

The Howey Political Report



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Brian A. Howey, publisher

Mark Schoeff Jr., Washington writer

Jack E. Howey, editor

The Howey Political Report Office: 317-254-1533
PO Box 40265 Fax: 317-968-0487
Indianapolis, IN 46240-0265 Mobile: 317-506-0883

brianhowey@howeypolitics.com
www.howeypolitics.com

Washington office: 202-775-3242;
Business Office: 317-254-0535.

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“QUOTE” OF THE WEEK

“Should Saddam Hussein choose confrontation, the American people can know that every measure has been taken to avoid war, and every measure will be taken to win it.”

- President George W. Bush

The Brink of War at the Old Point

Hoosiers await a ‘fast-food war’

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY** in Indianapolis

Polka Boy had just finished playing, “*In Heaven there is no beer, that’s why we drink it here*”

A glance at the watch and it was 7:47 p.m. Monday, St. Patrick’s Day. The Athenaeum’s Kellerbar, the ballroom floor and biergarten were packed with green-clad revelers, many wearing funny hats and buttons, possibly a couple thousand people total. No one appeared to be looking over their shoulder and no obvious security was evident. Indianapolis Mayor Bart Peterson and his opponent, Greg Jordan, were there earlier.

I darted up the stairs and out into the warm night, passing the Murat, and moved southeasterly down Massachusetts

Avenue. I thought President George. W.

Bush’s speech might be on at the Chatterbox’s TV set on top of the refrigerator in back, but as I approached this favorite jazz dive, I heard Monica Herzig pounding away on the piano and several dozen people singing Irish songs. That party was going too strong.

I walked down Mass Ave to the Old Point Tavern, tucked just underneath the Indianapolis skyline on a five-point intersection. Most people there were in the sidewalk cafe, enjoying the balmy night. Inside, *Fox News* was on the TV above the bar, and several people were seated there drinking and talking. I asked the waitress if the volume could be turned up when President Bush began his address. “Sure,” she said.

At 8:01 p.m., the volume came up and there was Bush, telling the nation it was about to wage its first full-blown war of the 21st Century. Yes, we had gone into Afghanistan and helped the Northern Alliance drive away the Taliban and send al Qaeda scurrying into caves. But this was different: An invasion. A potential siege looming in Baghdad, described by the *Washington Post* as a “Stalingrad” in waiting. There are a bunch of Indiana men and women nervously waiting on the Kuwaiti desert, supposedly in reach of Saddam’s VX gas and anthrax. One Hoosier, Specialist Brian Clemens of Kokomo, had already been killed in a Humvee accident.

President Bush began speaking: “My fellow citizens, events in Iraq have now reached the final days of decision.”

HPR War Edition

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HPR WILL MONITOR WAR: Watch for HPR Daily Wire Bulletins for Indiana reaction and notices on the coming war. Also, updates will be posted on the HPR website at www.howeypolitics.com as warranted.

SPECIAL OPS TO SEEK IRAQ CHEMICALS: The Bush administration has deployed mobile labs and new specialized teams of intelligence officials and disarmament experts to Kuwait to help the military find Iraq's hidden weapons of mass destruction as soon as war begins, according to senior administration officials. It is also reaching out to former international inspectors (*New York Times*). These and other steps are part of an ambitious effort to find, secure and rapidly destroy the caches of chemical, biological and other unconventional weapons that the administration asserts that Saddam Hussein, the Iraqi leader, is hiding. In interviews, officials described the plans as among the most sensitive and critical missions of the war against Iraq. Never before, they said, has the United States proposed to disarm a nation of unconventional weapons by force. The Pentagon has deployed new tactical units called "mobile exploitation teams," state-of-the-art equipment and novel tactics

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The music at the Old Point played, and someone turned up the volume on the television a bit more. "Intelligence gathered by this and other governments leaves no doubt that the Iraq regime continues to possess and conceal some of the most lethal weapons ever devised," Bush continued. The people inside the bar began settling into their seats. They were quiet. "The danger is clear: Using chemical, biological or, one day, nuclear weapons, obtained with the help of Iraq, the terrorists could fulfill their stated ambitions and kill thousands or hundreds of thousands of innocent people in our country, or any other."

