Clarion Review

Political Science

None Dare Call it Reason: How the Average American Has Hanged Himself

Richard Sutherland
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Two Stars (out of Five)

Richard Sutherland gets right to the point: middle class America is at fault for electing poor leaders to handle our country's political and financial health. Sutherland who has an advanced degree in history and holds a J.D. from Harvard Law School asks questions about how the United States got in such dire financial straits. His answer: "we bought the cure-all potion from the snake oil salesman. We've been sold a bill of goods."

The author examines the past twenty-seven years and argues that conservative Republicans have plundered the U.S. treasury with tax cuts for the wealthy a large national debt and multi-billion-dollar financial bailouts while the "average American" can't afford health insurance can't find a job with decent wages and has his personal liberties violated by the government. Although Sutherland goes back to Ronald Reagan and the Republican controlled Congresses of the 1980s and mid-1990s he focuses his attacks on George W. Bush's presidency.

The author discusses some important points that need national debate like the wisdom of deregulating the savings and loan industry in the 1980s turning away from alternative energy policies after Jimmy Carter agency heads who place politics over their department's mandate and the powers of the Patriot Act. He also makes the important point that each of us must give every politician regardless of party a report card. Sutherland emphasizes an argument that many people make but he needs to provide a more thorough analysis. The book reads like an outline without any important details.

Sutherland often does not cite his sources and it is difficult to determine the reliability of his information. For example readers can't tell where he got the research which states that Social Security will run out of funds by 2010 or 2015. Some of his arguments are also incoherent and he jumps from one topic to another in one paragraph. This is especially true when he talks about religion.

In a section titled "Minimum Wage" Sutherland argues for the need to raise the minimum wage and how Bush is courting the Christian right with seemingly no connection between the two. He also discusses the rise of faith-based initiatives Christian Republicans' belief of the Second Coming and the Jewish restoration of Palestine without really explaining the connection. Sutherland should remember the long view of American history. He argues that the conservatives need to win elections thus the "appearance of the political spin meisters" to persuade voters to keep them in office. Political propagandists like Thomas Paine have been effective tools ever since our country's founding.

Sutherland has a passion for this topic but he needs to revise his arguments to build a stronger case. He was right about one thing: in the 2008 presidential election American voters did what Sutherland wanted to them to do. He urges people to evaluate politicians and if they are not representing our best interests vote them out.

Bryan Craig