

Not the Decider by Dan Jacoby

Since last November's election, the Bush administration has come to the conclusion that they have to come up with something new. After working on this problem for a couple of months, what George W. Bush is offering has become clear.

There is the old story of the boy who bet the king that he could steal something from the palace right under the noses of the king's highly capable guards. Every day, he would leave the palace with a wheelbarrow full of sand. The guards would try to figure out what the boy was hiding in the sand, but search as they might, they couldn't find anything. Finally, the boy explained to the king that what he was stealing was wheelbarrows.

For the past couple of weeks I have been insisting that Bush was offering nothing new, just the same old, tired, failed ideas repackaged in new rhetoric. It has finally occurred to me that what Bush is offering is nothing other than that new rhetoric.

The most obvious example is the change from "I'm the decider" to "I'm the decision maker." Obviously, the first phrase didn't work, since nobody trusted Bush to decide. Perhaps, the Bush folks think, we'll trust him not to decide, but to make decisions.

Some examples:

The Old	The New	The Difference
Your taxes are too high	We need spending discipline	Republicans screwed up the budget; let the Democrats fix it.
Privatize Social Security	Social Security and Medicare and Medicaid are commitments of conscience	Maybe in the fog of myriad Medicare and Medicaid problems, nobody will notice if we privatize Social Security.
No Child Left Behind	Expand No Child Left Behind	Nothing is so bad that it can't be made worse.
Temporary guest worker program	Without animosity and without amnesty	New, catchy phrase.
America is addicted to oil	The serious challenge of global climate change	Pay no attention to the addiction, and maybe it will go away.
Wanted: Dead or alive	We must take the fight to the enemy	Forget bin Laden, Iran is the evil empire. (The enemy isn't Eurasia; it's Eastasia.)
Stay the course	New way forward	Admit we're not winning, and blame the Democrats.
War on terror	Failure is not an option	Admit that we can't win (sort of), but we can't afford to lose.