Others who had been toward the front of the Old Point had stopped their conversations and gradually moved toward the bar. "The United States of America has the sovereign authority to use force in assuring its own national security. That duty falls to me, as Commander-in-Chief, by the oath I have sworn, by the oath I will keep.

"Today, no nation can possibly claim that Iraq has disarmed," Bush continued. "And it will not disarm so long as Saddam Hussein holds power. For the last

four-and-a-half months, the United States and our allies have worked within the Security Council to enforce that council's long-standing demands. Yet, some permanent members of the Security Council have publicly announced they will veto any resolution that compels the disarmament of Iraq. These governments share our assessment of the danger, but not our resolve to meet it. Many nations, however, do have the resolve and fortitude to act against this threat to peace, and a broad coalition is now gathering to enforce the just demands of the world. The United Nations Security Council has not lived up to its responsibilities, so we will rise to ours."

By this time, there were folks coming in from the outside cafe, appearing at the door, looking up to see the President, and taking their places along the wall. I glanced over my shoulder and looked at the 20 or so people now gazing at the television, their heads lifted up, their expressions solemn. The bartenders were watching, too. There were no jokes; no derisive comments. The people listened in silence as traffic hissed by on the three intersecting streets. "Saddam Hussein and his sons

must leave Iraq within 48 hours. Their refusal to do so will result in military conflict, commenced at a time of our choosing."

This phrase was instantly recognizable. Bush had uttered "at a time of our choosing" at the National Cathedral on Sept. 14, 2001, in perhaps his most impressive oratory as president. Then, he had vowed to wage a "War on Terrorism" against al Qaeda and sponsoring nations and warned Americans that it would be a long, asymmetrical struggle, with a price that would have to be paid, probably with American blood. As the "Battle Hymn of the Republic" played at the cathedral, Americans saw five, smart, rock-jawed military men in full dress. With the shock of Sept. 11 still burning in our minds, the sight of these young men in the grand cathedral built with Indiana limestone was gripping and emotional. On this night some 18 months later, Bush was essentially delivering on that promise. He was remaining true to the "Bush Doctrine," that vowed an America that would preemptively root out its most lethal enemies before they could strike, changing the international dynamic.

Bush continued talking, not necessarily to Americans, but Iraqis. "Many Iraqis can hear me tonight in a translated radio broadcast, and I have a message for them. If we must begin a military campaign, it will be directed against the lawless men who rule your country and not against you," he said. "As our coalition takes away their power, we will deliver the food and medicine you need. We will tear down the apparatus of terror and we will help you to build a new Iraq that is prosperous and free. In a free Iraq, there will be no more wars of aggression against your neighbors, no more poison factories, no more executions of dissidents, no more torture chambers and rape rooms. The tyrant will soon be gone. The day of your liberation is near."

Every measure will be taken...

Then came the most chilling moment of the speech. Bush explained, "Should Saddam Hussein choose confrontation, the American people can know that every measure has been taken to avoid war, and *every measure will be taken to win it*. Americans understand the costs of conflict because we have paid them in the past. War has no certainty, except the certainty of sacrifice."

By Tuesday, the networks and news channels were reporting that Iraqis were loading up VX munitions south of Baghdad. NBC reported that the notorious Republican Guard were planning to destroy bridges and coat approaching highways with a VX slurry. Just hours before, Bush was saying that "every measure," which presumably would include nukes, was at his disposal.

It was a scary moment because it promised a steep escalation if Saddam, backed in a corner, opted to use VX and anthrax tipped missiles.

There was only a slight shifting of position by people at the Old Point. Most did not seem to grasp the "every measure" vow. The news media didn't play it up in the ensuing coverage.

Bush's next few sentences did little to stir Hoosiers. "If Saddam Hussein attempts to cling to power, he will remain a deadly foe until the end. In desperation, he and terrorist groups might try to conduct terrorist operations against the American people and our friends. These attacks are not inevitable. They are, however, possible. And this very fact underscores the reason we cannot live under the threat of blackmail."

