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## A Libby Verdict

There will be a great deal written and said in coming days about the frustrations of the Scooter Libby verdict — that it did not tell us whether someone deliberately blew Valerie Plame Wilson's cover or erase serious concerns about the prosecutor's abuse of the First Amendment. Let's focus first on what the verdict does say.

One of the most senior officials in the White House, Lewis Libby, the chief of staff for Vice President Dick Cheney, was caught lying to the F.B.I. He appears to have been trying to cover up a smear campaign that was orchestrated by his boss against the first person to unmask one of the many untruths that President Bush used to justify invading Iraq. He was charged with those crimes, defended by the best lawyers he could get, tried in an open courtroom and convicted of serious felonies. Mr. Libby walked freely out of the court, had his say in public and will be allowed to appeal.

It was another reminder of how precious the American judicial system is, at a time when it is under serious attack from the same administration Mr. Libby served. That administration is systematically denying the right of counsel, the right to evidence and even the right to be tried to scores of prisoners who may have committed no crimes at all.

learned that Saddam Hussein recently sought significant quantities of uranium from Africa."

In July 2003, Mr. Wilson wrote in an Op-Ed article in *The Times* that what he had found did not support that claim. The specter of a nuclear-armed Iraq was central to Mr. Bush's case for rushing to war. So, the trial testimony showed, Mr. Cheney orchestrated an assault on Mr. Wilson's credibility with the help of Mr. Libby and others. They whispered to journalists that Mr. Wilson's wife worked at the C.I.A. and that nepotism was the reason he had been chosen for the trip.

That is what we know from the Libby trial, and it is some of the clearest evidence yet that this administration did not get duped by faulty intelligence; at the very least, it cherry-picked and hyped intelligence to justify the war. What Mr. Wilson found, and subsequent investigations confirmed, was that there was one trip in 1999 — not "recently," but four years before Mr. Bush's statement — by an Iraqi official to Niger and that during that trip, uranium was never discussed.

What we still do not know is whether a government official used Ms. Wilson's name despite knowing that she worked undercover. That is a serious offense, which could have put her and all those who

## Health Care for the Rest of Us

To the Editor:

Re "Most Support U.S. Guarantee of Health Care" (front page, March 2):

Around kitchen tables, families are fuming over their rising premiums, uninsured relatives and unpaid medical bills. The problem of health coverage concerns all those who have insurance, those offered insurance by employers who turn it down because of the expense, and the uninsured.

Americans get it — the cost of doing nothing is greater than the cost of investing in the future. We are ready to pay our fair share to guarantee better quality medical care for all.

The electorate has even provided our politicians with a road map to insuring everyone: Start by covering all children, fight the bloated insurance and pharmaceutical companies, and establish quality, affordable health care for all.

It's the right thing to do, but for those who are not moved by moral imperatives, recent polling confirms what politicians can no longer ignore. It's not only good policy; it's good politics.

JOHN BOUMAN

President, Sargent Shriver  
National Center on Poverty Law  
Chicago, March 5, 2007

To the Editor:

If we have learned anything from past failures at health care reform and public opinion polls, it is this: Keep it simple and give people choice.

For good reason, the public has had enough of the ever-rising health care premiums and the too-often too-limited coverage that the private health insurance industry is willing to provide. For good reason, the public knows that the federal government needs to step in but worries that politics will get in the way of a good solution.

So let everyone choose. Let people keep the insurance they have if they like it, but guarantee everyone else automatic coverage through a public plan that eliminates the waste of the private insurance middleman, negotiates reasonable rates, offers choice of

more important than that of adults?

As a doctor in a public hospital that serves the indigent, I can attest to the pain experienced by my adult patients, including the realization that their suffering was caused by a potentially preventable disease that, all too often, had become incurable.

Are adults assumed to be responsible for their own misfortunes? We must remember that the vast majority of uninsured adults "work hard and play by the rules" but are being left behind by soaring costs of health care and insurance.

Competent and accessible health care is essential for people of all ages.

DAVID N. SCHWARTZ, M.D.  
Chicago, March 3, 2007

To the Editor:

The latest New York Times/CBS News poll finds that "a majority of Americans say the federal government should guarantee health insur-



Lewis Scott

ance to every American, especially children, and are willing to pay higher taxes to do it."

However well intentioned these respondents are to the fiscal considerations of such a policy, one wonders what their answer would have been regarding another, overlooked conse-

## Politics, Politics (And It's Only '07)

To the Editor:

Surely Senator Barack Obama understood, before Maureen Dowd pointed it out to him in her March 3 column (*Where's His Right Hook?*), that "a campaign is inherently a conflict."

Fortunately, Senator Obama also understands that there are other, often more effective methods of conflict resolution than a right hook.

The schoolyard-bully, pre-emptive strike, "bring 'em on" form of dispute resolution has brought us a war that was easy enough to start but that no one is sure how to end.

A leader whose first reaction to any disagreement is *not* "put up your dukes" will better serve America and the world. I think that the voters will understand that.

MALCOLM M. GAYNOR  
Telluride, Colo., March 4, 2007

To the Editor:

In "Neither Clinton, Nor Obama" (column, March 4), David Brooks writes: "Once a century or so the Democratic Party actually nominates somebody the average person would like to have a beer with. Bill Richardson is that kind of guy."

Isn't this kind of high school popularity poll a major part of what has gotten us in such deep trouble with our present occupant of the White House?

He was hailed by numerous pundits as "a popular guy, easy to have a beer with." But they failed to note how grievously unsuited for the presidency he was.

Perhaps Mr. Richardson is better suited; but that wouldn't be hard. Let's get rid of this popularity high school stuff.

And in any case, isn't it a little early to be taking these polls?

RALPH WEST  
Philadelphia, March 4, 2007

To the Editor:

I don't always agree with David Brooks, but I am in total agreement with his assessment of Gov. Bill