 89 percent condemned the President's statement.

Let's take a quick look at a few of the stories. On January 30, ABC's Jim Wooten described the Iranians as "genuinely astonished" and reported

that whatever goodwill the U.S. had gained post-September 11 had evaporated. On February 11, Peter Jennings called a government-organized Iranian demonstration "gigantic" and editorialized that "millions of people do not like being referred to as evil."

How interesting. I haven't checked, but I doubt Jennings has ever made a similar remark in defense of Americans on the many occasions Iranian leaders have referred to the U.S. as "The Great Satan." But that's another issue altogether.

ABC had plenty of company. On February 15, NBC's Andrea Mitchell declared the "axis of evil" *continued on page 2*

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DEAR MEMBER

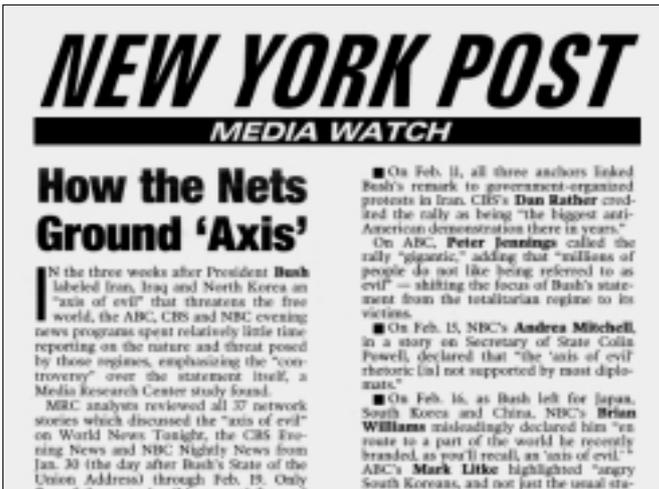
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rhetoric was not supported by most diplomats.” A day later, the peacock network’s Brian Williams expanded the “axis of evil” to include practically the entire Far East as he described the President’s trip to South Korea, Japan, and China as a visit to “a part of the world he recently branded, as you’ll recall, an ‘axis of evil.’”

Actually, we don’t recall anything of the sort and suggesting such is blatantly false. Iraq, Iran, and North Korea were mentioned individually and specifically by the President. I have no clue as to why Williams would lump Japan and South Korea, two U.S. allies, together with North Korea. One can only guess that the false generalization fit the story angle NBC was trying to advance.

The MRC’s “axis of evil” study shows a network media that still reflexively condemn the Bush administration, despite the well-constructed, well-executed war on terrorism. The study also illustrates the media’s perpetual inclination to criticize rather than report and to create controversy rather than explain. An evenhanded approach would have included comments from those outraged by the Bush remark, comments from those supporting it, and a look at the three countries. All editorial comments, like those made by Jennings, would have been dropped or labeled as such.

What would viewers find in balanced stories? Many Americans might have discovered that Iran has been arming factions in Afghanistan and undermining our policies there for quite some time. Viewers might have also learned that Iran’s Revolutionary Guard, as *U.S. News* reported in early March, have smuggled at least 50 Al Qaeda fighters across their country and into the safe arms of the



Hezbollah terrorist group in Lebanon.

As for North Korea, many Americans might have learned for the first time just how paranoid the small nation’s government truly is. They might have learned that Kim Chong il, the country’s dictator, is officially known as “beloved leader” and large mural paintings of him adorn the sides of the few multi-story buildings in the country. Americans might also have learned that Kim’s regime brutalizes and starves its own people and in a region of economic powerhouses, wal-lows in staggering poverty. Lastly, Americans might have learned that despite the condition of its people, North Korea spends what little



A recent report by the MRC exposed the media’s attempts to condemn Bush and ignore the facts.

money it has to develop ballistic missiles that it has repeatedly threatened to use.

