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## THE QUEST FOR RESPONSIBILITY\*

CLARENCE A. DYKSTRA

*University of Wisconsin*

We moderns attack no new problem when we set out again on the quest for responsibility. We merely use new terms for old ideas. Hundreds of generations have tried to reconcile liberty and law, authority and freedom. These same problems are posed on the oldest Egyptian tablets. Recall also that requirement in an old Greek city that whosoever desired to propose a new law should come into the place of assembly with a rope about his neck. Responsibility, you see! Justinian declared that the affairs which concern all should be decided by all. Such illustrations may be found throughout the pages of history. Calvin and Arminius posed the problem in theological language, using the terms "sovereignty of God" and "free will." Plantagenets, Tudors, and Stuarts all grappled with the implications of the responsible crown, and with the difficulties of getting taxes without debate in Parliament. Magna Carta, the Declaration of Right, ship money, the Instrument of Government of Cromwell's day, habeas corpus, the Bill of Rights—these are all tokens of a long English struggle for responsibility in government. Jefferson and a multitude of his contemporaries on both sides of the ocean were merely carrying forward a time-worn struggle to put monarchs into some setting of responsibility. Even the devices of annual elections and a set term for parliaments are products of the long search. Lacking only was the language or idiom of responsibility. Practice aimed at the idea, however difficult it proved to arrive at the condition.

Instrumentally, these pioneers were concerned with denying,

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proscribing, or circumscribing the exercise of powers from which they had suffered or feared that they might suffer. They struggled to contrive forms by which powers granted would be impotent for harm, and they ran into the problem of making them at the same time efficacious for good. Their inventions were not invariably successful. Americans, fascinated by Montesquieu's misunderstanding of English polity, contrived checks and balances. But there is little evidence that the constitutional fathers had much real faith in the device. In a very real sense, those English in America in the late eighteenth century were resurrecting the philosophies and some of the formulæ developed in the seventeenth century by the English in England.

In this day of governmental action and state intervention, it may be worth our while to pause the while to examine and re-examine the challenge of this problem of responsibility in its several aspects. There is a simple way of beginning, and it cuts right through all of the talking and writing of two thousand years. If we assume, to begin with, that responsible government is desirable—and we must—we should inquire: For what and to whom shall it be responsible? We should know further who actually will be shouldered with responsibility and whether responsibility can be achieved by structural devices. We must discover also whether there are other realities involved that must be considered when such questions are raised.

It seems obvious that government eventually will be responsible for such undertakings as those who control it declare to be in the general interest and for the general welfare. There is little possibility of doing what so many have tried to do—classify and pigeon-hole so-called governmental functions, setting them down as more or less hard and fast judgments eternally applicable. Such attempts have merely added to the confusion of thought which is everywhere prevalent. Doubtless we can all agree that there are some functions necessary to government, functions which if not performed leave us without government. There are some also which cannot be performed by government. Even the English statesman who declared that "Parliament has power to do anything" did reserve one little matter, "the power to make a man of a woman." The attempt to enumerate functions between these extremes, whether in universal terms or as related to a particular time or place, invites contradiction and disagreement from every quarter of the

compass. In a very real sense, therefore, each student of the problem and each practicing statesman or politician makes his own list. This is the reality which we need to face when we approach other aspects of the problem of responsibility. Not to do so is to hide our heads in the sand. There are no boundaries which are beyond dispute between the extremes. There is no agreement within the mean. Particular governments at particular times and under particular circumstances discover particular things which must not be left undone if there is to be a government and an orderly society. Again these same governments find that certain things cannot be done if revolution is to be avoided. Evidently this is no place for "the dialectic"—self-styled statesmen to the contrary notwithstanding.

Moreover, it is to be noted that the problem is not entirely within the control of any existing government, or of peoples, or even of dictators. What governments can do at all, or what they can do without injury, or even what they can do better than some other organization or individual, or permit to be left undone, or do badly, depends often upon the state of the arts, upon the processes of mechanization and of organization, and on natural resources which are available. One has merely to revert for a moment to the current world problems of the nations known as "the haves and have nots" to illustrate this difficulty.

