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LA RECHERCHE

EAE ANG 2

SESSION 2016

AGRÉGATION CONCOURS EXTERNE

**Section : LANGUES VIVANTES ÉTRANGÈRES
ANGLAIS**

COMMENTAIRE DE TEXTE EN ANGLAIS

Durée : 6 heures

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COMMENTAIRE DE TEXTE EN ANGLAIS

Gingrich and the Republican right had brought us back to the 1960s again; Newt said that America had been a great country until the sixties, when the Democrats took over and replaced absolute notions of right and wrong with more relativistic values. He pledged to take us back to the morality of the 1950s, in order to “renew American civilization.”

5 Of course there were political and personal excesses in the 1960s, but the decade and the movements it spawned also produced advances in civil rights, women’s rights, a clean environment, workplace safety, and opportunities for the poor. The Democrats believed in and worked for those things. So did a lot of traditional Republicans, including many of the governors I’d served with in the late 1970s and 1980s. In focusing only on the excesses of
10 the 1960s, the New Right reminded me a lot of the carping that white southerners did against Reconstruction for a century after the Civil War. When I was growing up, we were still being taught how mean the Northern forces were to us during Reconstruction, and how noble the South was, even in defeat. There was something to it, but the loudest complaints always overlooked the good done by Lincoln and the national Republicans in ending
15 slavery and preserving the Union. On the big issues, slavery and the Union, the South was wrong.

Now it was happening again, as the right wing used the excesses of the sixties to obscure the good done in civil rights and other areas. Their blanket condemnation reminded me of a story Senator David Pryor used to tell about a conversation he’d had with
20 an eighty-five-year-old man who told him he had lived through two world wars, the Depression, Vietnam, the civil rights movement, and all the other upheavals of the twentieth century. Pryor said, “You sure have seen a lot of changes.” “Yeah,” the old man replied, “and I was against every one of them!”

Still, I didn’t want to demonize Gingrich and his crowd as they had done to us. He had
25 some interesting ideas, especially in the areas of science, technology, and entrepreneurialism, and he was a committed internationalist in foreign policy. Also, I had thought for years that the Democratic Party needed to modernize its approach, to focus less on preserving the party’s industrial-age achievements and more on meeting the challenges of the information age, and to clarify our commitment to middle-class values and concerns.
30 I welcomed the chance to compare our New Democrat ideas on economic and social problems with those embodied in the “Contract with America.” Politics at its best is about the competition of ideas and policy.

But Gingrich didn’t stop there. The core of his argument was not just that his ideas were better than ours; he said his *values* were better than ours, because Democrats were
35 weak on family, work, welfare, crime, and defense, and because, being crippled by the self-indulgent sixties, we couldn’t draw distinctions between right and wrong.

The political power of his theory was that it forcefully and clearly confirmed the negative stereotypes of Democrats that Republicans had been working to embed in the nation’s consciousness since 1968. Nixon had done it; Reagan had done it; and George
40 Bush had done it, too, when he turned the 1988 election into a referendum on Willie Horton and the Pledge of Allegiance. Now Newt had taken the art of “reverse plastic surgery” to a whole new level of sophistication and harshness.

The problem with his theory was that it didn’t fit the facts. [...]

Bill Clinton, *My Life*, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 2004, pp. 634-635.