Instead of usable information like this, however, the networks focused on Bush’s critics during his visit to South Korea. “The President’s belief is causing some anxiety in the South,” Jennings told viewers, and ABC went on to quote only Bush critics. NBC did the same thing. Only CBS noted that many Koreans agreed with Bush and “argue that the North needs to be seen for what it is.”

The figures from the study formed the basis of an MRC *Media Reality Check*. Released on February 21 by our Director of Media Analysis, Rich Noyes, it was quickly picked up by Fox News Channel’s *Special Report with Brit Hume*. Hume credited the MRC for its research, noting both our conservative philosophy and our insistence on fairness.

“The Media Research Center, which is a conservative group...does...sound analysis and accurate tabulation of what the broadcast networks have to say,” Hume noted as he discussed the “axis of evil” phrase with Morton Kondracke. Kondracke, a political moderate, then used the study’s figures to dismiss the media’s biased coverage: “Eighty-nine percent of the talking heads who commented on this subject thought it was bad. That is disruptive and, you know, shocking and all the rest of it.”

In addition, the *New York Post* reprinted the *Media Reality Check* in its opinion section and Rich later appeared on the FNC morning show *Fox and Friends* to discuss the study.

Once again, the MRC was able to quickly review media coverage, analyze it, and confront the liberal bias so prevalent in this story. Our reputation for accuracy led fair-minded media outlets to publicize the slanted coverage to millions of Americans.

As always, this was possible because of your support. We stand ready, willing and able, because of members like you, to continue our fight for unbiased reporting.

Until next month,

L. Brent Bozell III

The Liberal View on Patriotism Enough Already!

Aaron Sorkin, creator of the NBC drama *The West Wing*, is unhappy with President Bush, the media, and the country.

In an interview with *The New Yorker* magazine, Sorkin said he supported Bush "one hundred percent" but then...savaged him.

"I...think it's absolutely right that at this time we're all laying off the bubblehead jokes. But that's a far cry from what the *Times* and CNN and others on whom we rely for unvarnished objectivity are telling us, which is that, my God! On September 12th he woke up as Teddy Roosevelt! He became the Rough Rider!"

This comment tells us all we need to know about left-wingers like Sorkin. Anyone who relies on the *New York Times* for "unvarnished objectivity" has serious issues with reality.

But President Bush isn't the only one in Sorkin's sights. He also found fault with NBC anchor Tom Brokaw's recent interview with President Bush.

"The White House pumped up the President's schedule to show him being much busier and more engaged than he was, and Tom Brokaw let it happen — the show was a valentine to Bush," Sorkin asserted.

Sorkin's comments did not sit well with NBC executives and the attendant media coverage created a bit of a controversy. MRC President Bozell discussed the matter on Fox News Channel's *Hannity and Colmes*, defending Sorkin's right to free speech and criticism but rightly pointing out that the comments were content-free and simply designed to insult President Bush.

Sorkin's remarks are telltale signs of the elites' discontent with the country's current attitude. Patriotism has befuddled

and frightened many elite journalists and entertainment types who are far more comfortable criticizing America than defending it. The fact that "red" America — that vast portion of the country outside of Manhattan, certain precincts in Washington, D.C. and Hollywood — has always respected the flag and the country's traditions seems to have escaped this oh-so-intelligent crowd.

But things are getting back to normal. The Winter Olympics coverage provided several commentators who were worried that patriotism was becoming jingoism. The line between jingoism and patriotism is a thin one and only sensitive liberal eyes can spot it.

Anne Taylor Fleming, a CNN *Newsnight* essayist, was concerned from the start. "I'm just hoping, maybe against hope, that we are respectful and that the jingoism is muted," Taylor said during the February 8 opening ceremonies.

Katie Couric was in the same frame of mind. "The opening ceremony, the games themselves will be very patriotic in feel," the NBC Olympic host noted the same day as Fleming. "And yet sometimes the international community can interpret that as arrogant nationalism."