Again, virtually no emotion expressed at the tavern. Only silence and upward gazes with rapt attention. Within the next 12 hours, Indiana Gov. Frank O'Bannon would convene legislative leaders, Lt. Gov. Joe Kernan, Chief Justice Randall Shepard, Homeland Security Director Cliff Ong and State Police Supt.

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to find and survey what officials estimate are at least 600 sites considered most likely to be hiding prohibited weapons.

COUNTY LEADERS PROTEST AT STATEHOUSE: County leaders from around the state visited the Statehouse on Tuesday to rail against state budget officials for a miscalculation that is costing counties \$87.5 million statewide (Niki Kelly, Fort Wayne Journal Gazette). Allen County Commissioner Marla Irving said the loss of revenue could result in layoffs and reduction in services. "It's about time the state was accountable to Allen County constituents," Irving said. "We want some answers. We have to base our livelihood on their estimates." Gov. Frank O'Bannon's administration said the problem was because of an overly optimistic projection, not a mistake. "If we have to pay the money back, it could bankrupt our county in a couple of years," said Rush County Commissioner Janet Kile, whose county owes nearly \$5 million under the state's calculations (Louisville Courier-Journal). State Budget Director Marilyn Schultz said the state forecasts what money counties will receive from their local county income taxes based on the latest audited tax

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year's returns. That means this year's distributions were based on 2000 tax returns, which Schultz noted contained the highest income levels the state has ever seen. Next year's distributions are based on the 2001 audited returns - which is when the economy plummeted and thousands of jobs began leaving the state. "I can understand that they are upset, but the fact is we're in a terrible recession," Schultz said. "This is only the second time since local option income taxes were instituted in the 1970s that a majority of counties will see a decline. That is the root of this frustration. Counties are used to budgeting on property taxes, which are much more stable than income taxes."

CLARK COUNTY COMMISSIONERS VOTE FOR INCOME TAX: For the first time in its history, Clark County has an income tax (Louisville Courier-Journal). In a series of votes last night, the seven-member County Council revamped the local taxing structure in a way that members said will enable them to better meet community responsibilities, avoid debt and pay such bills as the costs of jail expansion, estimated at more than \$20 million. "I believe this is the best thing for all Clark County taxpayers," said Barbara Hollis, one of the five council members who voted for

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Mel Carraway. O'Bannon explained, "Although we have no specific information to suggest the Statehouse is in any way threatened, I recognize that occupants of a government building, the likes of which have been targeted before, may feel some anxiety. So I asked the other officials here to address their concerns and reassure them that we are prepared in the event of an incident here."

"On Sept. 11, 2001, many of our citizens were very fearful that terror could strike here in Indiana," O'Bannon explained. "Even then -- even before we have undertaken many additional steps to prevent and respond to terror -- we could reassure them that we were prepared."

Indianapolis Mayor Bart Peterson told a somber city on Tuesday, "We are taking the necessary steps -- some we can talk about and some we cannot -- to make sure that Indianapolis is secure and prepared." The city, he said, was coordinating with high-rise managers, hospitals, schools and government buildings. A few hours later and a few blocks away, NCAA President Myles Brand announced that the basketball tournaments, including games at the RCA Dome, would take place as scheduled. "We are not going to let a tyrant interfere with our lives," Brand said.

Smaller cities also prepared. Bloomington Mayor John Fernandez initiated a conference among law enforcement, schools and hospitals. Elkhart County Sheriff Mike Brooks told the *Elkhart Truth*, "I will not take anything for granted. We haven't received anything specific relative to threats, but we are monitoring the situation with Homeland Security and other agencies."

The State Department's top counterterrorism official said Tuesday there is a "certainty" terrorists will try to "launch multiple attacks" and a senior intelligence official told *CNN* there is "a near certainty of small-scale al Qaeda attacks" against U.S. targets.

Appeasement could

Bush calmly continued his speech on the night before. "In the 20th Century, some chose to appease murderous dictators, whose threats were allowed to grow into genocide and global war. In this century, when evil men plot chemical, biological and nuclear terror, a policy of appeasement could bring destruction of a kind never before seen on this earth."

