The Dumbest President...EVER!

By Stuart Schwartz
Barack Obama is the dumbest president...EVER.

That is a reasonable conclusion once you've assessed the first nineteen months of his presidency and compared it to the definition of intelligence put together by researchers in the field. Although the mainstream media have spent the last two years proclaiming Obama "super-smart" or, as Newsweek put it, "sort of God" in stature and brilliance, the 44th president of the United States is poised to surpass our 15th president, James Buchanan, Jr., as the White House occupant who has made the dumbest moves while in office. With two years left, he is on the fast track to last.

That takes some doing, for the leadership of the hapless Buchanan prior to the Civil War "has led to his consistent ranking by historians as one of the worst Presidents." This is the president who vetoed a college funding bill because "there were already too many educated people" in the young nation. Buchanan's judgment was so wretched that he thought anti-slavery forces could be convinced to give up their opposition by his personal assurances that slaves were "treated with kindness and humanity" and that poverty could be ended by simply printing more money. Sound familiar?

Barack Obama is dumb. How dumb? Alfred E. Newman dumb, says columnist David Limbaugh, who labeled him "President Alfred E. Obama" because of his blithe disregard of the basics of fiscal responsibility. Alfred E. Newman is the Mad magazine mascot, whose answer to every problem is his signature statement: "What, me worry?"

How dumb? How-many-Obamas-does-it-take-to-screw-in-a-light-bulb dumb. And in the answer lies the key to his pole position in the race to last: It takes 242. One to hold the light bulb, four to turn the ladder, eighteen to assess conformity to OSHA workplace requirements, four to assess the environmental impact of the burnt-out bulb disposal, twelve to participate in a task force to evaluate green energy solutions for a replacement bulb, eight to script his actions, four to script instructions and work the teleprompter, 23 to work with the justice department to sue the light bulb manufacturer...you get the picture. And, à la Buchanan, Obama never does get that light bulb changed.

That James Buchanan "fiddled while Rome burned" seems to be the consensus of historians. His approach to the raging controversy over slavery in the decade preceding the Civil War was based on ignoring evidence and acting upon events as he wished them to be, not as they were. Fast-forward to the present: Obama responds to the Gulf crisis by trying to move us toward the collapsed centralized green economy of Spain, ignoring the fact that even Spain acknowledges that "every 'green job' created with government money...came at the cost of 2.2 regular jobs, and only one in 10 of the newly created green jobs became a permanent job."

In all areas of his presidency, Obama has demonstrated a striking disregard of facts, lack of good reasoning, and inability to function at an executive level, all at the core of the textbook definition of intelligence derived from more than a half century of research. Intelligence, the experts tell us, comes down to understanding the meaning of the world around us, and then using that understanding to live skillfully and appropriately (i.e., to get stuff done). One survey of more than fifty researchers in the field of intelligence offers the following definition:
A very special mental capability that, among other things, involves the ability to reason, plan, solve problems, think abstractly, comprehend complex ideas, learn quickly and learn from experience. It is not merely book learning, a narrow academic skill, or test-taking smarts. Rather, it reflects a broader and deeper capability for comprehending our surroundings—"catching on", "making sense" of things, or "figuring out" what to do.

Obama is Buchanan-esque in his inability to function as an executive, a key part of intelligence. Even a cursory analysis of history shows that limited government and free markets have produced prosperity; so Obama expands government and takes over private businesses, causing one observer to throw up his hands at another Buchanan moment from Obama and exclaim, "It isn't rocket science, Mr. President!" Hands-on executives and laser focus are business school basics for solving problems; so Obama parties rather than roll up his sleeves, unleashes federal regulators on hapless Gulf state residents rather than cutting through the red tape, and appoints study panels even as the oil washes ashore (e.g., see video timeline). Radical Islamists are waging war against the United States; Obama does a full Buchanan -- or, if you will, an Alfred E. Newman-style "What, me worry?" -- and, denying the existence of Islamic terrorism, asks whom are you going to believe -- me or your lying eyes?

The ability to draw reasonable conclusions from everyday life and then use those conclusions to adapt is fundamental to high intelligence, says cognitive psychologist Robert J. Steinberg, the award-winning Tufts University dean and University of Cambridge fellow. In other words, the scientific community has established good reasoning, learning from past experience, and acting according to those experiences as integral to high intelligence.

It does not include, as David Brooks, tells us, having an exceptional and "perfectly creased pant [leg]" or -- in what Hot Air's Allahpundit calls "a loathsome expression of elitism" -- being able to "talk like us," Brooks, and others of the "smart set." If that were the case, all we would need to increase intelligence in the U.S. Congress is to provide our elected representatives with dry cleaning services. As for the "talk like us" part, it doesn't take intelligence to talk like a self-styled intellectual, a.k.a. a New York Times columnist. Hawkeye Pearce has already shown us the way in the classic "Love Story" episode of television's "Mash." He teaches Radar, the shy Iowa farm boy who has a crush on a nurse who reads the classics and enjoys Bach, to reply with, eyebrows uplifted, "Ahhh...Bach" when she discusses music and throw in the occasional "That's highly significant."

Want to impress David Brooks and others of the media engaging in what Bernard Goldberg calls "a slobbering love affair" with the president? Simple. Reply, as Obama has done, "Ahhh...Burke" to David Brooks, enthralled by a president who expressed appreciation for the "finer points" of political philosophy; or flash your degree to Christopher Buckley, formerly of National Review, awestruck by Obama's "Harvard intellect"; or simply present Marxism and mainline elegance as typical of the academic life, and media academics like Michael Beschloss will gush on mainstream news, "he's probably the smartest guy ever to become President."

But intelligence is as intelligence does, as Forest Gump might remind us. Harvard has produced more than its share of great men and women, but it has also produced the Unabomber, Barney Frank, and Enron CEO Jeffrey Skilling...and now, the next James Buchanan.

So the next time Brooks or others in the mainstream media firmament tell you that Barack Obama is a towering intellect, the smartest president ever, just nod your head wisely and say, "Ahhh...pant leg."

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Page Printed from: http://www.americanthinker.com/2010/07/the_dumbest_presidentever.html at July 14, 2010 - 03:00:03 PM CDT