The Winter Games, except for a figure skating hullabaloo, were conducted with hardly a hitch. The chief complaint from the always-cynical sports reporters seemed to be that the native Utahans were too darned nice, friendly, and helpful. Even the leader of the Russian Olympic delegation, in a foul mood because of his team's performance, went out of his way to praise his American hosts.

The point? The American public knows the difference between sincere love of country and insulting displays of pride. Apparently most of the world knows and appreciates this too. It's the Courics, Sorkins, and Flemings of the media that don't.



The Network Ban on Bernard Goldberg

If there was ever doubt network news producers are biased against conservatives, their refusal to arrange interviews with former CBS correspondent Bernard Goldberg should remove it.

Goldberg's explosive book, *Bias: A CBS Insider Exposes How the Media Distort the News*, has spent several weeks atop the *New York Times* best-seller list and has led to hundreds of interviews for the author. None of them, however, have been with the Big Three networks.

"...The only three places I haven't been at any time of the day or night — and I'm including two in the morning or four in the morning, anytime — are ABC, NBC and CBS, which is either hilarious or pathetic," Goldberg said on CNN's *Reliable Sources* on Feb. 17.

While the book is clearly popular with the public, it has raised the hackles of journalists and several have gone out of their way to attack Goldberg. Tom Shales, the Washington Post television critic, published a book review in *Electronic Media* that was nothing more than childish name-calling that hardly touched Goldberg's charges of liberal bias.

The liberal Michael Kinsley, formerly a host on CNN *Crossfire* and most recently editor of *Slate.com*, wrote a *Washington Post* op-ed piece also attacking Goldberg. Continuing Shales' childish methods, Kinsley also used kindergarten language and logic, calling it a "dumb book" and writing that Goldberg is "remarkably dense."

Attacks like these say more about the state of journalism than they do about Goldberg, who has won seven Emmy Awards for news reporting and was once named one of the 10 most interesting people on television by *TV Guide*. Yet Shales and Kinsley attack him personally and question his journalistic credentials rather than address the issues raised in his book.

Could the liberal press be any more arrogant?



How do Brit Hume, Bill O'Reilly, Rush Limbaugh, Michael Reagan, Janet Parshall, Matt Drudge, *National Review*, the *Washington Times*, *World* magazine, and thousands of others stay on top of the latest liberal media bias? They read the MRC's *CyberAlert*. And you can too...for FREE! As a member of the MRC, you can sign up to receive the MRC's near-daily e-mail report *CyberAlert!*

To subscribe, just e-mail MRC@MediaResearch.org and say you want to get your FREE *CyberAlerts!* Mention that you read about it in *FLASH*.

Clinton's Still Honest...Even If He Lies a Lot

CBS anchor Dan Rather won the 2001 MRC Quote of the Year at January's Dishonors Awards for telling Fox News Channel's Bill O'Reilly that former President Bill Clinton was an honest man. "...I think you can be an honest person and lie about any number of things," the newsman said on the May 15, 2001 *O'Reilly Factor*.

Even after all the ridicule that comment generated, Rather still thinks so. Appearing on the February 7 *Imus in the Morning* radio show, Rather was determined to defend his favorite president, stepping right to the plate when host Don Imus asked about it. "I think the fact that someone has told a lie, even a big



Don Imus confronts Dan Rather with a quote from the Dishonors Awards.

lie, or maybe several big lies over a lifetime, does not mean that they're an inherently dishonest person."

But that's not all. Later in the show, Rather insisted that he tried to "report deep down the middle."

We guess that makes sense. If a person believes you can tell several "big lies" and still be honest, they probably also think you can be terribly biased and still report "down the middle."

By the Way, What About Bill?

On February 21 the *Washington Times* ran a front-page story explaining how the Clinton administration supported Enron's foreign projects with more than \$1 billion in government-backed loans. And, by the way, Enron contributed more than \$1 million to the Democratic Party during the Clinton years.



