SALESMEN ROB SOLDIERS

It’s been said that you don’t know what hell is until you’ve had an insurance salesman in your living room, prattling on interminably about term life annuities.

But I’ve recently learned about a deeper level of hell reserved for insurance company hucksters who—get this—are ripping off America’s young soldiers headed for the Iraqi war. Companies such as American Amicable Life Insurance have weaseled their way to our basic-training bases where they pose as semi-official military agents. They gather boot-camp grunts into so-called classes for compulsory “briefing” on personal finances. With superior officers in the room, the agents talk of “investments” and urge them to sign blind authorizations to deduct money from their meager monthly paychecks.

The briefings don’t mention that the 19- and 20-year-old soldiers are not really buying investments, but life insurance. Nor is it pointed out that term policies pay nothing unless you die, yet nearly every soldier is covered by a low-cost military policy that pays 10-times what these private scams do.

The Pentagon turns a blind eye to this sleazy scam, and so does Congress—the American Council of Life Insurers, which hands out fat campaign donations, has gotten lawmakers to block any effort to stop the corporate thievery.

These guys are practicing crass war profiteering, for which they deserve a special place in hell.

BEATING THE BIG SHOTS

For those who whine that the Powers That Be are so powerful there’s no use even bothering to battle the bastards—take note and take heart in three big court victories by grass-roots battlers:

It all adds up to a sorry story

The numbers tell the tale of the Bush presidency

Listening to all this talk of “swing voters” and “battleground states,” I often think about my dear ol’ daddy, W.F. “Hi” Hightower.

When I was growing up in Denison, Texas, my father didn’t expound much on political philosophy, but if you backed him into a corner he’d have called himself a conservative. ‘Probe a little deeper, however, and ol’ Hi would maintain that the community had a moral obligation to look out for the least among them, that a public library was essential in creating an informed citizenry (even though it would cut into his newsstand business), that we needed to pay a small tax to the county if we expected to have good roads, and that any leader—whether in business or government—had to be accountable for his (or her, but mostly his) actions. And if he proved himself incompetent or dishonest, or both, he should be hoisted out of office on his own petard.

I got to thinking about this election, which everybody says is the most important in recent history—wondering what Hi would make of George W and the Bushites: First, he’d have to break out his hip-waders to slog through the rhetorical muck spewing from the podiums of these high-dollar conventions, with their Hollywood production and vetted and canned stump speeches.

But then, being a businessman, Hi would’ve wanted to see the hard, objective numbers and make his decision on solid, logical deduction rather than on the cut of a man’s hair or his choice of hobbies. Like Mickey Mantle’s 56-game hitting streak, like Hank Aaron’s 755 dingers, the numbers don’t lie.

So even though my daddy’s long gone, I wanted to put together this special Lowdown with him in mind—he’d be all for boiling the President down to a job performance review.

—continued p. 2
1. A coalition of environmental and citizen groups in the West Virginia area has convinced a federal judge to rein in coal industry giants who do “mountaintop removal.” Instead of funneling into the mountains to get at the coal, the corporations simply blow up the top third of the mountains, shove the rubble into valleys and streams below, and scoop out the coal.

2. A coalition of environmental groups and Nevada officials beat back the nuclear power giants who wanted to bury all of America’s high-level nuclear waste in Nevada’s Yucca Mountain, in an earthquake zone. We’d all be at risk from long-term radiation leaks, and having the hot stuff hauled on trucks and trains through population centers. A federal appeals court has halted the plan.

3. Recently, another federal appeals court ruled against lapdog regulators who tried to let Big Media grow bigger, shrinking media competition, diversity. Community radio broadcasters and citizen groups won that battle.

To join these fights, go to www.jimhightower.com

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**The Economy**

Federal deficit under Bush administration: $2.3 trillion 
projected through 2011

Federal surplus when Bush came into office: $5.6 trillion 
projected over 10 years

2004 deficit: $450 billion

Current U.S. debt to the penny: $7,298,671,067,464.27

“Our projected budget deficits are not manageable without significant changes [in taxes or spending]. “We simply cannot grow our way out this problem.” Says U.S. Comptroller General David Walker, a former Reagan Administration official, who is a non-partisan auditor appointed to a 15-year term.

