

Promises:

When candidate George Bush promised back in 2000 to end eight years of the Clinton way of doing things we thought he was talking about the dishonesty and partisanship and personal scandals. But these last eight years have been full of lies, improprieties of all sorts and party politics determining everything including Justice Department employment. Who knew that what George Bush really meant was that he would put an end to eight years of the Clinton peace and prosperity? That would have been a tough platform to run on, don't you think?

"Vote for me, America, and I promise you a recession and a war that only a fool would start." Or maybe this one would have worked. "I have seen the future and I can tell you now, Dick and his buddies will do very well." Actually both of those lines are too unwieldy to be campaign slogans. They involve reading more than five words. How about, "Torture, Lies and Profits!" There, that's catchy.

I don't care what side of the aisle you sit on. If you look back and compare the past eight years to the eight years before them you'd be hard pressed to say that things are better. Well, OK, if your name is Exxon or Blackwater or Halliburton things are a whole lot better. But how many of us are named Exxon or Blackwater or Halliburton? The rest of us have only to look at the enormous national debt, defaulted mortgages, longer work hours for shorter wages, outrageous healthcare choices, broken treaties, so many dead sons and daughters in that awful desert, the crumbling infrastructure at home and an image around the world that is just slightly more positive than Zimbabwe's.

With that list of accomplishments to his administration's credit this would be a wonderful time for the President to reprise his greatest moment in Office. He should walk out on the deck of another ship and proudly say, "Mission Accomplished!" And then he should jump off.

I mean really, folks. We spent a trillion dollars just to hang a dictator? For the life of me I can't think of anything else we've accomplished over there except for providing the inspiration to thousands of new jihadists. Couldn't we have deposed a dictator from somewhere else and saved a few bucks? Or a few hundred billion bucks?

Surely Robert Mugabe or Charles Taylor or the Myanmar Junta would have been cheaper. The President could still have had his aircraft carrier photo op and a put few bucks in the bank to boot.

But the Bush eight years never was about careful choices or reasoned diplomacy. Those years were about pandering to all the brave Neocons who stayed home while sending the volunteer armed forces to do the dieing. Those years have not been about affordable health care or the concerns of working folks. The Bush eight years have been more about boardroom bonuses and defense profiteers. The past eight years didn't pay much attention to integrity and honor. Instead they left a trail of torn up treaties and tortured prisoners.

All the while this Administration and its followers waved flags and talked principles. In truth they have succeeded in deeply dishonoring both our country and its standards. It is a perverted patriotism that discards the Geneva Convention on the treatment of prisoners, The Kyoto Accords, The Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty and the U.N. Charter. This go it alone, in your face smirk at the rest of the planet is head-shakingly puerile. This kind of behavior is remindful of some of the tactics of the old Soviet Union, where treaties were used as kindling and human rights were shipped off to Siberia. Whether it's a Gitmo or a Gulag, it smells just as bad.

So, if you take things at face value, I guess you'd have to say that George Bush kept his campaign promises. He said that he would change things. It's our problem that we thought he meant a change to something better. Fool us once, shame on him. Fool us again and again and again, shame on us. I hope we understand what it is that the next president is promising and, more importantly, whether those promises are worth keeping.