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September 16, 2005, 8:41 a.m.

The President from New Orleans

A scorecard.

By T. J. Walker

PRESENCE

President Bush's walk out to the lectern in front of a church last night address the nation was a nice opening touch. His blue shirt was wrinkleless, but with rolled up sleeves, he looked like he was serious about hard work and seemed appropriately somber.

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STAGE CRAFT

Bush has greatly improved his

TelePrompTer reading abilities over the years, but he is still no Reagan or Clinton. Though Bush had only a few very minor stumbles, he didn't seem as steady or rehearsed as he did earlier in the year for his Inaugural or the State of the Union addresses. Though Bush no longer rushes his Teleprompter reading as he once did, he was squinting as though he was having a hard time reading. Additionally, the lighting seemed too harsh on his eyes. While technically proficient, Bush didn't adequately personalize his delivery. Additionally positive, Bush did not shake or bob his head, as he often does when he tries to seem emphatic.

SPEECH CRAFT

Structurally, Bush's speech was well-crafted. He used ample doses of examples, stories and vignettes, complete with dialogue from real people. However, his hawking of 1-800 numbers and websites seemed un-presidential and more appropriate for a lowly public information officer giving a press briefing.

EMOTIONAL RESONANCE

Bush seemed to be suggesting that the government was at fault

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for its slow response to Katrina and that he would take the blame. He conceded that he was less than perfect and that not all criticism of him and his government was just partisan carping from disgruntled liberals and Democrats. Bush conceded that government was "overwhelmed in the first few days." And that, "Americans have every right to expect more." Also, he said, "I as president am responsible for the problem and the solution." These phrases all cut emotionally because they seemed genuine and were rare from this president.

INTERESTING/WEIRD MOMENTS

Bush aid citizens "won't have to wade through bureaucracies..." This seemed clumsy. Americans hate bureaucracy when it means rules and regulations on how to get a driver's license. But bureaucracy involving rules and regulations on how strong levees should be, when evacuation orders should take place, how thick storm walls should be built-citizens would have liked a whole lot more bureaucracy pre-Katrina.

Bush also said, "as many of us saw on television" there is a lot of poverty... Ouch, this seemed as awkward as former FEMA head Michael Brown admitting that he didn't know refugees were housed in the New Orleans convention center. Why would Bush speechwriters give his critics ammunition that Bush is out of touch?

RHETORICAL HIGHLIGHTS

Bush recounted what one citizen said when asked if he would move from New Orleans. "Will you move? 'Naw, I will rebuild, but I will build high.'" This was a nice oratorical touch and Bush carried it off well.

APPEAL TO LIBERALS

If Hillary Clinton once channeled Eleanor Roosevelt in the White House, then Bush one-upped her by channeling FDR and LBJ. Bush said the answer to all of New Orleans' problems was big government or gigantic government. New government program after new government program was proposed. Ted Kennedy must have been chortling to himself thinking "I must be back in the 60s world of big government solutions to every societal problem." For a moment it seemed Bush would promise a chicken gumbo in every pot.

APPEAL TO CONSERVATIVES

Zero. Bush ignored the concepts of individual accountability and responsibility in his speech. In the Bush world, his new moral relativism makes no distinctions between those who bought flood insurance and those who didn't; those who choose to live in safe mountains high above sea level and those who build below sea level in flood zones predicted by every expert to be washed away. Bush's message was redistributionist, collectivist, and

Apple: 09/16 9:04 a.m.

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Luskin: While We Quake Over Katrina . . . 09/16 8:48 a.m.

Walker: The President from New Orleans 09/16 8:41 a.m.

Miller: The O.C. 09/16 8:40 a.m.

Sulmasy: A Historic Moment in Israel 09/16 8:37 a.m.

Buckley: Fun & Games 09/16 8:36 a.m.

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Ijaz: Terrorism's New Operating System 09/16 8:33 a.m.

Dunphy: Underwater Police Work 09/16 8:32 a.m.

Wilcox: A Weaker Terminator 09/16 8:31 a.m.

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nannist. Individuals bear no responsibility for their misfortunes or for their own recovery. Any conservative with third grade math skills or beyond could smell trillions of dollars of budget deficit flowing out of Bush's mouth.

— *T. J. Walker, author of Presentation Training A-Z, is the president of Media Training Worldwide.*

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