There is the further difficulty, of course, which we face when we grapple with what we call "the will of the people" and its decision in the field of function. Some act of will, whether of the people or of a dictator, must answer the question for a particular government. Just what this is gets us into the question of how government can become the instrument which faithfully reflects the concurrence of individual wills in preponderant numbers. In a very real sense, therefore, this problem of function as it bears on responsibility has a relation to structure, to public opinion and its possibility of expression, to popular leadership, to general intelligence, and to the current economic scene. How to create a system of responsibility which is continuing and controlling, and at the same time in a public interest which is determinable and enduring rather than transient, is a challenge that faces popular government everywhere. It cannot be met by a theorist's attempt at classification. If a categorical answer be required, there can be but one—time and circumstance will give us the answer. The fact we must reckon

with is that governments must do, if they can, what is demanded of them by those who control them. In this determination, certain things have weight: the inevitable, the impossible, the state of the arts, the non-human resources, the will and genius of the people and its leadership.

The whole problem becomes even more complex when under a popular government we venture into the field of control. In so far as government is a device for doing certain things, it cannot be responsible to itself alone. As an organization of human beings, as a personnel—if you will—it should have within itself certain characteristics of responsible action. But the whole history and import of the struggle for self-government assumes that constituted governments are responsible to those who create them. In this sense, responsibility runs to the people, or the quality of popular government is impaired. It is the reciprocal of popular control. If the governing agent becomes the tool of some individual—a dictator (political or economic), an interested class or domestic faction, or a foreign master—we no longer have the substance out of which popular government is conceived, and we have made a mockery of responsibility. In modern times, this control finds its mechanism in the voting process, as yet a crude instrument of popular action. For our electorates are asked to resolve complex situations about which they have a minimum of information, for the most part inaccurately reported to them. They are subjected to disturbing appeals to irrelevant or traditional emotional attachments. They are not presented with simple choices which are clear to them. Moreover, they may be forced into choices by economic imperatives, or even by the appeal to fear. Besides, there are multitudes of conflicting interests which must yield to compromise, to adjustment, and to integration. The genius of self-government is indeed a hard task-master.

Because of the many difficulties involved in self-government, there are many who, in despair, seem willing, at least at times, to give up the struggle for the democratic way. It is only when we contemplate the possible alternatives to an ultimate control by the people themselves, operating as voters in whatever way they can, that we reassure ourselves of the validity of popular sovereignty. Lincoln was doubtless right when he said that all of the people cannot be fooled all of the time. Dictators, of course, always claim to act for the people, or in their interest; but none professes

to act in a relation of responsibility to the people. They are responsible either to themselves alone or to some class or person not identifiable as the people. This, it seems to me, is the essence of irresponsibility. The history of freedom warns us to beware of those who pretend to act in behalf of the people. It supports the declaration of Justinian that affairs which concern all should be decided by all. No doctrine is a safe one for the modern world that does not accept as inevitable that government, whatever its form, whatever the scope of its functions, must be genuinely responsible to the people as a whole.

In so far as it is true that the more or less amorphous public is not prepared for self-government, we in this company must find our greatest challenge and our inescapable responsibility. It is in point here to ask ourselves as educators what we are doing to implant in our people from the kindergarten up the requisite qualities for self-government. Here would appear to be our never-to-be-satisfied obligation. We have had one hundred years of public education in this country. In just what degree has this been a public education, save that the public has paid the bills? Do we develop the public person or the private individual? That there is a difference, no one will deny. Nor can it be gainsaid that the education of a private person in certain ways may easily result in the development of the non-public person. We give lip service at all times to the doctrine of education for citizenship. Just how effective has this service been in the making of intelligent participants in our public processes? We dare not make great claims to success in this field. The time has come to face this problem realistically. Democracy and its perpetuation may all too soon prove to be an American obligation. To what extent do we contribute to increase the number of those who can at once think for themselves, and see the reasons of those who differ? Who can assess matters in their true proportions and so arrive at common agreements on aspects of major pith, sacrificing perhaps their honest differences about minors and non-essentials? The fathers of 1787 did that. To what extent are our citizens able to differ with conviction, and yet compose differences and live in peace and order? To what extent is it possible for a minority among us to accept the decisions of a majority without submission or surrender to an autocrat? We can never be perfect in this regard. We cannot long keep responsibility in our governments unless we maintain an unremitting campaign

