

JANUARY 03

Media new year's resolutions for 2006

No one is in greater need of forthright new year's resolutions than big media outlets. In a constructive spirit, therefore, here are some resolutions for them in 2006.

*** Daily newspaper editors:**

Just about every paper has a "Business" section, where the focus is on CEOs, company managers, profit reports and big-time investors. But a lot more readers are working people – and a daily "Labor" section would be a welcome addition to the newsprint mix.

*** Public radio executives:**

As a counterpoint to the daily national program "Marketplace," public radio can widen its news repertoire by developing a show called "Laborplace."

*** Editors of the Wall Street Journal editorial page:**

Take another look at "The Wealth of Nations," where your hero Adam Smith shared the kind of insights that you often scorn. "It was not by gold or by silver, but by labor, that all the wealth of the world was originally purchased," he wrote. And consider what Smith observed about manufacturers and merchants, the kind of special interests your editorials routinely tout as synonymous with the public interest – "men whose interest is never exactly the same with that of the public, who have generally an interest to deceive and even to oppress the public, and who accordingly have, upon many occasions, both deceived and oppressed it."

*** Local TV news producers:**

Instead of obeying the unwritten rule "If it bleeds, it leads," try doing actual journalism to inform viewers about what's really important for the future of their communities.

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*** Top editors at the New York Times:**

Lately, you've had staggering impacts on history with acts of commission and omission. First you put bogus reports about Iraqi weapons of mass destruction on front pages. Then, after helping to start a war, for more than a year you held onto vital information about domestic spying by the National Security Agency before publishing it. Now, try to develop institutional remorse for jettisoning basic journalistic principles to the benefit of the Bush administration.

*** Editors, People Magazine:**

The lure of celebrity may be irresistible. But unless you change the name of the magazine to "Famous People," isn't it very misleading to convey the assumption that the people most worth reading about are usually movie stars, top-grossing musicians and the like? Work harder at looking for fascinating people, regardless of wealth or fame.

*** Terry Gross, "Fresh Air":**

If you want to continue with over-reliance on reporters from mainstream corporate-owned news outlets like the New York Times and the Washington Post, you don't have to act like they're practitioners of fearless journalism. Try asking them tough questions about standard media evasions.

*** National cable news programmers:**

Reporting a new tragedy is one thing, but fixating on it is another. Resolve to spend less time filling TV screens with the latest grisly story from someplace in America.

*** Thomas Friedman:**

Try writing columns and books without simplistic metaphorical anecdotes that are much less profoundly insightful than you think.

*** Bill O'Reilly:**

Carefully listen to the archival footage in "Good Night, and Good Luck." If you don't notice your strong resemblance to Sen. Joseph McCarthy, ask someone who doesn't work for Fox to explain it to you.

*** Judge Judy:**

Lighten up!

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Norman Solomon's latest book is "War Made Easy: How Presidents and Pundits Keep Spinning Us to Death." For information, go to: www.WarMadeEasy.com