

## What if we win?

by Cal\_Thomas

Most Democrats seem so invested in defeat in Iraq that they apparently have no "Plan B," which would be success. Like the character Billy Bigelow in the musical "Carousel," who is dumbstruck when he realizes he has not thought about the possibility that his pregnant wife might actually deliver a girl, instead of the son he wants, Democrats appear unable to conceive of victory, or at least stability in Iraq. So cynical have our politics become that a spokesman for Speaker Nancy Pelosi said Democratic leaders are "not willing to concede there are positive things to point to" in Iraq. And House Majority Whip James E. Clyburn said that a favorable report from Gen. Petraeus could lead 47 moderate to conservative "Blue Dog" Democrats to oppose a withdrawal timetable, making it virtually impossible for the liberal leadership to pass withdrawal legislation. "(It would be) a real problem for us," said Clyburn. Is that what the Iraq war has become? Instead of viewing it as a generational war that will determine the future of civilization (because, if we lose, Iraq will become a launching pad for terrorist acts around the world and hundreds of thousands of Iraqis would surely die), is it now just another tool in the Democrat's quest for the White House? Where are the statesmen who put their country and its interests before personal and political interests? Was Harry Truman right when he observed, "A statesman is a politician who has been dead for 10 or 15 years"? Aren't we Americans before we are Republicans or Democrats? And don't we all lose if one political "side" wins and it costs others their freedom and puts America in greater peril? Much of Washington is buzzing over a recent New York Times column by two scholars from the Brookings Institution, Michael O'Hanlon and Kenneth Pollack. In addition to their association with a left-of-center think tank, the two have credibility because they have been harsh critics of the way President Bush has directed the war. Their column, which was titled "A War We Just Might Win," expresses something we haven't heard in several years: optimism. "We are finally getting somewhere in Iraq, at least in military terms," they write. This surprised them and they saw "the potential to produce not necessarily 'victory,' but a sustainable stability that both we and the Iraqis could live with." Testifying last week before the House Armed Services Committee, U.S. Army General John M. Keane said Gen. Petraeus' new offensive has turned the tide against al-Qaida and insurgents alike. "We are on the offensive and have the momentum," said Gen. Keane, citing improved security throughout Baghdad, reduced sectarian violence, and al-Qaida losing ground in Sunni areas. This is bad news for Democrats; so invested are they in defeat. What would they do; what could they do should pacification, if not unification, set in? It would not be beyond them to ignore the positives and focus only on the negatives. Will the mainstream media support them in such a strategy? Some might, but the "alternative" media, including talk radio, cable TV and the Internet, won't let them get away with it. Democrats may be reduced to asking if the public is going to believe them or their "lying eyes." On "NBC Nightly News" last week, anchor Brian Williams ignored the column by O'Hanlon and Pollack and instead focused on "a draft U.S. report," saying "there are disturbing new details about corruption at the very top of the Iraqi government." ABC's Terry McCarthy apparently didn't receive, or ignored, the Democratic talking points when he said of the O'Hanlon-Pollack column on "World News Tonight," "the report tracks fairly closely with what we're seeing." David Martin on "CBS Evening News" reported on July 31, "With one day left in the month, American casualties in July are the lowest since the troop surge began in February." NBC News notwithstanding, these somewhat upbeat assessments on CBS, ABC (and in The New York Times) must be unsettling to a lot of Democrats. Even Sen. Hillary Clinton, who flipped on her "favorite" baseball team when it became politically expedient to do so, will have a tough time selling the line, "I believed in victory from the beginning." (Direct all MAIL for Cal Thomas to 2225 Kenmore Ave., Suite 114, Buffalo, N.Y. 14207. Readers may also e-mail Cal Thomas at [tmseditors@tribune.com](mailto:tmseditors@tribune.com).) (c) 2007 Tribune Media Services, Inc.

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