

**MARCH 31**

# Quarterly report from Bush-Cheney Media

**T**he first quarter of 2005 brought significant media dividends for the Bush-Cheney limited liability corporation. Stakeholders received windfalls as mainstream news outlets deferred to consolidation of power from the November election. A rollout of new "democracy" branding — kicked off by the State of the Union product relaunch — yielded at least temporary gains in psychological market share. For instance, repackaging of images in the Middle East implemented makeovers for several client governments. Actual democratic threats, inimical to Bush-Cheney LLC interests, remain low.

Our major domestic financial goal, the privatization of Social Security, is out of reach for the next several quarters. However, in view of the magnitude of potential profits, this massive effort will continue.

More problematic, in retrospect, was the March expenditure of political capital in the Schiavo gambit. Returns on media investment, as gauged by opinion poll data, have been disappointing. However, base earnings are likely to accrue to beneficial levels due to high volume from fundamentalist buy-ins.

Some media damage is inevitable, like the March 30 New York Times op-ed by John Danforth claiming that the Republican Party "has gone so far in adopting a sectarian agenda that it has become the political extension of a religious movement." But such refined GOP sensibilities are not a big part of our base. In fact, the further melding of religious and patriotic symbolism augurs well for investors. With the Cross in one hand and the Dollar Bill in the other, this limited liability corporation is moving forward to advance the interests of its various constituencies.

Unfortunately, the first quarter closed with a looming personnel problem on Capitol Hill. On balance, as indicated by a recent Wall Street Journal editorial, the House majority leader's baggage has approached the tipping point. Tom DeLay may need to be dumped before the fourth quarter.

On cable television, satisfactory trends continue. At MSNBC the process of imitating Fox News Channel is apparently secure. Other good news: The benign junk quotient

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on prime-time CNN continues to rise, with a welcome boost from the Michael Jackson trial. Overall, the ambient TV trajectory is edging toward our target, "No journalism is good journalism."

Negative impacts of the Armstrong Williams "payola" scandal continue to dissipate. Our in-house audit of the cost/benefit ratio indicates that such payments to media pundits amount to a short-term plus but long-term minus. In general, crass payoffs are inappropriate and unnecessary to curry favor with sycophant columnists.

Less problematic are the "video news releases" skewered by the New York Times. Taxpayer funding for some of our PR operations is a significant enhancement of perception management, and little ground need be given in this area. (If the Times were as scrupulous in avoiding stories we plant as it urges TV news departments to be with our videos, many of the paper's articles wouldn't exist.) Blow-over anticipated by end of third quarter.

Regarding the Iraq war: Despite occasional barbs from "the liberal media," they are largely taking cues from weak-kneed Democrats in Congress who ignore the significant opposition to the war that exists at grassroots as measured by opinion polling. With many stakeholders in Bush-Cheney LLC still receiving major financial benefits from war-related contracts, the status quo remains lucrative while the political hazards appear to be manageable over the next few quarters.

As in the past eight quarters, the spectacle of U.S. servicemen and servicewomen in harm's way must be utilized to deflect criticism of the policies that put them in harm's way. CEO Bush will continue his Jimmy Stewart imitations during appearances with soldiers and their families, while CFO Cheney will further develop his persona of stern and slightly avuncular paternalism.

On the talk-radio front, the emergence of Air America as a liberal network, while troubling, does not currently threaten the airwave dominance of B-C LLC clients. Our proprietary echo chambers — with such booming amplifiers as Rush Limbaugh, the Weekly Standard, the Washington Times, the New York Post, Fox News Channel and the Wall Street Journal's editorial page — provide a steady barrage of media blasts unmatched by anything the left-of-center can possibly offer.

Cautionary note: The interests of the Bush-Cheney limited liability corporation remain vulnerable to realization by a majority of the population that their financial interests and long-term security are being undermined by our policies.

*Norman Solomon's latest book, "War Made Easy: How Presidents and Pundits Keep Spinning Us to Death," will be published in early summer.*

