

Editorials



Tuesday, January 1, 2008

Lampasas Dispatch Record

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'The Golden Compass' threatens to lead astray

The movie trailers sure look enticing, with majestic polar bears, rapid-fire action and a cast that includes Nicole Kidman. Behind the advertising campaign for "The Golden Compass," though, lurks a dark secret. For all its glitz and seeming similarities to the friendlier fantasy works of C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien, "The Golden Compass" offers a thinly veiled assault on Christian doctrine and on the very certainty of God's existence.

Based on British agnostic Philip Pullman's "His Dark Materials" trilogy -- a series written for children -- "The Golden Compass" attacks Christianity as a dark force that oppresses and tortures mankind while crushing man's emotions and desires. Worse yet, the movie presents its anti-Christian message with just enough seemingly innocent appeal to lure audiences into reading -- or watching future cinematic adaptations of -- Pullman's two later, more stridently agnostic works. Parents should consider Pullman's openly stated intention of destroying faith as they seek to guard their children from harmful media influences.

The author proudly claimed in interviews, "My books are about killing God," and he admits he is targeting children, believing they represent the best audience for his anti-Christian ideology.

"The Golden Compass" encourages viewers to sympathize with 12-year-old Lyra and her companions as they struggle against the zealous persecution led by the Magisterium, a fascist organization intended to represent the church. In Pullman's twisted worldview, the Magisterium oppresses humanity by trying to cast out children's "daemons" (pronounced "demons") and separate them from their "Dust," a substance somewhat like original sin.

The trilogy encourages man to seek pleasure in rebellion against God, or the "Authority." In contrast to the Apostle Paul's condemnations of licentious lawlessness, "The Golden Compass" celebrates -- as any future film adaptations of Pullman's novels certainly will -- unrestrained human choice as the ultimate freedom. Consequently, "His Dark Materials" defends evolutionary theories and glorifies witchcraft, homosexuality and premarital sex, all while casting as heroes those who resist the Magisterium by choosing to practice such debauchery.

Moreover, the trilogy's condemnation of church doctrine and practice ranges from scorn for Christianity's supposed impotence to accusations that the defense of Christian truth maims and dehumanizes man.

One character in the series, Mary Malone, announces, "The Christian religion is a very powerful and convincing mistake, that's all." In another instance, a witch -- one of the good guys in the trilogy -- charges that churches sexually mutilate children "so they shan't feel. That is what the church does, and every church is the same: control, destroy, obliterate every good feeling."

Such hate-filled messages threaten to deceive audiences by grossly distorting the Christian gospel of redemption, purification and grace. Who would want to worship God if He is the sadist Pullman alleges?

Conversely, why should any thoughtful Christian open his own ears, or his children's, to such open blasphemy against their Heavenly Father?

If parents want to expose their children to classic fantasy entertainment while instilling moral messages, perhaps they should consider the cinematic adaptations of "The Chronicles of Narnia" or "The Lord of the Rings." Both encourage audiences to love heroism, to seek transcendent truth and to recognize mankind's fallenness and need for a savior.

"The Golden Compass," however, masquerades as harmless entertainment while threatening to lead the undiscerning astray from Christianity.

From the Bible

"Great and marvelous are Thy works, O Lord God, the Almighty; Righteous and true are Thy ways, Thou King of the nations."

Revelation 15:3

Letters Policy

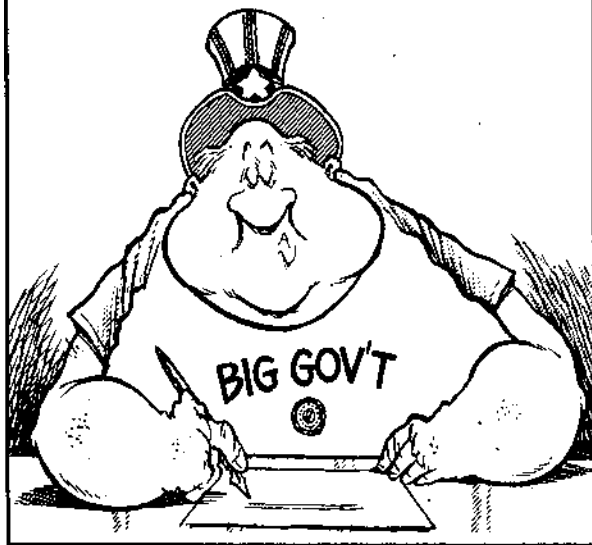
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Letters will be printed on a space-available basis. Letters should stick with issues, and not simply be personal attacks. Letters endorsing a particular position on issues of local interest will be accepted, however letters endorsing a candidate for political office will not be accepted.