**Wages**

Americans’ average income growth from 2000-2002: -5.7%

Americans’ avg. income growth from 2000-2002 adjusted for inflation: -9.2%

2002 is the most recent year for which data is available. This is the first time Americans’ overall income shrank for two consecutive years since the current tax system was put in place during World War II.

Hourly wage growth for production, non-supervisory workers in 2003: 0.6%

(80% of the workforce that are blue-collar workers in manufacturing or are non-managers in services)

Americans’ avg. income growth from 2000-2002 adjusted for inflation: -9.2%

CEO pay growth in 2003: 27%

Hourly wages fell for middle- and low-wage men and women (adjusted for inflation), making 2003 the worst year for wage growth over the 1998-2003 period. This happened in spite of the acceleration of gross domestic product (GDP) growth in late 2003. Meanwhile, the 27% climb in overall pay for CEOs exceeds the 11.5% rise in 2002 over 2001. Since 1990, average CEO pay has risen a total of 279%.

Ratio of CEO to worker pay in 2003: 300 to 1

Ratio of CEO to worker pay in 1982: 42 to 1

CEO to worker pay ratios in Mexico (45 to 1), Hong Kong (38 to 1), and Britain (25 to 1) are much less obscene. Unfortunately, under George W’s tax system, all those gobbledy for executive pay are now treated by the IRS as a “reason- able business expense,” so they are fully deductible from a corporation’s income tax – no matter how huge the sum.

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**Jobs**

Number of jobs lost since Bush took office: 1.2 million

Number of jobs promised to come from Bush tax cuts: 5.5 million

Number of jobs created during Clinton administration: 21 million

Since the recession began 39 months ago in March 2001, the 0.9% contraction in the job market represents the greatest sustained job loss since the Great Depression.

Unemployment rate today: 5.6%

Underemployment rate today: 9.6%

Underemployment rate when “recovery” began: 9.4%

Bush’s “Jobs and Growth Plan” has yielded no change in the nation’s unemployment rate for all the talk of a “recovery.” Underemployment, meaning involuntary part-time work, discouraged workers, and other workers who have looked for work in the last year but are not counted as unemployed, has actually increased.

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**DID YOU KNOW?**

Of imports into the U.S., China accounts for:

- **95%** of stuffed toys
- **88%** of radios
- **83%** of toys
- **70%** of leather goods
- **67%** of shoes

Source: Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas

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**The Pentagon’s Revolving Door**

Pete Aldridge has made a career of spinning in and out of the revolving door between the Pentagon and military contractors. He was secretary of the air force, then he was president of air military contractors. He was then he was president of air military contractors. He was between the Pentagon and congressional budget commissions. He is a former Reagan Administration official, who is a non-partisan auditor appointed to a 15-year term.

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**Do something!**

This issue presents the election by the number. Share it with your annoying, Limbaugh-listening, right-wing-loving brother-in-law. Pass it around your favorite local coffee shop. Copy a page or two and post it at your favorite local coffee shop. You can talk till you’re blue in the face, but, most of the time, people won’t budge from their positions — no matter how misguided — until they see hard proof. Well, here you go.

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Globaloney

Number of U.S. jobs lost due to NAFTA and WTO trade deals between 1994 and 2000: 3 million
Number of U.S. jobs lost in manufacturing sector alone under Bush Administration: 1.7 million
Manufacturing jobs lost in 2003: 582,000
Manufacturing jobs eliminated since 1997: 3.3 million

Increased imports spurred by the NAFTA and WTO trade deals eliminate U.S. jobs. Under Bush, 10% of total U.S. industrial employment has vanished.

Healthcare

Number of people who have become uninsured since Bush took office: 3.8 million
Number of people who gained health insurance under Clinton Administration: 2.3 million

Since Bush took office, family healthcare premiums have risen by more than $2,700 a year. The average cost for a family plan is now above $9,000. This increase, combined with the loss of so many jobs, has left a total of 43 million Americans uninsured.

