

GEORGE W. BUSH, FLIP/FLOPPER-IN-CHIEF

Jim Fetzer (READER WEEKLY 5 August 2004)

There were so many extraordinary moments that it practically took your breath away. Think of Barack Obama, US Senate Candidate in Illinois, observing that there is no red-states-America or blue-states-America, no African-America and no Asian-America but one United States of America.

Think of Ron Reagan, making an eloquent case for stem cell research, observing that while many who oppose this research are well-meaning and sincere, others are grinding a political ax and should be ashamed of themselves, appealing to us all to cast a vote for stem cell research.

Think of Wesley Clark, the former Supreme Commander of NATO, observing that neither party has a monopoly on the best defense of this nation and that Republicans who insinuate as much, as Vice President Cheney continues to do, are "committing a fraud on the American people."

Think of Terea Heinz Kerry, speaking her mind as a woman with something to say, a living, breathing testament to John Kerry's admiration and appreciation for independent thought and outspoken expression, who, along with Elizabeth Edwards, sets an inspiring example for all American women.

Think of John Forbes Kerry, reporting for duty, who threw down the gauntlet with the proclamation, "As President, I will restore trust and credibility to the White House", in striking juxtaposition with an earlier candidate's claim to restore honor and dignity to the Presidency.

Think about his promises: "I will be a commander in chief who will never mislead us into war. I will have a vice president who will not conduct secret meetings with polluters to rewrite our environmental laws."

They are what we needed to hear: "I will have a secretary of defense who will listen to the best advice of our military leaders. And I will appoint an attorney general who actually upholds the Constitution of the United States."

A Zogby poll Monday through Thursday showed that John Kerry and John Edwards were already up 5 points, leading Bush-Cheney by 48% to 43%. And the distance between them, in the wake of Kerry's magnificent presentation, is certain to increase to 10 points or even more.

So what can the Republicans do? They can issue warnings of terrorist attacks at whim, but those are growing stale. They can manipulate voting machines, but election officials are becoming increasingly skeptical. They can continue to assail Kerry as weak on defense, but those claims are sounding hollow. And they

can continue to attack his voting record, but that appears to be unpromising.

Indeed, the charge of inconsistency the GOP has lodged against Kerry smacks of hypocrisy. Kerry may have had second thoughts about providing \$87 billion for the war with few strings attached because of the lack of accountability and a concern for increasing our debt. But those were legitimate concerns that remain unresolved to this day.

It is typical of Bush, who accents "accountability" when it comes to public schools as a ploy to undermine them, that he would trash responsible efforts to impose forms of accountability in Iraq where his cronie corporate buddies are making vast sums without oversight, which the Republicans refused to provide.

The contrast with President Bush could hardly be greater. Bush first opposed but later embraced the idea of a Department of Homeland Security. He first opposed but later embraced the idea of a 9/11 commission. He was going to defer implementing its recommendations. Now he wants to rush them. He has been on both sides of so many issues that flip/flopping is his trademark.

His constantly changing rationale for the war in Iraq is a perfect example. First it was WMDs. Then it was 9/11. Then it was al Qaeda. Then it was to remove a tyrant. Then freedom and democracy. Now order and stability. He called himself the War President. Now it's the Peace President. His position is not simply inconsistent but is actually completely incoherent.

My father used to observe that the Republican Party takes great pride in accusing the other side of the practices of which it is itself most guilty. If there were truth in political packaging, the GOP should be renamed the POH as the Party of Hypocrisy. Bush waffles so much he has turned 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue into an IHOP.

Perhaps this should not be surprising in an administration that focuses solely on politics and has no time for policy. But the nation may be confronting even darker problems. According to recent reports, our president is now taking powerful anti-depressants to control his erratic behavior and paranoia.

Teresa Hampton, editor of capitolhillblue.com, reports, "The prescription drugs, administered by Colonel Richard J. Tubb, the White House physician, can impair the President's mental faculties and decrease both his physical capabilities and his ability to respond in a crisis, administration aides admit."

Independent sources have arrived at equally disturbing conclusions about the state of the President's mental health. Dr. Justin Frank, a psychiatrist at George Washington University, has diagnosed Bush as a "paranoid megalomaniac" and "untreated alcoholic", the type commonly referred to as a "dry drunk".

Frank also observes that Bush has displayed "a lifelong streak of sadism,

ranging from childhood pranks (using firecrackers to blow up frogs) to insulting journalists, gloating over state executions, and pumping his hand gleefully before the bombing of Baghdad."

His conclusions, which are published in his book, *BUSH ON THE COUCH*, have been endorsed by other prominent psychiatrists, including Dr. James Grotstein, a professor at the UCLA Medical Center, and Dr. Irvin Yalom, a professor emeritus at Stanford's Medical School.

A political consultant for the GOP told capitolhillblue.com, "We have to face the very real possibility that the President of the United States is looney-tunes", he said sadly. "That's not good for my candidates, it's not good for the party, and it's certainly not good for the country." But it's certainly something more to think about.

Jim Fetzer, a professor of philosophy at UMD, believes that this is going to be one of the most vicious campaigns in American history and that the so-called neo-conservatives who control the administration are not going to relinquish their power without exploiting every trick in the book.