

How Presidents Have Viewed Their Power

“My view was that every executive officer...in high position, was a steward of the people bound actively and affirmatively to do all he could for the people...I declined to adopt the view that what was imperatively necessary for the Nation could not be done by the President unless he could find some specific authorization to do it. My belief was that it was not only [a President’s] right but his duty to do anything that the needs of the Nation demanded unless such action was forbidden by the Constitution or by the laws...I did not usurp power, but I did greatly broaden the use of executive power. In other words, I acted for the public welfare, I acted for the common well-being of all our people, whenever and in whatever manner was necessary, unless prevented by direct constitutional or legislative prohibition.”

Teddy Roosevelt: An Autobiography (1913)

“My judgment is that the view of Mr. Roosevelt, ascribing an undefined residuum of power to the President, is an unsafe doctrine...The true view of the executive function is, as I conceive it, that the President exercise no power which cannot be fairly and reasonably traced to some specific grant of power or justly implied and included within such express grant...Such specific grant must either be in the Federal Constitution or in an act of Congress passed in pursuance thereof. There is no undefined residuum of power which he can exercise because it seems to be in the public interest.”

William Howard Taft: Our Chief Magistrate and His Powers (1916)

Having read both of these quotes, which view of executive power you agree with. Please defend your opinion with concrete reasoning.