The Power To Lead: The Crisis Of The American Presidency

James MacGregor Burns

The symptoms of this crisis of the American spirit are all around us. For the first time in the history of our country a majority of our people believe that the next five years will be worse than the past five years. Two-thirds of our people do not even vote. We respected the Presidency as a place of honor until the shock of Watergate. We remember when the phrase "sound as a dollar" was an expression of absolute dependability, until ten years of inflation began to shrink our dollar and our savings. We believed that our nation’s resources were limitless until 1973 when we had to face a growing dependence on foreign oil. These wounds are still very deep. I propose the creation of an energy security corporation to lead this effort to replace two and a half million barrels of imported oil per day by 1990. Download Citation on ResearchGate | On Jan 1, 1984, Gaddis Smith and others published The Power to Lead: The Crisis of the American Presidency. James MacGregor Burns (1984), one of this country's most astute scholars of leadership, begins his book, The Power to Lead, with a description of the inauguration of a new president: After years of witnessing government in the hands often of wellintentioned mediocrities or outright scoundrels, here was a man of fine ethical standards, with a kind of sunny morality. After years of drift and deadlock and delay in government, here was a man of proved competence, tough, demanding, clearheaded who had come from "nowhere" to win the Democratic presidential nomination and then kno
The powers of the presidency still concern us. What powers belong to the president? Although some are quite clear from the Constitution, claims of inherent powers have led to many controversies during our history. How past presidents have expanded the powers of the office is key to understanding the nature of the modern presidency. INTERACTIVE MEDIA LECTURE 12.1 THE DRAMA OF THE PRESIDENCY

The American President There are numerous movies that either feature or rely on the character of the American president. This lecture can easily be adapted to many of these—indeed, it may even be helpful to highlight this feature in the media by showing clips from several films and/or television shows. The presidency of Bush II had a catastrophic effect on America's standing in the world. The simplicity with which Bush I elucidated his Manichean worldview, "If you are not with us, you are against us," shows his complete unawareness of the complexity of world alliances and nations' decision-making realities. He squandered his opportunity to lead the world by risking the goodwill of every nation by operating on gut instinct rather than through reasoned consideration, turning his adventurism in Iraq into a global disaster that plagues us still. Yet the author also notes: American power was not only seen as unquestionably dominant but also legitimate and America's voice was credible. Brzezinski says for that, Clinton deserves credit. The symptoms of this crisis of the American spirit are all around us. For the first time in the history of our country a majority of our people believe that the next five years will be worse than the past five years. Two-thirds of our people do not even vote. We respected the Presidency as a place of honor until the shock of Watergate. We remember when the phrase "sound as a dollar" was an expression of absolute dependability, until ten years of inflation began to shrink our dollar and our savings. We believed that our nation's resources were limitless until 1973 when we had to face a growing dependence on foreign oil. These wounds are still very deep. I propose the creation of an energy security corporation to lead this effort to replace two and a half million barrels of imported oil per day by 1990.
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