The *Washington Times* exposes Clinton's billion-dollar ties to Enron ...but most of the media ignore it.

Of the Big Three networks, only NBC pursued the story, running a February 25 segment that noted Enron received the large government-backed loans during the Clinton years. NBC also reported that former CEO Kenneth Lay played golf with Clinton and that the corporation had made a timely \$100,000 donation to the Democratic Party.

The other networks? Not a peep on the Clinton loans. And the paper of record, the *New York Times*? Their February 21 story on the government's support of Enron's overseas projects didn't mention Clinton until the 4th paragraph.

Dishonorable mention, though, has to go to Enron's hometown paper, the *Houston Chronicle*. The *Chronicle* didn't mention the Clinton connection until the 16th paragraph on its story on the government loans.

Conservatives Killed Pearl?

There is nothing some liberals won't blame on conservatives. Witness the media hysteria that held talk radio hosts, the Christian Coalition, and conservative politicians responsible for Matthew Shepard's murder and the Oklahoma City bombing.

Now, a former journalist is trying to blame conservatives for the murder of *Wall Street Journal* reporter Daniel Pearl in Pakistan. Ken

Denny, a former reporter at the *Augusta, Ga. Chronicle*, wrote a letter to a well-known media website, the Poynter Institute's *MediaNews* (www.poynter.org/medianews) that makes this claim. Denny says the *Journal's* editorial-page criticisms of liberal bias in the media, combined with other conservative criticisms of journalism, made the kidnappers see reporters as political operatives. "For far too long, the journalistic community has treated conservative criticism of the profession too lightly. False descriptions have dire consequences, as we now see," Denny wrote.

We share Mr. Denny's concern with false descriptions and his letter is one of the worst we've seen. To argue that conservative media criticism was responsible for Pearl's death is savagely insulting to both the Pearl family and



Conservatives to blame for the death of Daniel Pearl?

the *Journal*. A band of Pakistani militants killed Daniel Pearl because they are animals and he was an American. Blaming conservatives for his death is reprehensible and represents another attempt — albeit an inept, bumbling, and foolish one — to silence conservative commentary.

The Nominee Is Conservative But Special Interests Aren't Liberal

On the February 24 *World News Tonight*, ABC weekend anchor Carole Simpson described Charles Pickering, President Bush's nominee for a federal district court judgeship, as "conservative." In the same segment, a large assortment of left-wing organizations, ranging from the NAACP to the National Organization for Women and the National Abortion and Reproductive Rights Action League, were mentioned without any labels or any form of partisan identification whatsoever.

According to Simpson, opposition to Pickering's appointment came from a "coalition



Carole Simpson and ABC play the selective labeling game.

of more than 50 civil rights, human rights, and women's groups." To understand how ridiculous ABC's labeling double standard is, even the *New York Times*, the inventors of liberal partisanship, described the groups arrayed against Pickering as "liberal" in a Feb. 28 article.

The Senate Judiciary Committee, controlled by Democrats, has indicated that they will fight every Bush judicial appointee that liberal special interests have problems with. In other words, they plan to fight every one of them. And you can expect ABC to continue supporting those fights with their own brand of selective labeling.

There Goes Ted Turner, Again

While his former wife was discussing women's issues, Ted Turner, the founder of CNN and current Vice Chair at AOL Time Warner, was busy sticking his foot in his mouth.

Speaking at Brown University in Providence, R.I. on Feb. 11, Turner joined a liberal chorus that includes comedian Bill Maher and writer Susan Sontag when he called the terrorists who attacked the World Trade Center "brave." He also admitted that they "might have been a little nuts."

Turner, who has a history of rambling, often incoherent remarks, repeated the worn-out line about poverty being responsible for the attacks: "There are a lot of people living in abject poverty out there who don't have any hope of a better life." Apparently, Turner didn't hear, or chose to ignore, the fact that all 19 hijackers were middle-class Arabs.

