

OUR VIEW

Bush: Divider Not An Uniter

George Bush wants you to think that, aw shucks, he's a regular guy. Regular, because for the third time in recent months he's visiting America's heartland (Wisconsin, Iowa, Michigan and Ohio) and hosting a series of purportedly folksy chats — dubbed "Ask the President" — with the good people of the Midwest. As the left wing proves it can play cannonball politics with the same brutal efficacy of the war-mongering right (it's engaging in opposition research, propagandizing and expertly using media—witness the success of the scathing, anti-Bush film "Fahrenheit 9/11"), our imperialist president isn't content to sit still. He's going on the offensive. Bush wants to shore up support by stirring up passions over abortion, gay marriage and other hot-button, Pavlovian issues that get a rise from conservatives. By repeatedly swinging through the Midwest, he is trying to avoid the sins of his father, who submarined his 1992 re-election bid by cultivating a sense of aristocracy that alienated common citizens.

The problem then, as now, is that the term "common citizens" is analogous to "upper-middle-class White conservative." The farce of this president's compassionate conservatism is that it's been repurposed to mean being compassionate to conservatives. His tax cuts are saving tens of millions for the wealthy. The White House's obfuscation on 9/11 intelligence and WMDs in Iraq has extended compassion to those who, according to federal reports, knew a terrorist attack on U.S. soil was imminent but did nothing to stop it and those who've reaped hundreds of millions from the build up to and rebuilding of Saddam's former fiefdom.

Compassionate conservatism has been anything but for communities of color. For whatever reason, Bush apparently sees little need to coddle minority voters. With the exception of efforts to court Hispanics (he's plowed millions into Spanish-language ads; Latinos comprise a significant political voting bloc in various states, including his home turf of Texas), Bush has consistently dismissed, if not ignored, issues important to minorities.

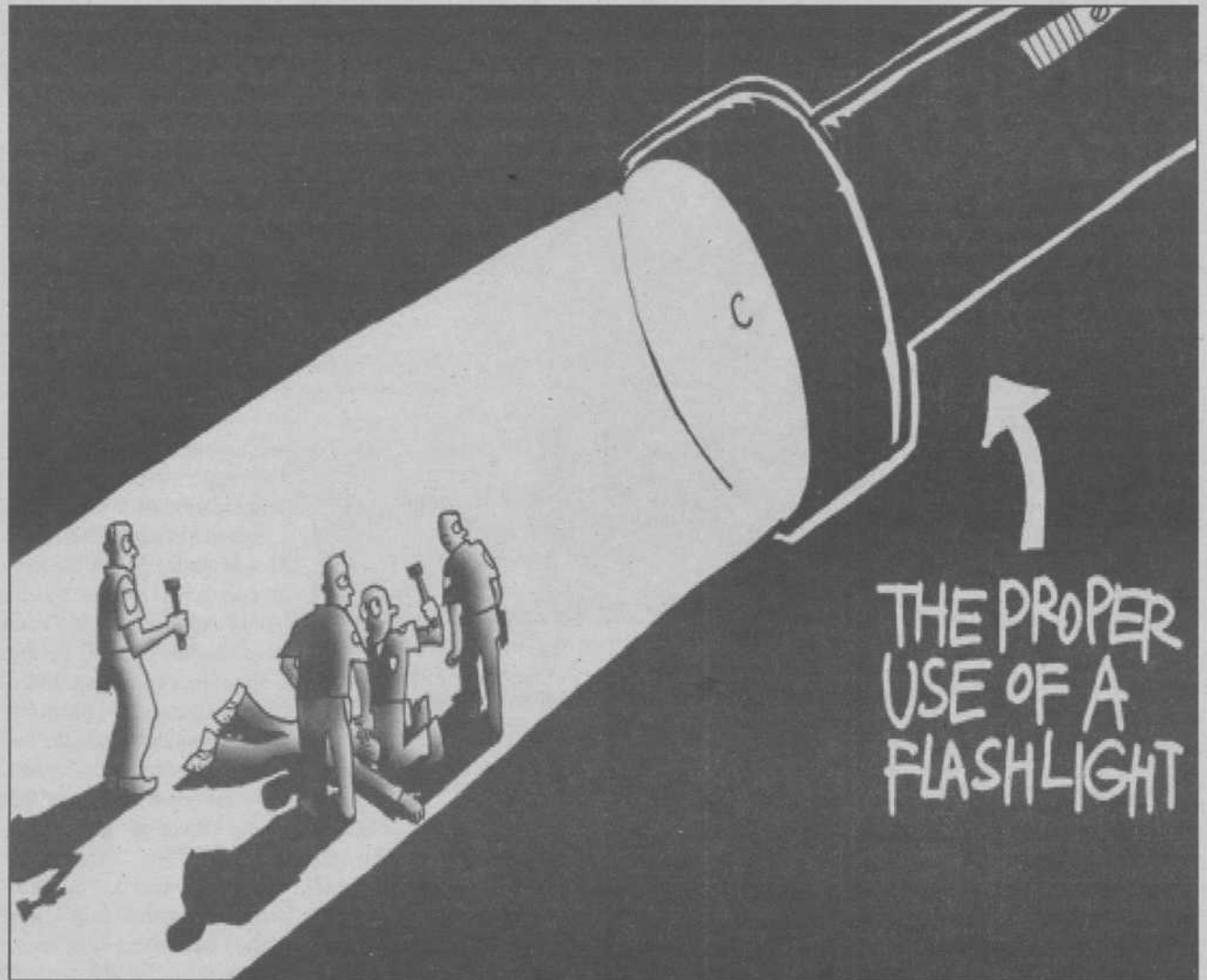
This month, he became the first sitting president since Herbert Hoover to skip the annual convention of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, a meeting he addressed in 2000 as a presidential candidate. Could that turn out to be his undoing? As Francine Poller, a retired teacher from Waycross, Ga., told the New York Times: "Before this, I was going to vote for Kerry. Now I'm going to work for Kerry. Bush doesn't realize it, but he's putting fat on the fire for Kerry. He's firing us up for Kerry."