Cost of Bush Medicare drug proposal: $534 billion
Cost of program originally announced by White House: $395 billion

Before Congress approved the bill, Richard Foster, who was chief actuary of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, was prepared to reveal the higher cost estimates to Congress. Thomas Scully, who was Bush’s Medicare Director at the time, told Foster he’d be fired if he did.

The Olympics are underway in Greece, and, naturally, corporate CEOs are there among the globe-hopping celebrity scene—but what to do about terrorists who might target the games? Of course, the Greek government has assembled 40,000 police, 7,000 military troops, NATO jets, spy planes, and submarines. But the superwealthy swells of corporate-dom need to feel extra-special safe.

So, the top honchos of such outfits as American Express, Citigroup, and McDonald’s are not staying in swank hotels, but in specially outfitted yachts anchored in the harbor near Athens. If there’s a terrorist attack, the yachts can flee with their elite passengers.

Some package deals include helicopters, body guards, arm-plated limousines, and a motorcycle escort to get the special ones to and from the Olympic contests. Citigroup’s luxury ship has it all plus a yoga studio, and at $150,000 a day it’s a pricey cocoon for CEOs! You and me! The corporations will deduct the yacht packages for tax purposes, claiming them to be a “necessary cost of doing business.”

These guys get the gold medal for Olympic-level excess.

---continued from p. 2---

The Hightower Lowdown

The “Crawford Five” are free!

Dan Rather’s janitor was frisked—sort of. A police officer didn’t need a warrant to search the janitor’s Gujarati bag. New York City police search janitors for drugs. But Rather’s security guards were allowed to search him. Talk about double standards.

MIGHTY CONGRESS

Getting back to getting the government to do something about the deficit. The Senate passed a budget that would reduce the deficit by $225 billion over ten years. The House version contains $90 billion in cuts.

It’s the Senate version. Can we please talk about the deficit, for a change?

---continued p. 4---
### Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bush Administration underfunded No Child Left Behind Act in 2004:</td>
<td>$9.4 billion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bush Administration underfunded NCLB Act since it was passed in 2001:</td>
<td>$26.4 billion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

By failing to fully fund his NCLB, Bush left states to find the money for the federally required education programs designed to hold schools accountable for children’s academic progress. So severe is the gap in funding that 21 states have passed or proposed measures to opt out of or seek changes in the Act, including Utah, Virginia, Vermont, Maine, New Hampshire, Hawaii, Arizona, Minnesota, Idaho, Connecticut, Wyoming and New Mexico.

**Sources:**
- U.S. Department of Education

### Civil Liberties

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>States that have passed resolutions to protect residents from the USA PATRIOT Act's erosion of civil liberties:</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cities and counties that have passed similar resolutions:</td>
<td>338</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Rather than submit to Bush & Ashcroft’s Orwellian intrusion into our lives, citizens across the country, from Des Moines, Iowa, to Lexington, Kentucky, are taking action to protect the civil liberties guaranteed by the Bill of Rights.

**Sources:**
- Bill of Rights Defense Committee

### The Environment

**Anti-Environment Actions of Bush Administration in last six months alone:**
- Court nixes Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) plan to send nuclear waste to an earthquake zone at Yucca Mountain
- EPA allows power plant and factory repairs costing up to 20% to be called “maintenance,” so they don’t have to conform to new, court-mandated pollution controls
- EPA proposes giving pesticide approval authority to bureaucrats instead of biologists, adding a new risk to wildlife
- Forest Service proposes roadless rule rollback
- Army Corps of Engineers loosens clean water, stream protections for mountaintop removal mining
- Bush administration may roll back fuel standards
- Bush administration unveils controversial salmon plan
- Bush administration planning cuts in environmental funding
- Energy Department seeking to expand natural gas drilling on federal lands

### The Hightower Lowdown

**Get those jobs outa here!**

“Outsourcing is just a new way of doing international trade,” said N. Gregory Mankiw, chairman of Bush’s Council of Economic Advisors when he released the Economic Report of the President. “More things are tradable than were tradable in the past. And that’s a good thing.”

**Sources:**
- National Resource Defense Council

### TO SUBSCRIBE TO THE BUSH PRESIDENCY BY THE NUMBERS:

1. The numbers don’t lie
2. Economy, Wages, Jobs, War
4. Education, Environment