

USA in Decline

David J. Phillips

iUniverse (January 2009)

Softcover \$25.95 (380pp)

978-1-4401-0895-2

David J. Phillips who has three degrees from Oxford and forty years of managerial experience adds his knowledge to the debate over America's current status as an economic super-power. The major problem he writes is that the "USA is now addicted to the free handout." Americans are addicted to debt and our culture of easy loans and a decline in personal responsibility makes it easy to get in over our heads. Phillips illustrates this addiction with examples of single mothers who really can't afford a home but bought one anyway and the government's reaction to the present financial crisis which is to write off billions of dollars as "bad debt" and not concentrate on reforming the system.

The author also discusses how the US education system has failed to create skilled workers while the country is dependent on foreign oil and needs to control federal spending.

Phillips' strength is his discussion of the economic picture. His remarks about the bail-out are interesting and timely as Congressional Republicans are echoing the same sentiments: let's work out the details to help reform a system that failed not just throw money at the problem. Phillips suggests putting the failing companies into receivership and creating a "czar" an experienced money manager to navigate the bail-out process.

Some of Phillips' remarks on education are important although not new: Students are not taking enough science and math courses nor are they motivated to compete with students in India and China he writes.

The book's chapters which are not titled are undisciplined in their topics. For example a chapter on economics includes essays on moral values. The chapters seem to be loosely organized around the author's short essays and exact phrases are repeated throughout the book. *USA in Decline* could be a tighter stronger book with another round of editing to pull it all together. Unfortunately some of the material is already outdated. He discusses the 2008 presidential candidates and some points about the bail-out have already been decided upon by Congress.

Phillips' conservative cultural values will limit his audience to those who already agree with him. In what has become a requisite for this genre he censures the Kennedys feminism atheists homosexuals and what he calls "Limousine Liberals" although he does not really define this last term. Overall this book is another tome in the culture wars and does not add anything new. If Phillips focused his attention on economics and management where his true expertise lies this book would be more original.

(August 21, 2009)

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