

February 21, 2004

Bush: The statisticians made me do it

When I heard the President say a few day ago that 2.6 million jobs were to be created this coming year here in the US, I immediately made sure that no geographic shift has moved this part of the North American continent to the East, way East.

Today I heard that the White House has retreated from this promise with the defense that the President is not a statistician. He was misled by number crunchers! Et Tu, Mr. President!

I wish to comment on this matter, not as a defense of statisticians (I am not one; besides, I am confident they have many defensive quivers in their statistical arsenal) but as one who wishes to do his share to prevent this preemptive strike against statisticians from mushrooming into a Presidential wrath against the "Axis of Number Crunchers". We pharmaceutical scientists use statistics, confess to making many assumptions (reasonable ones, we protest), and "do" number crunching, (sometimes promiscuously), when making decisions in matters such as if a generic version of a drug is as good as the brand name or if two drugs would interact with each other I can hear it now if (more like when, excuse me for showing my political slip) the recently passed Medicare bill dealing with prescription drugs run into political turbulence: Damn them Rx scientists, their numbers and assumptions". Our strongest defense would be: Except for Moses, everything we have heard and will hear has an assumptive basis." Our wise number crunchers tell us that the invocation of Moses, though non- statistical, would be strong defense against the Don Quixotic crusaders fighting number crunchers

In conclusion, can a child who is regrettably "left behind" petition to move ahead on the latest White house version of "My (or my neighbor's) dog ate my home work"?