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Presidential Greatness

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BOOKS

Bailey, Thomas A. *Presidential Greatness*. New York: Appleton-Century, 1966. 368p. (E 176.1 .B17)

There have been many efforts made throughout the history of this country to measure the greatness or effectiveness of our Presidents. The author of *Presidential Greatness* has made another such effort. He has attacked the problem with a slightly new technique and has developed a very readable, interesting, and human view of the Presidents of these United States. Mr. Bailey has used a basis for his discourse two surveys of presidential greatness conducted in 1948 and again in 1962 by Professor Arthur M. Schlesinger, Sr., of Harvard University. The pollsters were professional historians, political scientists, historians, journalists, and others from various walks of life. Mr. Bailey has then gone into the attributes of greatness; surveyed the Presidents, using these criteria; and then compared his ranking of greatness with the ratings expressed in Professor Schlesinger's polls. The criteria used, among others, were physical stature, intellect, character, personality, temperament, and ability as a politician, administrator, and leader. The book is laced with entertaining, little-known incidents, and human and humorous anecdotes on all of the Presidents that personify them as men rather than casting them as impersonal, statuesque figures. Throughout the book there is a definite tongue-in-cheek shading which is refreshing. In his summary reassessment of the Presidents, Mr. Bailey has used 43 yardsticks to measure greatness, commencing with achievement. What was the President's record of achievement at home and abroad, both long-range and short-range? He also applies the gauge of the veto. How skillful was the President in controlling Congress or shaping legislation by the veto or threat of veto? Employing the measurements gathered from his scale, the author has then reassessed the Presidents and placed them in his own priority of greatness. In so doing, he does not agree with Professor Schlesinger in many instances, and his rationale for the variance

is most interesting. This is not a good research book, but it is pleasurable, interesting reading for anyone, without regard to political party affiliation.

J.R.M. FISHER

Commander, U.S. Navy

Brynes, Asher. *We Give to Conquer*. New York: Norton, 1966. 219p. (HC 60 .B87)

On 10 January 1967, *The New York Times* printed the text of President Johnson's special message to Congress on aid to foreign lands. The \$6.2 billion that he requested for the next two fiscal years is the smallest since the program started 20 years ago. In his message, President Johnson stated in part, "The threat to our security posed by internal subversion and insurgency cannot be countered by withdrawal, isolation or indifference."

According to Mr. Asher Brynes' thesis, as expounded in *We Give to Conquer*, the United States foreign aid program is a threat to world peace. He maintains that all unilateral foreign aid to poorer nations is essentially imperialistic. It seeks to create, maintain, and defend spheres of influence and thus, under the guise of philanthropy, it carries on the old statecraft in a new way. Mr. Brynes says that American foreign aid programs are designed to promote within the assisted countries the emergence of middle-class populations; therefore, it is from the Communist point of view as subversive as their own tactics which encourage the creation of new proletariats. He argues that since the American foreign aid program is much larger than the Communist effort (about 30 to 1), it tends to exert a controlling pressure in areas where the Soviet Union has an equal interest. This contest for uncommitted nations, the author holds, can have the same consequence as the diplomatic rivalry that preceded the great wars of this century. The position taken in this book is not antiforeign aid. As a matter of fact, the author offers a proposal which would greatly expand the