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The Five Worst Op-Eds of 2010

By [Gene Healy](#)

This time every year, the New York Times' David Brooks writes a column lauding the year's best magazine articles -- a nice gesture from every liberal's favorite nice-guy-on-the-Right.

For my last column this year, I'd rather tap into my inner Scrooge for a list of the worst op-eds of 2010.

The modern op-ed dates from 1921, when New York World editor Herbert Bayard Swope first inflicted the genre upon the world. "Nothing is more interesting than opinion," he rationalized, therefore, "I decided to print opinion, ignoring facts."

The worst op-eds of 2010 stayed true to that vision. I looked for bad arguments, bad writing, and bad faith, awarding extra points for warped values, and limiting my picks to the major dailies.

Here goes:

5. Al Gore and David Blood, "Toward Sustainable Capitalism," Wall Street Journal (June 24):

This pompous and impenetrable piece is the former veep's deep-think vision for the economy (and a pitch for Gore's lucrative green-energy investment firm). More than anything, though, it's a hate crime against clear prose.

The authors' use of the alleged verb "incent" -- as in, we need to "incent investors to manage assets with a long-term perspective" -- may leave you wondering, "Where's the 'English only' movement when we really need it?"

4. Thomas Friedman, "Malia for President," New York Times (May 29):

For bad op-eds, it's tough to beat the NYT's Friedman, whose columns are hot, flat, and crowded with mixed metaphors, famous name-droppings, and juvenile political ideas.

During last summer's "Did you plug the hole yet, daddy" frenzy over the BP oil spill, Friedman urged President Obama to "think like a kid." "Daddy, why can't you even mention the words 'carbon tax'?" the 57-year-old columnist wailed.

3. Charles Krauthammer, "Throw the Wikibook at Them," Washington Post (Dec. 3):

Craftwise, Krauthammer is among the best in the business -- would that he'd more often use his power for good, not evil. In this column, about "getting" WikiLeaks Julian Assange, Krauthammer reminisces about a KGB assassination via "poisoned umbrella tip" but (somewhat grudgingly) concludes we'll have to settle for making up a crime.

2. Frank Rich, "The Axis of the Obsessed and Deranged," New York Times (Feb. 27):

Here, Rich waxes nostalgic about the militia scare of the '90s, warning that the "tax protester" who flew a plane into an IRS building in February may be a dark harbinger of Tea Party terrorism to come. Political figures who tolerate anti-government rhetoric are "palling around with terrorists."

1. David Broder, "How Obama Might Recover," Washington Post (Oct. 31):

As the GOP was about to recapture the House, the Grand Poohbah of Beltway Consensus told our embattled president that he could become the "comeback kid" by "orchestrating a showdown" with Iran.

As "we accelerate preparations for war, the economy will improve," which "will help him politically," Broder wrote.

"I am not suggesting that the president incite a war to get re-elected," Broder insisted, just pointing out that doing so might make Obama "one of the most successful presidents in history." Ah, I see.

This year, America's opinion leaders fantasized about assassinations and phony terror-scares, begged the president to solve their daddy issues, and helpfully suggested he put lives at risk to goose his approval rating. Still, it's a good thing we haven't ceded the nation's op-ed pages to "extremists."

There's my top five. (I'm picturing the winners gushing a la Sally Field at the Oscars: "You hate me! You really hate me!")

But your mileage may vary, so I welcome your candidates -- even if I'm among them. Like they say, "It's an honor just to be nominated!"

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