

American Politics: “Lie To Me”

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What is the main lesson from the recent fiascos of former Senator John Edwards and Representative Anthony Weiner? If you follow the news shows you saw a number of video clips where each of them had lied many times about what eventually they confessed to, their stupid, sleazy sexual misconduct. As I watched the videos I was amazed how good their lying behavior was, without any hint of their blatant dishonesty in how they looked or sounded. Of course, I was also reminded how terrific a liar Bill Clinton was when he went on television to lie about his sexual misconduct.

As a fan of the TV show Lie To Me where the experts can detect minute physical signs of lying or micro-expressions, I felt that the politicians had developed the talent and skill to lie without giving any sign of it.

Here is what Americans should learn: All elected Democrats and Republicans have succeeded because they are excellent liars and, therefore, not one of them can ever be trusted to be telling the truth.

When you vote for any of these two-party politicians all you are saying is: LIE TO ME.

And when they get elected that is exactly what they will do, and not just about their personal behavior. The larger lesson is that American politicians will also lie effortlessly about public policy and just about everything they have anything to do with.

Make no mistake, President Obama has lied about many things just as presidents before him also have.

Can you have an effective representative democracy when elected officials can never be trusted to tell the truth to citizens? No.

Elected officials no long feel they have a profound responsibility to tell the truth. It appears to be behavior that has become automatic, not something they agonize over. Lying has become normal behavior whether it is done in Internet communications, on TV, in speeches or during campaigning for office. Lying may have become so commonplace that politicians no longer spend time justifying it to themselves or their closest staff or supporters. Sure, when they get caught, they easily apologize and accept responsibility in some glib and usually tearful way. But their moral decrepitude should not be forgiven. Dishonest politicians are chronically ill, selfish, egoistic betrayers of public trust. Severe punishment of them is necessary, starting with legally required removal from office and loss of all pension and health insurance benefits.

In the US political system public trust of elected officials is passé, or should be.

This is not a matter of cynicism; it is just prudent and logical to mistrust just about everything said by elected officials. Of course, if you think that a particular politician lies supports your views, then it may not bother you, but it should.

Forget about the rationalization that politicians merely misspeak or that they are just fallible human beings like the rest of us. My point is that an essential skill and regular behavior of politicians is lying without any hint of it. The only thing that politicians now fear is losing control and inadvertently telling the truth!

Has it always been this way? Have American politicians always been ubiquitous liars? I don't think so. What was once aberrant behavior has become normal behavior. It is yet another sign of just how much the US has sunk. It is not just that the country is on the wrong track; it is off the track, falling into an abyss.

When it is rational to always be suspicious of everything politicians say, then why keep listening? Why keep voting for them? Why keep believing that the US is still a functioning democracy? Why believe lies about reforming government? Why think that the overpowering corruption of government by corporate interests will change?

The biggest insanity of all is that when politicians get caught lying about sexual behavior they pay a high price, but not when they get caught lying about the economy, how they have voted on issues, how they have implemented their campaign promises, what they have taken from corporate supporters, and other substantive issues. They get away with it. In large measure because the media do not make a big deal of ordinary lying. Lying is the new normal. Expectations of honesty are gone.

The US political system is broken. That is the truth. You can trust me.

Take a little satisfaction knowing that the biggest lies politicians tell are probably to themselves.

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