Here, President Bush attempted to recalibrate his reasons for pre-emptive war. Gone were suggestions of direct links to Saddam and Sept. 11, though Bush said he believes Iraq and al Qaeda have a relationship. "Terrorists and terror states do not reveal these threats with fair notice, in formal declarations, and responding to such enemies only after they have struck first is not self-defense, it is suicide. The security of the world requires disarming Saddam Hussein now."

Bush briefly outlined his view of a post-war Iraq, one that the *Wall Street Journal* said would be rebuilt in less than a year with the help of corporations. "Unlike Saddam Hussein, we believe the Iraqi people are deserving and capable of human liberty," he said. "And when the dictator has departed, they can set an example to all the Middle East of a vital and peaceful and self-governing nation. The United States, with other countries, will work to advance liberty and peace in that region. Our goal will not be achieved overnight, but it can come over time. The power and appeal of human liberty is felt in every life and every land. And the greatest power of freedom is to overcome hatred and violence, and turn the creative gifts of men and women to the pursuits of peace."

With the "God bless America" sign-off and the chatter of *Fox* talking heads, if not subterranean terror cells lurking everywhere, in every mind, and nowhere specific, relative silence was left at the Old Point Tavern. There was some murmur, but no patriotic exhortations or snide comments; no outward fear; little

inward prayer evident. And the gathered Hoosier folk began peeling away into the night.

Reaction to the speech was measured at 65 percent by an NBC/WSJ poll; 71 percent in an ABC News poll. And soft. *The Washington Post* ran a story on Tuesday with the lead: Rarely has the expected length of a war been such a key factor in determining whether it will be seen as a defeat or a victory for the United States. "For Bush, victory requires a short war," said Andrew Bacevich, a retired Army colonel. "I'd guess that if it goes beyond three weeks, Bush will be in real trouble."

Hoosiers were saying the same thing, just as they did in the spring of 1861 prior to Bull Run. We want a fast-food war.

Political leaders agree

Political support in Indiana was mostly lined up with the president.

U.S. Sen. Richard Lugar explained, "The United States is engaged in a global war against terrorism. The war proceeds in a world awash with nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons and materials of mass destruction. Throughout much of the past decade, vulnerability to the use of weapons of mass destruction has been the number one national security dilemma confronting the United States. We are poised to use massive military force in Iraq in response to the threat of weapons of mass destruction. Terrorist organizations have demonstrated suicidal tendencies and are beyond deterrence. We must anticipate that they will use weapons of mass destruction if allowed the opportunity. The minimum standard for victory in this war is the prevention of any of the individual terrorists or terrorists cells from obtaining weapons or materials of mass destruction.

Would U.S. soldiers be greeted as liberators? Lugar told the *New York Times*, "That is not a sure shot."

U.S. Rep. Mark Souder observed,

"This is a solemn moment for our country. No true American desires war and bloodshed. But the President's duty is to protect the nation, and it is now clear that we have reached the point where our peace and security cannot be achieved through diplomacy alone." U.S. Rep. Mike Pence was more succinct. "President Bush has made it clear that the long nightmare of the Iraqi people will soon be over," he said. "Saddam Hussein was offered peace. He now must choose between exile and war."

U.S. Rep. Steve Buyer said, "President Bush outlined a rational basis as to why diplomacy has not succeeded. In the face of apparent danger and Iraq's clear ambitions to pursue weapons of mass destruction, the United Nations Security Council has shown itself to be derelict in its duty and now finds itself immaterial. It is now time for all Americans to unite in support of our troops and for those on the homefront to be vigilant and to guard against potential acts of terror."

And U.S. Sen. Evan Bayh explained, "Nobody wants war, but as the President said tonight and I have said before, we learned from the tragedy of September 11 that the risk of inaction is greater than the risk of action. Saddam Hussein must be disarmed. We've given him every opportunity to do that peacefully, but he refuses. That leaves us with two alternatives: Either we live in the shadow of the threat he presents or we act to protect ourselves. Along with the President, I believe action is necessary."

Beginning of the end

When I got home about an hour after the President's speech and tucked my 12-year-old son in bed, he asked, "Do we have anything to worry about, Dad?"

