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BRET FURTWANGLER | GRAPHIC ARTIST

■ In my opinion

Holding out for a HERO



JENNIFER MCBRIDE
QUASHING DISSENT

I have a theory. The popularity of superhero movies proves how much Americans like comic books, but it also suggests Americans are especially fond of waiting around for somebody to save us. We carry bumper stickers proudly proclaiming that guns don't kill people. We over-medicate our children to the point of paralysis. Our politicians' speeches are long, resplendent and devoid of facts. Apparently there is contentment in complacency. As long as there's a football season, the national populace will be quite comfortable in the position of damsel in distress, passing and passing and passing the buck.

Our children's children are already burdened with the dinner check of an Iraqi war. The elections in Iraq were a great success with higher turnout than expected, and hopefully all those ink-stained fingers raised in celebration will be part of an emerging democracy that will become both peaceful and prosperous. I was one of the few in Eugene who originally supported the Iraqi war on the basis of human-rights intervention. The rape rooms left me shuddering. The Kurds and the Shiites were vulnerable to systematic mass murder. U.N. sanctions had left the rich privileged and the poor starving. I was also an unabashed Colin Powell groupie: How could the near-peacenik of the Bush administration let us down? I still think toppling aggressive dictators who commit chemical genocide is the right thing to do, although I prefer it to be done in a different manner — better organized and involving international forces. And, oh yeah, avoiding that whole torture thing would have been nice.

Unfortunately, our policy on inter-

heaven forbid we let all those planes just sit around. We want them out and bombing all those gosh darn Islamic threats.

The Republican embrace of a foolish policy seems to know no end. President Bush is gripping his sword of justice by the wrong end if he thinks now is the time to move into Iran. At this fragile time in Israeli-Palestinian relations, when some kind of peace between the two decades-old enemies might actually be possible, how dare the Pentagon choose to publicly bully the Israeli government into doing President Bush's dirty work. If Israel did invade, not only would it become a full-blown calamity as hordes of haters poured over Israeli borders, but the peace process would be savaged, and Israel would be left militarily vulnerable to invasion. The result would be United States troops diverted away from police action in Iraq early, leaving a quagmire to become a wasteland. Luckily for the Ayatollahs, Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon is too smart to invade Iran. By even suggesting it, Bush may have destabilized Sharon a little, hurting the upcoming peace process. If we step in and mess things up, there really will be no one to come to the rescue.

The locals in New Orleans determine how successful their Mardi Gras celebration was by weighing their trash. If the same standard is used by the Bush administration, I can only applaud their overwhelmingly splendid success. Unfortunately, those of us who would prefer not to live in a world of landfills are only left with one prayer: "Help me, Obi-Wan Kenobi. You're my only hope."

How could the Bush administration invade anywhere new, one asks, with our troops being overextended and all? The answer is that the Wolfowitzes of the world can funnel money to other nations and let them do the assaulting. Donald Rumsfeld casually mentioned he wouldn't be surprised to see Israel invade Iran. I'm sure they'd have at least one ally in their star-crossed attempt. After all, our air troops are almost useless in the guerilla war in Iraq, and

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■ Editorial

New Bush budget sets 'muddled' priorities

President Bush submitted his 2006 budget to Congress on Monday and surprise, surprise: more funding for the military and homeland security with severe cuts in practically every other department, from education to health care for veterans.

"It is a budget that sets priorities," Bush said. And those priorities are: working or not working rich and Bush family friends, high priority; children in poverty and the working poor, low priority.

Almost every program for lower-income Americans was potentially expendable in Bush's budget, including food stamps, farm subsidies, Medicaid, public-housing programs. His budget would cut the Environmental Protection Agency by 5.6 percent. A number of community development programs would be cut by about 40 percent. And the budget would expand Pell Grants, but only at the expense of the \$6 billion Perkins Loan Program, which would be eliminated.

But apparently making Bush's tax cut for the wealthy permanent is too important to sacrifice. Furthermore, the budget submitted to Congress is incomplete because it does not include spending for the president's number one foreign priority, our various wars in the Middle East, and it does not include spending for the president's number one domestic priority, overhauling Social Security. The administration has requested \$80 billion for the former, and the latter, some experts estimate, will cost around \$3-\$4.5 trillion over a 20-year period.

This is a question of priorities. The government has a responsibility to provide for our safety, but safety from terrorists is only one part of that equation. Safety also includes providing a safety net for those less fortunate. Safety includes keeping us safe from disease and environmental disaster. Pushing privatized Social Security over adequate health care is not the kind of thinking that will keep us safe.

Bush explains Social Security, sort of

Speaking of Social Security, are you confused about how President Bush is going to solve the Social Security crisis? Well, you are not alone. Apparently President Bush isn't totally clear about it either, as evidenced by his attempt to extemporaneously explain it to a confused audience member on Feb. 4 (we are not making this up):

"All which is on the table begins to address the big cost drivers. For example, how benefits are calculate, for example, is on the table; whether or not benefits rise based upon wage increases or price increases. There's a series of parts of the formula that are being considered. And when you couple that, those different cost drivers, affecting those — changing those with personal accounts, the idea is to get what has been promised more likely to be — or closer delivered to what has been promised.

"Does that make any sense to you? It's kind of muddled. ... I'll keep working on it."

Well, we are convinced. If you want an actual explanation of the president's plan, read the Emerald's Tuesday cover story ("Security for the future," 2/8/05).

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