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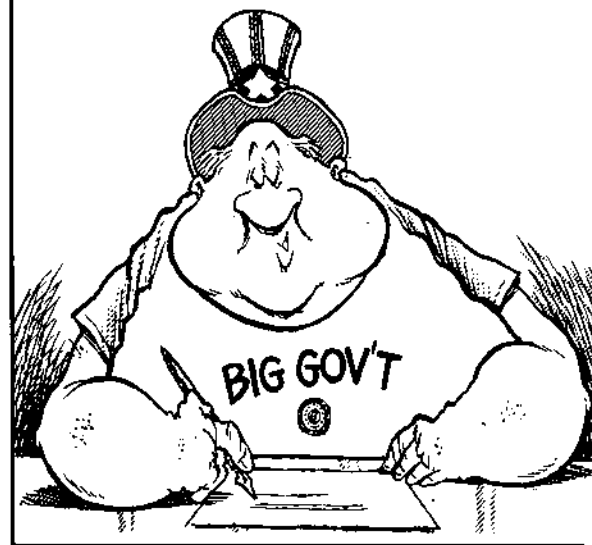
NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION

I. LOSE WEIGHT



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WITHOUT DIET OR EXERCISE



Make 2008 a year to celebrate

Political reporters love a horse race. Bruising campaigns -- with their polls, promises and pandering -- offer endless excitement for scribes. By contrast, day-to-day governing -- with its conversations, cooperation and compromises -- seems boring.

This year, the presidential primary process starts earlier than ever. It might last for months, or it might be effectively over by February. In any event, political coverage in 2008 is likely to focus on the selection of our next president. That gives our leaders an opportunity, if they're willing to seize it.

For their part, lawmakers need to fix the budget process. Every year, it winds up being a costly train wreck.

The federal government's fiscal year begins Oct. 1. But each year, lawmakers struggle to get their act together. All too often they miss the deadline, which forces them to pass a "continuing resolution" to keep the lights on in federal buildings.

This year was especially difficult. By mid-December, only one of the 12 spending bills Congress is supposed to pass had been signed by the president. The other 11 were rolled into one "omnibus" spending bill.

This monster, some 3,400 pages long and two feet high, hit congressional desks just hours before the lawmakers were supposed to vote on it. The Senate got a full 46 hours, while House members got a mere 22 hours. Even lawmakers who specialize in speed-reading had no idea what they were voting for.

This is no way to run a government.

The president sends his proposed budget to Capitol Hill in early February. That gives lawmakers plenty of time to pass spending measures. In fact, they have longer than they used to. Until the mid-1970s the fiscal year ended in June. Lawmakers pushed that back to September to give them more time to write the budget, and they still can't get the job done on time.

Also, Congress should release spending bills at least a week before they're voted on, so lawmakers, journalists and bloggers could check the fine print and identify any pork projects or other surprises.

Meanwhile, President Bush can take a small step that could pay big dividends to taxpayers: index capital gains to inflation.

Right now, anyone who sells an asset such as a stock or a house must pay capital gains taxes on the increase

New Year's resolutions

Every New Year's Eve millions of Americans make New Year's resolutions. Whether the resolution is to get out of debt, to spend more time with loved ones, or to quit smoking, these resolutions have one thing in common: They are goals to make our lives better.

Unfortunately, this ritual commitment to self-improvement is widely viewed as something of a joke -- in part because New Year's resolutions go so notoriously unmet. After years of watching others -- or themselves -- excitedly commit to a new goal, only to abandon the quest by March, many come to conclude that New Year's resolutions are an exercise in futility that should not be taken seriously. "The silly season is upon us," writes a columnist for the Washington Post, "when people feel compelled to remake themselves with new year's resolutions."

But such a cynical attitude is false and self-destructive. Making New Year's resolutions does not have to be futile -- and to make them is not silly. Done seriously, it is an act of profound moral significance that embodies the essence of a life well-lived.

Consider what we do when we make a New Year's resolution: We look at where we are in some area of life, think about where we want to be, and then set ourselves a goal to get there. We are tired of feeling chubby and lethargic, say, and want the improved appearance and greater energy level that comes with greater fitness. So we resolve to take up a fun athletic activity -- like tennis or a martial art -- and plan to do it three times a week.

Is this a laughable act of self-delusion? Hardly. If it were, then how would anyone ever achieve anything in life? In fact, to make a New Year's resolution is to recognize the undeniable reality that successful goal-pursuit is possible -- the reality that everyone at one time or another has set and achieved long-range goals, and profited from doing so. Indeed, not only is it possible to achieve long-range goals, it is necessary for success in life. To make a New Year's resolution is also to recognize the undeniable reality that rewarding careers and romances do not just happen automatically -- that to get what we want in our lives, we must consciously choose and achieve the right goals. We must

in that asset's value, regardless of inflation. This can hurt investors who hold an asset for many years and realize only a small real, after-inflation, gain. In some cases, the investor pays more in taxes than the asset actually earned.

Indexing capital gains to inflation would be a technical change to the tax code -- but that's actually an advantage. President Bush can make it without congressional approval, so he could help investors without any undue delay.

This change also would help ease worries about the housing market. In the last year, many homeowners have seen the assessed value of their homes erode. By slashing the capital gains tax that long-time homeowners might have to pay, Bush would give a subtle boost to consumer confidence and alleviate the tax-related reason that some people have for holding onto their homes. It's a much better step than a direct federal intervention to prop up the housing market.