My response to him was, "I don't think so, but we need to pay attention and be ready."

My sons' first war was about to commence. ❖

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all five of the changes adopted last night. Only one council member, Jim Smith, voted against all five measures. Announcing his decision before the voting began, Smith said, "The fundamental problems have not been addressed," adding, "I won't participate" in the increases.

ELKHART COUNTY COMMISSIONER WANTS PEACE SIGN PROBE: An Elkhart County commissioner wants a police investigation into who painted a peace symbol on an American flag displayed at a peace rally this month (Associated Press). "There were photos in the local newspapers showing the desecration of the flag," Commissioner Phil Stiver said Monday. "Those people who did that may be able to be identified by the photos, and maybe there is an ongoing investigation into this. I certainly hope so . . . and I would like to see arrests follow." Sheriff Mike Books said Monday that he would have to review state law before starting any investigation. Under Indiana law, it is a misdemeanor punishable by up to a year in jail for anyone to intentionally deface or burn a U.S. flag.

GOV. RYAN DISCUSSES DEATH PENALTY: Before becoming a professional politician, former Illinois Gov. George Ryan was a

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pharmacist, helping make people's lives better (Post-Tribune). As governor, however, he found himself responsible for killing people. "I had to order poison to be injected into the veins of a poor person quivering on a gurney," Ryan told students and professors at Valparaiso University's School of Law Tuesday. Ryan talked to a packed lecture hall about his changing views on the death penalty. More than anyone else, the former governor has driven the death penalty debate over the past three years by stopping all executions in Illinois and then commuting the sentences of all death row inmates. Before launching into his speech, Ryan asked the students and professors in the room to raise their hands if they favored the death penalty. Less than a quarter of the approximately 150 in attendance signalled their support. "There was a time when I would have raised my hand, too," Ryan said. "I had made the decision to take another man's life and I don't know what gave me the right to do that," Ryan said. Too many problems exist with the criminal justice system to have confidence in death sentences, he said.

SUICIDES UP IN DELAWARE COUNTY: Delaware County authorities are concerned about what

A grim mood envelopes edgy Washington

By MARK CURRY

WASHINGTON, D.C. - On Monday night, two hours before President Bush issued his ultimatum to the dictator of Iraq, I received a phone call from a business acquaintance in town to lobby Congress. He was in a hotel room overlooking the White House.

"Think I should be nervous," he asked with a chuckle.

"I think you should be grateful. You're witnessing history," I said, and he agreed. Everything's over but the waiting, and it seems there won't be much of that.

The security perimeter around the White House has been widened to include Lafayette Park and is now closed to pedestrians. Additional concrete barriers and five-foot high chain-link fencing encircle federal buildings and monuments. Humvees painted in desert camouflage and outfitted with anti-aircraft missile batteries are scattered in strategic locations. Jet fighter aircraft, Black Hawk helicopters and single-engine observation planes stepped up patrols.

Saddam Hussein has less than 12 hours to leave Baghdad or be removed by force, and the mood in our nation's capital is grim. After 9/11, anthrax, train wrecks, the sniper attacks, anti-war demonstrations, a record-breaking winter and more than a year of bouncing from one terror alert level to the next, Washingtonians are as prepared as they ever will be for war with Iraq and what might follow. And yet, this city presents a face of calm before the storm.

Disregarding the bizarre episode of the tobacco farmer who parked his tractor in a pond near the Vietnam Veteran's Memorial, folks behave as if it's business as usual on the subway, around shopping centers, at restaurants and even on Capitol Hill. We wait patiently in long lines for security checkpoints at every federal building and many private businesses, willingly offer our bags and ID for inspec-

tions, plan our driving to avoid roads that might suddenly close or be clogged with lane closures.

Still, conversation among office workers and friends eventually turns to duct tape, abandoned packages, definitions of suspicious behavior, evacuation plans and strategies for gathering the family in an emergency.

Schools stockpile bottled water. Federal office workers, following "Shelter In Place" guidelines, store supplies, including extra clothing and flashlights, under their desks.