Bush's actions as a president have been antithetical to the racial-healing pabulum he spouted as a presidential candidate. He's attacked affirmative action, refused to address mandatory minimum sentencing, put Head Start programming on the chopping block, targeted the National Endowment for the Arts, ignored the genocidal and disenfranchisement effects of the prison industry complex, cut welfare subsidies—among numerous other affronts. What a way to keep your promise to be a "uniter, not a divider."

Bush backers would be hard-pressed to name one program that's benefited minorities in general and African-Americans in particular. It's unlikely that Bush even knows what most matters to Black America, as he's avoided campaigning anywhere near Black strongholds.

It's as if rural Blacks don't have the same economic concerns (more in fact) as rural Whites; that the minority neighborhoods who've faced years of disinvestment are any different than White communities devastated by the offshoring of jobs. As if inner-city drug scourges are more troublesome than the methamphetamine epidemic poisoning suburbs. For every small town Bush panders to with his pancake breakfasts, there's a housing project that needs similar help. But if the past four years have proven anything, it's that our president is no regular guy. In fact, there's a new way to spell imperialist: George W. Bush.

POINT OF VIEW



Defense vs. security debate grows

By Louie Overstreet
Special to Sentinel-Voice

Currently more than 6 million Americans are unemployed. Millions of high school and college graduates are entering the job market each year. Even accounting for the fact that a million-plus people are retiring each year, an economy that is only creating only a million jobs a year does not register well with people who are seeking gainful employment.

America is basically experiencing a net jobless economic recovery. This creates the situation where the economy will likely take a backseat to the war in Iraq as the primary campaign issue.

Expect George Bush to employ the campaign strategy of coupling the war in Iraq with the war on terrorism. Look for John Kerry to make every attempt to separate the Iraq misadventure from homeland security interests of the United States.

A brief history lesson may serve a useful purpose here. From George Washington's time, there has been a cabinet position known as the Secretary of War. During John Adams' tenure the Secretary of Navy was added to the cabinet. These two departments remained intact up until 1947, when they were combined into the Department of



LOUIE OVERSTREET

Defense.

Combining these two departments and changing the names was done, in part, to address the fears of our WWII Allies and other countries that America was bent on global conquest after winning wars in the Western and Eastern Hemispheres.

Our foreign policy initiatives have been handled by the Secretary of State since the end of WWII up to 9/11. Since then, make no mistake about it, our foreign policy has been run out of the Defense Department by using our military to further objectives that are perceived to be that of a nation intent on solving any foreign policy concerns we have through the use of military force. Surprisingly, in a democracy, this fundamental shift has occurred with little debate in the U.S. Congress.

Give the current Administration credit for being able

to position its objectives, to include invading a sovereign nation on what has turned out to be false pretenses, in such a manner where those who question such objectives are labeled as being unpatriotic.

The foregoing situation is why Republican campaign strategists are burning the midnight oil in an attempt to continue to blur in the minds of the public the difference in defense and security issues. Because of the foregoing political fact of life, I am not sure the 9/11 Commission, comprised of five Republicans and five Democrats, will be able to do much in terms of clarifying the differences between our national defense and security interests. Even when there is unanimous agreement among commis-

sion members, expect Vice President Cheney to play the role of "hatchet man" in attempting to chew up the credibility of the commission.

Admittedly, in some cases, this is going to be difficult to do in an election year. Last weekend, a Republican member of the commission stated, "You are going to see unanimous recommendations on the intelligence community ... They couldn't distinguish between a bicycle crash and a train wreck."

The most controversy, however, will not stem from the failure of our intelligence-gathering agencies. Candidates for President will attempt to fault the efforts of the current and past administrations for being either in-

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