

A Conversation with NEWT GINGRICH

In this conversation, former Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich gives an inside account of the 1994 Republican Revolution, when Republicans took control of both Houses of Congress for the first time in forty years. The former speaker also recalls his first political campaigns and how he began to influence Washington in the 1980s. Finally, Gingrich offers a personal take on mentors, allies, and rivals, including Gerald Ford, Jack Kemp, Ronald Reagan, George H.W. Bush, and Bill Clinton—as well as his reflections on presidents from Eisenhower to Obama.

On “The Establishment” and “The Insurgents,” Gingrich says: “The heart of the Republican establishment is to get as much as it can without being disruptive. The heart of the Republican insurgents, whether it's Goldwater or it's Reagan or it's Gingrich, is to be as disruptive as necessary to get what you want.”

On his political agenda in the 1980s, Gingrich says: “I basically had three goals. Defeat the Soviet empire, replace the welfare state, and replace the Democrats as the majority party in the House. And that's what I arrived with. I spent my day on those three goals.”

On shaking up Washington, Gingrich says: “I went to see Nixon at one point to get his advice. And it was very funny. He said: ‘The House Republicans are boring. The House Republicans were boring when I was there in the 40s and unless you quit being boring, you're not going to attract enough energy to become a majority.’ So what I would do is I'd get a group together every week and I would try to think about how to be interesting.”

On Clinton and Obama, Gingrich says: “Arthur Link wrote about Woodrow Wilson that he never understood the sinews of good fellowship which bind men unbound by any other tie...And I think Clinton understood it. That if you and he could laugh, you were halfway to a deal. And I don't think Obama has a clue about the human side of the business.”

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