This is the time of year when people make resolutions: to lose 30 pounds, eat more vegetables or exercise more. So why not Congress? Having the spotlight on the presidential candidates should ease the partisan pressure on those who remain in Washington and make it possible for them to solve some problems that have plagued policymakers in recent years.

The administration and Congress should vow to do better in 2008 than they did in 2007. If they succeed, our elected leaders can leave a stronger country no matter which candidate wins the race for the White House. That's a resolution that would benefit all of us.

Ed Feulner is president of The Heritage Foundation, based in Washington, D.C.

Edwin Feulner



Michelle Malkin



Top story of 2007: the surge in Iraq

There should be no question what the top story of the year was: America's counterinsurgency campaign in Iraq, the Democrats' efforts to sabotage it, and the mainstream media's refusal to own up to military progress.

We rang in 2007 with vehement liberal opposition to the "surge" of 21,000 added U.S. troops and tactical changes to secure Baghdad. In the ensuing 12 months, Democrats tried and failed repeatedly to undermine this military strategy and starve the war of funding. Their poisonously partisan allies at MoveOn.org attempted to smear surge architect Gen. David Petraeus as a traitor. The New York Times and Associated Press fought to obscure the successes of the surge with their relentless "grim milestone" drumbeat. But by year's end, with Shiites and Sunnis marching and praying together for peace, even anti-war Democrats and adversarial media outlets alike were forced to acknowledge that undeniable military progress and security improvements had been made.

Is there still a long way to go? Obviously, yes. Were there ancillary factors that contributed to the decrease in violence and the "awakenings" in Anbar province and Baghdad? Yes again. But go back to January. Refresh your memories of the anti-surge rhetoric and the spectacularly misguided conventional wisdom.

When the Senate Foreign Relations Committee's resolution opposing the surge passed 12-9 on Jan. 24, Sen. Joseph Biden, D-Del., the panel's chairman, claimed it was "not an attempt to embarrass the president." Bull. That's what the Democrats have been trying to do all year. Biden argued: The measure "is designed to let the president know that there are many in both parties, Democrats and Republicans, that believe a change in our mission to go into Baghdad -- in the midst of a civil war -- as well as a surge in ground troops ... is the wrong way to go, and I believe it will have the opposite -- I repeat -- opposite effect the president intends."

Seven months later, staunch anti-war Democrat Rep. Brian Baird of Washington returned from Baghdad and recognized reality:

"As a Democrat who voted against the war from the outset and who has been frankly critical of the administration and the post-invasion strategy, I am convinced by the evidence that the situation has at long last begun to change substantially for the better ... the people, strategies and facts on the ground have changed for the better and those changes justify changing our position on what should be done."

Wrong-way Biden insisted the anti-surge resolution wasn't meant to embarrass the president. Opponents of the Baghdad mission insisted they didn't want America to fail. But let's not forget where the Democrats came from in January -- and where the party leadership remains. A Fox News poll in mid-January revealed a disturbing 49 percent of Democrats either wanted us to lose in Iraq or "didn't know" if they wanted us to succeed. All but two Democrats voted in the House to oppose the surge. As our troops succeeded, these surge critics went from arguing against the strategy to arguing whether violence dropped in Baghdad to arguing about why that decrease occurred. Through it all, Gen. Petraeus and the troops serving under him have remained stalwart, candid and courageous. He told the Senate Armed Services Committee on Jan. 23: "The way ahead will be neither quick nor easy."

That's also what I heard repeatedly from officers I interviewed while embedded in Baghdad in January -- just as the first wave of surge forces was being mobilized. It's a message the instant gratification Beltway media didn't want to deliver.

There's a reason the magazine and newspaper editors are naming everything but the surge as their top story of the year. Good news in the war on terror is bad news for those rooting for failure. Far easier to play up casualties and sectarian strife, sensationalize accusations of atrocities, and demonize the men and women in uniform to indulge Bush Derangement Syndrome, as Washington Post staffer and NBC military analyst William Arkin did on Jan. 30 when he lambasted troops for enjoying "obscene amenities" and serving as a "mercenary" force.

One of the troops Arkin considers a "mercenary" was Army 2nd Lt. Mark J. Daily. On Jan. 19, a reader e-mailed me that the 23-year-old standout soldier had been killed in an IED attack in Mosul along with three comrades. To MoveOn and Democrat leaders and the anti-surge press, he's just another number. Another "victim." Another pawn. But on his MySpace site and across the Internet, his immortal words resonate:

"Some have allowed their resentment of the President to stir silent applause for setbacks in Iraq. Others have ironically decried the war because it has tied up our forces and prevented them from confronting criminal regimes in Sudan, Uganda, and elsewhere. I simply decided that the time for candid discussions of the oppressed was over, and I joined."

He declared simply: "I genuinely believe the United States Army is a force of good in this world." It's the legacy 2nd Lt. Daily left on this world -- and the legacy that defined 2007 against all odds.

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