

## *Educating the Presidency*

When life, the life of every American and of billions of other people all over the globe, rests in the palm of whoever sits at the desk in the Oval Office of the White House, why do we not insist that every Presidential candidate possess basic training in all the office entails? Since the executive branch of our government...not the legislative and not the judiciary...is responsible for foreign policy, and since the nation's foreign policy pretty well determines survival, should nuclear conflict erupt anywhere on Earth, would it not be rational to require that all candidates running for President pass minimum competency tests based on the fundamentals of the Constitution?

Among monarchies of western Europe, even though the royal heads of state hold but titular positions, the heirs-apparent to thrones are raised from birth to assume their roles.

In our own country, we maintain five military academies to educate future leaders of our armed forces. In the United States more than 1,700 other colleges and universities, accredited four-year institutions, grant baccalaureate degrees. No institution exists, however, specifically to train aspiring Presidents.

Of the forty men who have risen to the highest office of the land, twenty not only studied but practiced law. Since the death in 1945 of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, however, only two Presidents (Nixon and Ford) have been lawyers.

American history is alive with Presidents upon whom we look back somewhat wistfully. We wonder why candidates for the office seem disturbingly uninspiring today. Where are the men of stature such as John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, James Monroe and John Quincy Adams? Where are the Lincolns, the Teddy and Franklin Roosevelts, the Harry Trumans of modern America?

Review carefully, while looking back, and find there were

lean years in the past, years when great leaders did not present themselves, years when the best the country could offer for President were such men as Taylor, Fillmore, Pierce, Buchanan, Arthur and Harding. None of them has history food served the Presidency with distinction. Yet the nation survived.

As the world shrinks with modern transportation, communication and information, as the arms races continue, as new frontiers open in space, as global population swells, and as the United States is viewed, increasingly, as responsible for policing the world, the job of the Presidency takes on enormous potential for good or evil. Being an effective politician, a great communicator, even just being a nice person and a decent human being, is no longer adequate. The Presidency not only deserves, but demands, an individual well-prepared through education, background and experience to handle every aspect of the job. Candidates for this office need a broad background in sociology and economics, in government and law, and in diplomacy, history and international affairs, as well as in politics.

Americans are a peculiar breed. They prohibit any person from practicing law without passing a bar examination; they prohibit any person from practicing medicine without completing medical school, serving hospital internship and residency, and passing medical examinations; they provide military training and education to members of the armed forces. They require that accountants, pharmacists, nurses and teachers be registered or certified, that architects and engineers be licensed, and that insurance agents and real estate salespeople meet minimum standards.

But the President of the United States need not have graduated from high school. There is no law requiring that he even be literate.