

**JC Watts column**  
**Stephens Media Group**  
**06/06 – Deja Vu**

Now that I've been out of the political scene for over three years, I find myself quoting the noted philosopher Yogi Berra when I watch what's happening in that most political of towns, Washington D.C.

"It's déjà vu all over again."

Observing the machinations and maneuverings of Democrats on Capitol Hill, I feel like I'm viewing a mirror image of the Republicans in 1997-98.

Hearken back to yesteryear when a man named Clinton was on the White House hot seat and another man named Gingrich was his willing and worthy foil.

Tom Delay was allowing no delays in his ascendancy to power in the Republican conference. Because of his deep disdain for Bill Clinton, and his eagerness to build a political empire, he mapped out a plan that was quite simple: Attack Clinton, run against Clinton, defeat Clinton. We neglected our own accomplishments and agenda and ran against the incumbent president. It was all Clinton all the time.

Unfortunately, the Republicans failed to note one very important factor. Bill Clinton was not on the ballot in 1998.

Now, just eight years later – but a lifetime in political years – the Democrats, emboldened by a snapshot in time called public opinion polls, are running against George Bush.

They're putting all of the eggs in a basket marked "Iraq." It matters not a whit to them that the leader of terrorist cells in Iraq has been taken out. In fact, while the opposition party won't take the president's word on the war, they don't want to believe the terrorist al-Zarqawi, either. You may not have heard this on your favorite newscast, but al-Zarqawi's not-so-safe house housed a document penned by the late, unlamented leader of the insurgency citing the successes of U.S. and coalition efforts in Iraq, as opposed to their own ineffectiveness and declining morale.

Has the war gone perfectly? Of course not. But I like our chances long-term, if the American people and their leaders will hold steady and disregard the Kennedy-Kerry-Pelosi team's strategy of cut-and-run.

Surely, although the Democrats are talking pretty serious smack about their "opportunities" in November, they can't be happy when they get real with each other behind closed doors.

Consider the following:

- Forty-two House Democrat members snubbed their noses at their leadership and voted to stay the course in Iraq last week, despite intense lobbying from leadership. If my math serves me correctly, that amounts to about 20% of the Democrat caucus.

- In the Senate, 93 of 100 members voted for a similar measure. The Kerry-Kennedy faction was way out alone on this limb.
- Pennsylvania Congressman John Murtha has announced that he'll challenge Steny Hoyer for the number two spot in the Democrat caucus if his party takes the majority in November. It's not unusual for a sitting member of leadership to be challenged, but it speaks to disarray in the caucus when it does.
- Republicans won a special election in San Diego in a campaign in which one would have thought George Bush was the candidate. In the aftermath of the Duke Cunningham bribery conviction, this was the most tainted GOP seat in the country, and Republicans still retained it.

And last, but not least...

- The Congressional Black Caucus has made it very clear that they believe a double standard was imposed when Congressman Bill Jefferson of Louisiana was removed from a major committee. Jefferson -- while serving under an ethics cloud resulting from \$90,000 in real cold cash stored in his freezer -- has not, as yet, been indicted.

Democrat leadership has given passes to Dan Rostenkowski (ultimately convicted) and Gary Condit (murder investigation), and currently to Congressman Alan Mollohan of West Virginia (financial improprieties). Could it be a coincidence that of the three latter members I mentioned all have a fair pigmentation to their skin?

Democrat leadership is toying with 39 CBC votes at a time when they can ill lose even a handful of votes.

I sense the Democrats will soon abandon the mantle of the GOP "culture of corruption" under which they had so hoped to run this year.

By the nature of the process, political parties must be partisan. The loyal opposition has a duty to cite their differences and keep the majority accountable.

But don't count President Bush out just yet. He has a new, strong, and energized team in place in the White House. His political obituary has been written a little too early. If you need proof of this theory, I refer you to your American history books under the chapter on Bill Clinton.