Media reports feed the sense of foreboding. On Tuesday night, the local Fox station served up an almost 40 solid minutes of "War Watch" news. The somber anchors introduced brief reports from Kuwait, London, New York and Iraq, including 20 seconds of footage from the chaotic exodus of Kurds from the north. The largest segment was dedicated to a two-and-one-half minute roundup of how this city is preparing. Coverage in the Washington Post and the Washington Times exceeds novel length. It's nearly impossible to listen to any radio station for more than several minutes without hearing at least one reference to war, homeland security or the possibility of terrorism.

"We are a secure city, and we are an open city," D.C. Mayor Anthony Williams said in a press conference Tuesday. "It is possible to be both."

For the average area resident, however, the man on the tractor illustrates our collective vulnerability. As the Washington Post reported in Wednesday's edition, "Washingtonians already worried about escaping the District in a terrorist attack said their fears grew yesterday when they saw how easily one man on a tractor brought rush-hour traffic in and around the city to a standstill."

And the minutes ticked towards war. ❖

PERHAPS... WE WANDER

By Brian Howey

Blood on the hands of pacifists

Within days, if not hours, of this column's posting, the United States will probably be at war.

As I write this, CNN is barging in with "breaking news" that Saddam Hussein is preparing to launch biological and chemical weapons, perhaps pre-emptively. My thoughts today as we prepare for the first war of the 21st Century are these: What might have happened if the peace movement here in America, and Germany, Great Britain, Spain, France, and the Middle East had stoked up earlier? Say, a decade earlier? Or, maybe even after 1997 when Amnesty International issued a scathing report on human rights in Iraq?

What might have happened if Sean Penn, Martin Sheen, Madonna, Mike Farrell, the Dixie Chicks, and others had spoken out at the Oscars, the Golden Globes, or press conferences four, five, six years ago, about the abysmal human rights record of Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq? What if someone had made a blockbuster movie?

What if Members of Congress and the last two presidential administrations had been urging boycotts of Iraqi products, such as oil? What if the French had done that? If they had -- if they had planted the seed of protest, and nurtured it so that it resonated in Paris, Munich, Cairo, and Los Angeles -- perhaps a war could have been prevented and a people would have been freed from genocide.

Or, if it hadn't, perhaps a true world-wide coalition of civilized nations would have stood up years ago — not months — and demanded an end to genocide, or else the armies of dozens of nations would have ended the nightmare.

Virtually none of this happened.

The sadists who ruled a nation of some 23 million people had free rein to torture political prisoners immediately after their arrests, killing hundreds of thousands of them, an estimated million in total. They tortured children in front of parents. Few western governments, Middle Eastern neighbors, and Hollywood stars and starlets stood up and denounced them.

I have a trusted and wise friend who sent me an e-mail this morning, denouncing President Bush as a warmonger, who always fully intended to invade Iraq. I agreed with him on several points. I'm worried that the invasion won't go well; that too many of our neighbor soldiers will die or get gassed. I'm even more worried that the occupation will be even more terrifying, enraging Arabs and plunging America into a cultural crisis.

But when I ask him and others in the peace movement if it's OK for Saddam to survive; that we as a world just turn our backs and let the oil flow, I tend to get two responses. One is, "Well, the United States supported Saddam in the '80s. And what about Somoza? And Marcos?"

I respond, "So that makes this less right?" If the peace movement across the world hadn't sat on its ass, perhaps we wouldn't have had a "belligerent" president preparing to send our sons and daughters into battle today.

After many of us grew up horrified by holocausts in Nazi Germany, the Soviet Union and its evil client states, Cambodia, Uganda, and Rwanda, we prayed for an end to genocide and we resolved to say never again.

The pacifists across the world today, at the turn of the century, have the blood of genocide on their hands, failing to utter the emphatic words of protest. ❖

This memo was originally published in the Indianapolis Eye.

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would appear to be a significant increase in the local suicide rate (Muncie Star Press). During the first two and a half months of 2003, seven suicides have been reported in the county. Two other deaths remain under investigation and might be added to the list. The county had 15 suicides in 2002. Reasons for the increase? Authorities cited the bad weather, job loss and the pending war with Iraq. "I would say all of the above with the exception of the weather," said Robert Fischer, a local psychologist who works for the Muncie Police Department. "The things going on in the world right now is going to produce social instability and family disruption. "When things are rough, people tend to drink and when they drink, their judgment is impaired."

