

# FATE OF THE UNION



TED RALL

## INTERVIEWS BY MICHAEL McCUSKER

In contemplation of George W. Bush's first Presidential 'State of the Union' pep-talk to Congress about the war against terrorism and the deteriorating economy, a few coastal folk were asked the question: *What is your personal perception & prophesy of the State of the Union in 2002?*

### MICHAEL LINK

I feel that now the government of the United States has taken the role of protection of the people and seeker out of evil, President Bush will be able to do what he feels like in the name of national security and patriotism.

I can take the counterpoint: What other options do we have?

Bottom line corporatism against what is left of the cultures of the world. It is sad that it has to manifest itself as Christian against Muslim, West against East.

I think in this coming year we will see increased military activity by the United States and other nations in the name of anti-terrorism.

We have to look outside the box for solutions. We have to look elsewhere. We have to *not* act.

Do we want violence or do we want peace as well as security and safety? If we want peace, we can promote it instead of violence, which has never solved anything. We can do it. That is what I believe, and I'm sticking to it.

### 'HIPPIE JIM' HEDFORD

First the *Best Case Scenario*:  
Israel and all associated shrines and talismans (sand optional) relocated to the Arizona desert.  
Afghan people given jobs building a new pipeline.  
Osama bin Laden captured, hires Johnny Cochran as defense attorney.

Enron scandal implicates George Bush Jr.  
*Worst Case Scenario*:

War machine feeding frenzy goes unchecked.  
World peace dismissed as outdated ideal with no income potential.

Asian and African terrorist factions documented for America so dot-com war can expand to include all of the 3rd world.

Domestic terrorists inspire national paranoia, National Guard mobilized into high profile and compromise all rights to privacy, conducting house to house searches in the name of National Security.

United States closes its borders...scrutinizes all its citizenry for proper display of consumer confidence and prominent patriotism, i.e., lapel pins, bumper stickers, frequent trips to Disneyworld.

### MICHAEL MILLER (aka 'SASHA')

I would think after (September 11) 2001 I cannot predict the future. Whatever happens of significant impact this year that this administration will try to capitalize on the very small percentage of people they are working for in this country.

My concern is will Americans stand up in the face of being called "terrorist sympathizers" for the democratic principles this country was founded upon?

(MPMc has done us a wonderful service in collecting so many opinions on current affairs in his newspaper. My criticism is that I'm tired of opinions that lead only to other opinions. I desire action. How do we throw the bums out? That's what I want to know.)

### JOANNE HALVORSON

Status Quo.  
No consequences for wrongdoing.

### LEE MILLER

Remember the last undeclared war that lasted ten years?

As time goes on, there will be more serious divisions. The apparent urgency of this fight will decrease for lack of a defined enemy and objective. When bodybags start being brought home in quantity, popular support will wane and Bush's popularity will diminish.

The economy will keep spiraling down, except of course for the companies that produce weapons. I would not be surprised if military conscription is reinstated.

### ELIZABETH MENETREY

The 'State of the Union' is that the poor, the struggling, the working class and especially the children are suffering.

When I see corporations getting tax "refunds" for taxes they never paid, it makes my blood boil.

When Bush says, "We will leave no child behind," I have to gag. More testing in schools? Give me a break.

Teachers are dealing with 30 kids in a classroom, outdated textbooks and lack of supplies.

The state of our schools should be a bigger priority, but more testing is certainly not the answer. Who is coming up with this nonsense? Educators?

What matters more than our children?  
As a parent and an educator, I must hold out for the future. However, right now things look pretty gloomy. Bah, humbug!

### KEVIN VIOLETTE

If by 'State of the Union' you mean "conformity," we're doing great. Everyone is embracing Bush the Lesser as if he were some military genius, while his true talent is something he shares with any dog — the ability to see things in black and white.

I am wondering how much the 'War on Terrorism' is costing us. While civilian industries die on the vine, the military-industrial complex (Eisenhower's term — the true military genius) is going great guns. I'm sorry, but more death is *not* the answer to complicated issues of international morality.

I say this because I love my country and want it to live the dream, not the nightmare.

### JOHN LONQUIST

I keep thinking of ostriches — if I think much more of it than that I start to get a headache.

### THEDA SPRACKLIN

I feel that this war is a physical manifestation of the war going on in the/our collective head, i.e., corruption versus honesty, manipulation versus trust and fast-food versus home cooking.

My resolve individually for the collective head therefore is to be more honest no matter how corrupt and powerful the issue.

To trust in outcomes rather than to force them.  
To do more cooking at home.

### MERIANNE MYERS

It is no surprise that George W. requires so much media time to explain the state of the nation to us. It's all he and his formidable staff can do to put a positive spin on our collective straits. For those of us without staff or media access, economy is an issue and our state might efficiently be described as simply dismal.

As a former magician's assistant, I can only watch admiringly as our government demonstrates the very cornerstone of good magic. Misdirection. It is increasingly clear that it is, indeed, possible to make the elephant disappear while we're all watching the pretty silk scarf flutter to the floor.

As more and more corporate giants go down in financial flames taking many of us with them, more public lands turned over to private profit, health and education budgets cut to make funds available for the military, it's hard to even get our minds around the state of our union, let alone imagine doing something about it.

I believe there is a small, but inevitable self-righting effect where politics are concerned. Just as a boat will struggle to right itself in a storm, the union that is us will struggle to survive when it is threatened. Granted, it's a little trickier when the gravest threat comes from our own government; when the abiding danger is not the gunslinger who is so obviously the bad guy but the perfectly "normal" looking family-man-in-a-suit, elected by our very selves. The one whose allegiance is to the corporate interests whose dedication is to the bottom line, not the bottom rung of society.

I stubbornly believe that when things get bad enough we tend to do something about it. It looks to me like many of us would rather get busy now than wait to see just how bad it can really get. More of us are stepping up, participating and stirring things up.

The state of the country? It sucks! The state of our union? Hopefully, we're about to take control. It's time we told *them* about the state of the union. We have the power and the smarts. These are exciting times.

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