



Attack the Messenger: How Politicians Turn You Against the Media (American Political Challenges)

Craig Crawford

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Politicians and the media are natural enemies, but in recent times, the relationship has exploded into all-out war. Think about bimbo eruptions, DUI arrests, cocaine parties, National Guard service records, Swift Boat veterans. Think about two generations of Bush presidents up against Dan Rather. Think about who lost.

Craig Crawford has seen it all up close and personal, and he is disturbed by what he sees. When politicians turn the public against the media, everyone loses—especially unbiased and courageous news reporting. When veteran White House correspondent Helen Thomas is banished from her front-row post, as she has been in the current administration—the American public is denied the chance to consider her pointed questions, even if they go unanswered. Worse, when traditional reporters and media are displaced, the pundits and alternative media take over. Rush Limbaugh, *The O'Reilly Factor*, Comedy Central's Jon Stewart, and the bloggers have their place in American politics, and the 2004 elections showed the incredible power of the Internet. These media, however, are a different breed, as Crawford points out—they serve a purpose, but at a cost. They become "opinion merchants," bartering outrageous assertions for audience appeal with little attention to the truth. These days, the truth is hard to find. If the press is not believed—or believable—because politicians have turned the public against it, then the press is not free, but under the thumbs of politicians. Without a free press, there is no democracy. That, says Crawford, is where we find ourselves today. If you don't like the news, attack the messenger, and it will go away. Going, going, gone.

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