SENATE VOTES ON PLEDGE, IN GOD WE TRUST MOTTO: As soon as today, the Senate could vote on a measure that would give schools permission to lead the Pledge of Allegiance, allow students a "brief period" of silence, and post the national motto, "In God We Trust." Schools may already do all of those things, but House Bill 1056 is meant to instill more patriotism in schools, its supporters say (Shannon Lohrmann, Lafayette Journal & Courier).

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The bill's sponsor, Rep. Terry Goodin, D-Crothersville, also is calling for the proposal so teachers and principals know those actions are allowed and how they can be done constitutionally. In the House, the bill included the pledge and a moment of silence. The provision permitting "In God We Trust" to be posted was added in a Senate committee. Several amendments that would have required schools to do those things were defeated in the Senate Tuesday. "What's wrong with having a flag in a classroom?" implored Sen. Mike Young, R-Indianapolis, who crafted the three controversial amendments. "It's exactly what they can do today. This bill is worthless. The point of this is that we want them to have an American flag in the classroom." Lawmakers were concerned about the cost of the mandates and the nature of the amendments. "Anytime you put in the word 'shall,' it creates a new situation," said Sen. Allen Paul, R-Richmond. "Some of the amendments were poorly written."



COLUMNISTS ON INDIANA

Mike Leonard, *Bloomington Herald-Times* -

My editor told me to be mindful that the president was to speak to the nation on Monday night, hours after this column was to be written and turned in. "If you're writing about the war, you might need to hedge what you say, depending on what the president says," he advised. This normally is good advice, but it took me all of five minutes to conclude, "He's not going to say anything that will change anything." That much has been clear from the start. The president and administration officials have consistently said that even if Saddam Hussein says he's complying with U.S. and U.N. demands, he won't be, because he's a liar. They said they'd give inspections a chance to work and then said, "Time's up," even though United Nations inspectors said they were making significant progress. I've spoken with a number of journalists around the country and despite the differences in our political or ideological views, we've all been in agreement about the U.S. case, particularly as presented by Secretary of State Colin Powell to the U.N. Powell's presentation would make for an interesting newsroom argument about whether to run it as a story, if a reporter had come up with it. Few sources, most unnamed. Grand characterizations of scanty evidence and considerable conjecture about the ramifications. Virtually all of us agree that no reputable newspaper would have seen enough verifiable facts in Powell's presentation to run it as a story, let alone use it as the pretext for war. And so here we are, on the precipice of war, just as promised. It will unsettle the world, unleash new terror attacks and divide our country bitterly as citizens argue whether patriotism means supporting the president blindly or speaking out against a war they see as unwise. Stay tuned. The worst is yet to come. ❖

Charlie Cook, *National Journal* -

The outbreak of a war with Iraq now seems to be a matter of days -- or even hours. Talk of war and diplomatic maneuvering has dominated the political and policy landscape for months. Win, lose or draw, the conclusion of a war with Iraq means President Bush will face many formidable policy challenges that are no less daunting than Iraq and easily could significantly complicate his re-election efforts. The year before a presidential election is usually a time for fine-tuning the president's positioning on policy matters and for teeing up issues that will maximize his chances of getting re-elected. Instead, Bush will likely find himself playing defense on a wide range of very difficult issues, with little maneuverability to select and promote other issues that would maximize his attractiveness to various elements of the electorate. Whether one agrees with Bush's handling of Iraq, it is hard to argue with the premise that America's relations with major Western and Asian nations are in a shambles. At no point since the end of World War II have relations between the United States and the governments of historic allies and adversaries alike been so strained. And relations are even worse with the general populations of those respective countries. Whether these governments and their peoples were "right" or "wrong" in their opposition or hesitancy to war, the United States will find dealing with them in the post-war era significantly more difficult than at any time in memory. Putting together coalitions for the foreseeable future will be particularly problematic given the ill will that has been created over the last year. ❖