Other highlights of Turner's speech were calling President Bush a "modern Julius Caesar" and his warning to students that "the



Ted Turner calls the terrorists who attacked the World Trade Center "brave."

environment will collapse in your lifetimes."

In typical Turner fashion, he issued an almost-immediate clarification on his terrorism remarks, assuring the world that's he's against terrorism. Hmmm, is it possible that Turner now writes speeches and apologies at the same time?

Good Morning America: Give Us Your Money and Grow Up!

The network morning shows continue to produce celebrity pieces that combine liberal advocacy with hero worship. A recent example was the Jan. 31 *Good Morning America* profile of Jane Fonda.

An icon of liberal baby boomers everywhere,

Fonda is also a woman with important political views, according to *GMA* co-host Diane Sawyer. "You need to hear what she has to say," Sawyer said as she introduced the segment.

Correspondent Nancy Snyderman opened the story by explaining how the former Viet Cong poster girl has dedicated her life to health care and family planning for young women. Fonda's dedication includes lobbying for public funds for family-planning efforts and condom distribution. Snyderman was enthused by this.

"So whose cages should we be rattling?" the supposedly objective reporter asked. Fonda's answer, naturally, was the Bush administration and Congress.

Fonda also had some other things to say. Not only should Americans fork over money for questionable family planning activities, but they also need to grow up and get with the times. "In this country, you think, Oh my



GMA once again promotes the liberal views of Hanoi Jane.

gosh, if we tell kids how to avoid getting pregnant, it's going to make them have sex," Fonda said. "Come on! I mean, take your head out of the sand!"

ABC really knows how to get the morning started. It isn't every day that a wealthy celebrity insults the public while asking for their money.

MRC's Mini-Bits

Laughable global warming hysteria from CNN's Richard Stenger, "...the carbon gas spike could add 11 extra microseconds (one-millionth of a second) every ten years"... CNN's Candy Crowley tells us Ted Kennedy celebrated his 70th birthday as "...the last of the liberal lions, roaring on behalf of the voiceless," ...Peter Jennings says, "I'm not one of those members of Congress or the leadership of the country who is proud not to have a passport, which I believe is utterly foolish"...Film director Robert Altman, in the *Times of London*, says

President Bush "can't even speak! I just find him an embarrassment" ...Altman's not patriotic, either: "When I see an American flag flying, it's a joke."...PBS honcho Bill Moyers claims "It concerns me more that Kenneth Lay is meeting secretly with the Vice President than it concerned me that President Clinton was meeting secretly with Monica Lewinsky"...Too-much-fun-to-leave-out category: liberal *Newsweek* editor Evan Thomas calls liberal Sen. Robert Byrd (D-WV) "a pompous idiot" for his recent spat with Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill.

It's Got Legs!

By Scott Hogenson
CNSNews.com
Executive Editor



One might think it presumptuous to call a four-year-old news service a leader. But increasingly, the coverage of other news organizations shows that is precisely what the Media Research Center's CNSNews.com has become.

CNSNews.com was founded as a full-service Internet newswire to bring to the public the real news the liberal "news" media either regularly ignore or refuse to report. And we're doing just that.

Consider the case of the *California Patriot*, a conservative student publication at the University of California-Berkeley. When the *Patriot* offices were vandalized and the student newspaper staff received violent threats, CNSNews.com Sr. Staff Writer Jim Burns was first to report their troubles on February 27.

That initial report led to a pledge of support from a Washington-area think tank, which offered to help cover some of the costs resulting from the *Patriot's* loss. We reported on that and soon, CNSNews.com readers were asking for information on how they could help.

Soon after, other publications began covering the woes of the *California Patriot*. By early March, student journalists from the *Patriot* were being interviewed on Sean Hannity's nationally syndicated radio show.

