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Worse Than Watergate: The Secret Presidency of George W. Bush

By John W. Dean



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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

The most facile presidential comparison one could make for George W. Bush would be his father, who presided over a war in Iraq and a struggling economy. Some "neocons" reject the parallel and compare Bush to his father's predecessor, Ronald Reagan, citing a plainspoken quality and a belief in deep tax cuts. But John Dean goes further back, seeing in Bush all the secrecy and scandal of Dean's former boss, the notorious Richard Nixon. The difference, as the title of Dean's book indicates, is that Bush is a heck of a lot worse. While the book provides insightful snippets of the way Nixon used to do business, it offers them to shed light on the practices of Bush. In Dean's estimation, the secrecy with which Bush and Dick Cheney govern is not merely a preferred system of management but an obsessive strategy meant to conceal a deeply troubling agenda of corporate favoritism and a dramatic growth in unchecked power for the executive branch that put at risk the lives of American citizens, civil liberties, and the Constitution. Dean sets out to make his point by drawing attention to several areas about which Bush and Cheney have been tight-lipped: the revealing by a "senior White House official" of the identity of an undercover CIA operative whose husband questioned the administration, the health of Cheney, the identity of Cheney's energy task force, the information requested by the bi-partisan 9/11 commission, Bush's business dealings early in his career, the creation of a "shadow government", wartime prisoners held at Guantanamo Bay, and scores more. He theorizes that the truth about these and many other situations, including the decision to go to war in Iraq, will eventually surface and that Bush and Cheney's secrecy is a thus far effective means of keep a lid on a rapidly multiplying set of lies and scandals that far outstrip the misdeeds that led directly to Dean's former employer resigning in disgrace. Dean's charges are impassioned and more severe than many of Bush's most persistent critics. But those charges are realized only after careful reasoning and steady logic by a man who knows his way around scandal and corruption. --*John Moe*

From Publishers Weekly

This title's accusation bears particular weight coming from the man who warned the super-secretive Richard Nixon that there was a cancer on his presidency, and Dean, who was Nixon's White House counsel, makes a strong argument that the secrecy of what he dubs the "Bush-Cheney presidency" is "not merely unjustified and excessive but obsessive," and consequently "frighteningly dangerous." Some of the subjects he touches on have been covered in detail elsewhere, and his chapter on the administration's stonewalling of the September 11 commission isn't fully up to date. But few critics have as effectively put the disparate pieces together, linking them to what Dean says is a broader pattern of secrecy from an administration that does its best to control the flow of information on every subject—even the vice president's health—and uses executive privilege to circumvent congressional scrutiny. Dean's probe extends back to Bush's pre-presidential activities, such as his attempt to withhold his gubernatorial papers from public view, and Dean's background as an investment banker adds welcome perspective on Bush's business career (as well as Cheney's). Dean ultimately identifies 11 issues (such as the secrecy around the forming of a national energy policy and what Dean calls Bush's misleading of Congress about war with Iraq) on which the White House's stance could lead to scandal, and warns that allowing the administration to continue its policy of secrecy may lead to a weakening of democracy. Despite occasional comments about Bush's intelligence that will rankle presidential supporters, Dean (*Blind Ambition*) is generally levelheaded; his role in Watergate and the seriousness of his charge in the national media that Bush has committed impeachable offenses has popped this onto bestseller lists.

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From the Publisher

Former White House counsel and New York Times bestselling author John Dean reveals how the Bush White House has set America back decades-employing a worldview and tactics of deception that will do more damage to the nation than Nixon at his worst.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Matthew Lyons:

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