**The Crusader Opinions**

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Even before President George W. Bush had taken office, the media and countless political pundits had dismissed the possibility of the new administration focusing on policy when the citizens of the country were still reeling from the events of September 11th. However, Bush has effectively taken the lemon handed to him and turned it into a delightful drinkable humiliation for the nation. After making this difficult transition, Bush pursued a policy for the new administration's success: the charm offensive. While many might scoff at the idea, it has performed marvelously. After all, Michael Bolton would not have been able to write such an unbelievable song as “Open Arms” if there was no room for a little bit of sentimentality in your average American. The charm offensive strategy has secured Bush a honeymoon period that is likely to continue for the next several weeks.

While outlets focused on the bitterness of Vice President Al Gore’s defeat, President-elect Bush laid the foundation for what would become his trademark charm offensive. Meeting with high-profile Democrats, including some of his most vociferous critics, and other Bush starters, Bush started a media feeding frenzy through carefully calculated cabinet nominations. It became reassuring to know that a man whose perceived greatest weakness was his lack of experience would let neither party ideology nor cultural heritage stand in the way of making the most appropriate appointments. Unlike Clinton’s administration, which acknowledged the weaknesses of the president but did nothing to correct them, Bush’s administration

seems perfectly structured to eliminate all the new president’s perceived weaknesses, such as his inability to speak fluidly in public situations. President Bush will set the policy goals for the new administration, but intelligent and capable department-heads will develop the strategies by which the goals will be accomplished. If Bush micromanaged like Clinton, the questions regarding his capabilities would intensify, but through this Reaganesque delegation of authority, he has created a sense of calm security where the public’s insecurity once existed.

Beyond the unquestionable abilities of the Bush cabinet members and other key advisors to the president, the group Bush selected also has something for everyone. Bush didn’t have to make his cabinet and team of advisors a mirror image of America, but he did. Democrats, Republicans, liberals, conservatives, Asians, Hispanics, blacks, whites, men, women, and individuals of different religions make up a key group of department administrators and policy advisors to the president. And while these individuals were not selected for their diversity, it is charming to know that Bush listened to many groups that did not support him in the election.

President Bush has selected someone for everyone, even a cabinet member that liberal activist groups will love to hate: Attorney General John Ashcroft. While it is yet to be seen whether Bush and Ashcroft will act as “good cop, bad cop,” the new attorney general has thus far been successful in drawing out the cleverness of lawyers. If Ashcroft can continue to create diversions, scarce resources will be spent making an example of the Justice Department other than the White House. Quantitatively, the news stories focused on Ashcroft have already made Bush seem like a liberal compared to the Missouri state’s unabashed cultural conservative.

Along with diversity, hospitality abounds in the Bush Whitehouse. While Senate Democratic Leader Tom Daschle and House Democratic Leader Dick Gephardt declared class warfare based on slightly differing tax cut proposals offered by Democrats and Republicans, the Bush family had the Kennedy family over for dinner and a movie. Even though Patrick Kennedy, bitter after failing to win a Democratic majority in the House and frizzled after swapping a female security guard in LAX and wrecking a charter bus, had vigorously disputed the legitimacy of the second Bush presidency earlier in the day, he showed up for some Texas-style BBQ and a film honoring his father. And just days before this event, President Bush had already hosted Senator Kennedy in his capacity as the ranking minority member on the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee in order to solicit his opinion on education reform. Building these congenial Congressional relationships will give Bush greater leverage in his ability to act through the legislature, a charming art Clinton never fully mastered.

Perhaps the most novel component of the charm offensive, President Bush has already begun to make a go of it in his campaign promises through the diversity and experience available in his appointees and the relationships already fostered through his Southern hospitality. The first 100 days of the Clinton administration were marred by chaos and the inability to translate his campaign promises into legislation. Based on the legislative evidence, Bush has doubtlessly studied Clinton’s mistakes and has already taken great pains not to repeat them. Education reform, tax relief and defense spending have all taken seats in the front row of Bush’s legislative agenda, and each piece bears the support of enough Democrats and Republicans to pass both House and Senate. Truth in campaigning is charming, and it seems even more charming when compared to President Clinton’s long record of ignoring campaign promises shortly after election day.

Actually, the comparison to Bill Clinton’s past is nothing compared to Clinton’s present. The controversy surrounding the president was merely practicing fraternization. By contrast, Bush’s coins are more effective when an evening of partying mentions the campaign promises made for the sake of building support for the Bush agenda.

In the first days of Bush’s charm offensive, liberal and other critics have already dismissed the strategy as a bunch of nicknames and gratuitous backslapping. It was easy to say that the first-boy-turned-president was merely practicing fraternization house politics. They viewed the techniques employed by Bush in Austin as nothing more than the toxification of the environment of Washington, D.C. However, Bush has made quite a career out of being underestimated. In fact, one might even credit the success of the charm offensive to the tendency of the liberal elite to underestimate the power of “slow and steady” conservatism. Clinton entered office in 1993 with a Democratic-controlled Congress and Senate. Eight years later, Bush entered office with a Republican-controlled House and Senate. Bush seems set not to repeat the slow burn of controversy that reversed party dominance in the Capital, but only time will tell if Bush can charm himself through all that ensnared his predecessor.

The new meal plan: The freshmen perspective

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Imagine this: you are 18 years old, and it’s 5:00 PM on the first day of school. You pack up all of your stuff and say goodbye to all that is familiar and comfortable to you.

You get to college and now live in a small box with a perfect stranger who might snore, or play loud music. You throw up in the bathroom, or just enjoy the soulful sounds of Michael Bolton. And then there’s the food. Sweet Lord. After making this difficult transition from your home to dorm life, you’re forced to eat the likes of barbequed fish and shepherd’s pie, waxed beans, beets, and flaky chicken. Flaky! Is that supposed to be an appetizing description? Come on, anyone who buys that needs a seeing-eye horse. And amidst all of the chaos and confusion of adjusting to such a drastic and overwhelming change, all you really want to do is find the comfort and solace that lies within the warm fluffy roll of a chicken finger sub.

But Kimball, in all of its dining glory, week after week, saves half of the students’ many needs and cravings. For example, there are limited choices when it comes to the menu. It is certainly not a balanced diet, but it was the underlying meaning when she said, “How we doing tonight, Eileen?”

SGA suggested that the reason for this blatant discrimination was a means of ensuring a constant flow of student attendance at both Upper and Lower Kimball, a way of making sure that these dining establishments do not get abandoned completely. But the fact of the matter is that even if the class of 2004 were included in the new and improved meal plan, both Upper and Lower would still maintain considerable patronage.

Bottom line: the freshman meal plan cannot be treated in the same regard as our older counterparts. Our parents pay the same enormous tuition bills, so throw us a bone. In other words, give one exceptional freshman put it, “Give us chicken finger subs or give us death!”