By March 8, the story was on television, and Fox's *O'Reilly Factor Show*, with host Bill O'Reilly discussing the incident with a UC-Berkeley student.

This is what we in the news business mean when we say a story has "legs." In this case, the story of the *California Patriot* had serious legs, all because of the article that first appeared on CNSNews.com. But this isn't an isolated instance.

On January 31, CNSNews.com Editorial Assistant Michael Betsch wrote an exclusive article about how

women at Mount Holyoke College in Massachusetts increasingly wanted to exercise their 2nd Amendment rights because they were afraid of the growing rate of rape and other violence.

Soon after Mike's story ran, others followed suit. By February 14, the *Wall Street Journal* ran an item on the situation at Mount Holyoke and *National Review* did the same in its March 11 issue.

Even the *New York Times* picked up on the story, running an opinion column on the subject March 8. As you may have guessed, the *Times* of New York dependably used the events at Mount Holyoke to make a case against gun ownership. One must presume the editorial page of that publication prefers the culture of victimhood to that of self-sufficiency.

I can't recall how many times CNSNews.com has given legs to a story that otherwise would never have seen the light of day. It's one of our core mission objectives and we've never strayed from it. I daresay we have been entirely successful in the pursuit of that calling.

While we have done the work seeking and reporting on such news and events, none of it could have happened without your support of those efforts.

When you support CNSNews.com, you do much more than lend your confidence to a single organization. You are, in effect, supporting many other deserving organizations and individuals who benefit from the work made possible by your contributions.

There are values and there are virtues. Mao and Hitler had values; but it is a virtue to seek and publish truth. That is the highest aspiration of journalism, and I'm proud to say "thank you" for your continued support of CNSNews.com.

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A Charitable Gift Annuity with the Media Research Center can provide you with a guaranteed, partially tax-free, life-time income stream as well as an immediate income tax deduction. Considered the ultimate "win-win" charitable gift, "planned giving" vehicles offer income and tax-saving benefits in return for an irrevocable commitment of cash, securities, or real estate to the Media Research Center.

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To discuss your particular situation and learn more about this important tax-saving, income-enhancing opportunity, please call **John Corfield**, the MRC's Director of Development, at **(703) 683-9733 ext. 154**.

By providing indisputable research, and directly confronting the media with their liberal bias, the MRC is exposing the media's agenda before the American public with its unique publications and balanced news wire. The MRC is the one organization positioned to **defend and arm the conservative movement with the weapons needed to preserve truth and freedom**. The MRC is making a most positive and discernible impact in this country. That is why it is so important that plans are made now to create a legacy and keep the MRC growing and operating in the future. Help us ensure that the strongest Warrior of the Right is always here to fight the good fight.





There were plenty of opportunities lately to catch our MRC spokesmen on the news. From the Don Imus show to Alan Keyes's new program, Japanese television, and *Hannity and Colmes*, President Bozell and Rich Noyes discussed media bias issues ranging from Enron to "Axis of Evil."

MRC Takes Active Role in Forcing Red Cross Apology

A decision by an American Red Cross chapter in California to ban the singing of "God Bless America" and "America the Beautiful" created a national controversy that the MRC was quick to become involved in and CNS.com was quick to cover.

The controversy eventually led to an apology from the Red Cross but not before the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights, the MRC and several other organizations had made their feelings known.

Here's how the events unfolded. On March 10, the Orange County, Calif. ARC chapter, claiming they wanted to be "inclusive" and "sensitive to religious diversity," refused to allow the two songs to be sung at a luncheon. The ARC national headquarters, in a press release on their web site, supported this stance.

Until March 11.

The Catholic League started the protest and contacted more than 100 other organizations for support. The MRC was more than happy to join the effort and plowed headfirst into the fray.

MRC President L. Brent Bozell faxed a letter to the President and CEO of the American Red Cross, telling him he was "stunned and appalled" by their stance and that he would urge the more than 100,000 MRC members across the country to withhold donations to the Red Cross until an apology was made.

The Red Cross, within a matter of hours, admitted mistakes had been made and issued an apology.

The Red Cross fracas is more evidence of MRC's commitment to fight political correctness and an example of the kind of impact members like you provide to our organization.

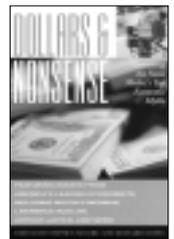
Take It From a Member of the MRC Board of Trustees

"This easy-to-understand book destroys ten of the media's most widely reported economic myths. With chapters written by such noted economists as Nobel Laureate Milton Friedman, Lawrence Kudlow, Arthur Laffer, and several others, *Dollars and Nonsense* illustrates how the media's poor economic coverage helps create bad public policies that limit our free-enterprise system. This unpretentious book — if read by editors, reporters, columnists, policy makers, and academics — has the potential to change the world for the better."

— Mr. John Garvey, President, CEO, and Chairman of Petroleum, Inc. in Wichita, Kansas, serves on the MRC's Board of Trustees. He is also President and Trustee of the Garvey Kansas Foundation.

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Order *Dollars & Nonsense* using the enclosed business reply envelope, or cut out and mail this form to the MRC at **325 South Patrick Street, Alexandria, VA 22314**. You may also call Donna at (800) 672-1423. Say you read about it in *FLASH!*



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Editor's Corner

TIM JONES

In Search of Attention

Eight American soldiers died in early March in bitter violence on the high, cold mountains of Afghanistan and what will happen between the time this is written and the time you read it is unknown.

I pause to pay respect to the young men who have sacrificed their tomorrows for ours. I fear that many more will suffer the same fate before we can truly enjoy peace again.

And this unavoidable struggle, complete with its continuing heartache and sadness, brings me to my topic today. It appears that some in the media have decided that our nation has become too patriotic, that we have caught a war fever that hinders our ability to see clearly and act rationally.

One organization, Rock the Vote, is terribly concerned. According to the *Los Angeles Times*, the organization is so unhappy that they're producing so-called public service announcements (PSA's) to "challenge" — believe it or not — the "unquestioning nationalism" they claim has occurred since September 11. One of the spots, the *Times* tells us, will show a school class reciting a Pledge of Allegiance that not only salutes the flag but affirms a national mandate to harm the environment and get oil "no matter what."

Rock the Vote deputy director Jehmu Green told the *Times* that "the spots look at traditional American symbols and adjust them to bring light to certain issues."



"We have strong feelings about the need to protect freedom of expression and use these ads to show that you wouldn't want to give up certain freedoms in the name of fighting for freedom," Green adds.

I've got some strong feelings too, and a basic question for Rock the Vote. How has this supposedly "unquestioning nationalism" limited the freedom of expression? The very fact Rock the Vote can produce and air such PSA's is evidence that no one has, is, or will attempt to limit the freedom of expression or speech in this country.

Where are the masses of dissent that have been silenced since September 11? Certainly not the left in America, who continue to appear on television, radio, and the Internet with outlandish claims that we brought the war on ourselves. Certainly not the nation's leading newspapers and television networks, which provide contrary views practically every day with their commentaries. Certainly not Muslim-Americans, whose spokesmen are a very visible presence on the

"talking head" news-show circuit.

So what's the real problem? The real issue is that the media and entertainment elites have been knocked out of their comfort zones and are, for the first time in a long while, unsure of their place in the world. Accustomed to criticizing America at every turn, they have found the audience for cynicism and self-loathing reduced to almost nothing. The renewed sense of patriotism has reaffirmed such principles as country, community, and a sense of duty, and elites find it all so provincial, old-fashioned, and just plain irritating.

The irritation has occurred because a more sober America is tuning them out and nothing hurts their arrogant pride and inflated sense of self-worth more than being ignored.

Now, what was it Rock the Vote was planning?



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