for its preservation and extension. All of the agencies of education and communication will be required for this service—schools, the radio, the screen, and the press. We who teach government and the social sciences should summon them to our aid. For we must develop a people to whom it is possible for a government to render responsibility. Here is perhaps our greatest obligation as political scientists.

We have a tradition in the United States that what we want is to attain that ideal expressed by the philosopher as “a government of laws rather than a government of men.” To this we revert when we lose patience with the personnel which operates our governing mechanism. And yet, since the processes of government are not automatic, we must put men in charge and hold them responsible for carrying out the popular will. We come, then, to the generalization that “representatives of the people’s own choosing” will carry the active burden of responsibility. It is difficult to believe that modern peoples, with the current mechanisms of intercommunication at their command, will be satisfied to give up for long periods the habit of choosing representatives to act for them except as they use the more direct methods of initiative and referendum. At the moment, many cross currents in world opinion and practice might seem to invalidate such a generalization. But all whirlwinds blow themselves out. Therefore no short-time philosophy or short-time procedure can be considered as anything but variants temporarily in control. Long experience in many places teaches us to hold fast to this principle of representation and to take such chances as are necessary with the device of popular choice. It teaches us further that responsibility has little relation, if any, to the quantitative approach to the election problem. The short ballot and the pointing up of policies to be voted for and against are the important items in popular voting.

There are those who teach that responsibility in government is, in some degree at least, bound up with or perhaps nullified by form or system. Woodrow Wilson believed sincerely—certainly through most of his life—that the way to some measure of governmental responsibility for the United States was to add to Article I, Section 6, the four words, “other than a cabinet,” thus making the section read: “No senator or representative shall . . . be appointed to any civil, other than a cabinet, office,” etc. This addition would give members of the Congress the right to hold cabinet

positions. Such a device, he thought, would break with our tradition and give us a parliamentary or cabinet government and, he assumed, "responsibility." Said he (in 1884): "The only hope of wrecking the present clumsy misrule of Congress lies in the establishment of a responsible cabinet government." This was Wilson's formula for bringing the executive and the legislature closer together and escaping the sterility which he considered to be the result of the check and balance system. He wanted some link, some bond of connection, between these two great branches of government to neutralize their antagonisms and harmonize their interests. He asked that the executive agents of government should stand at the ear of the legislature with respectful suggestions of the needs of the administration, and that the legislature give heed meanwhile, requiring of them obedience and diligence in the execution of its designs. He argued that changes in our form of government involved in his proposal are surely worth making, and in the most forthright fashion demanded the institution of the English cabinet form for the United States. However, there seems to be no evidence that after he left the class room Wilson still urged this formula to attain responsibility. On the contrary, he stressed the need for presidential leadership rather than a system which eventually would have made the President a figurehead. In his critical analysis of Wilson's point of view, David F. Houston, for eight years a member of the cabinet, concluded that Wilson's solution was too academic and overlooked the life of the government and the temper of our people. It is an interesting and penetrating comment on the implications of responsibility.

The cabinet suggestion is but one of those proposed by people who seek further responsibility at Washington. Some would limit the presidential term to six years, some call for the item veto, some would give Congress further powers, and some would take power from the President. All of these enthusiasts fail to see that they are expending a good deal of energy on more or less barren devices which at best could no more than neutralize or counteract some of the consequences of the check and balance system. The contrivance that cures one defect in such a structure is almost certain to give it another of equal virulence.

This faith in form or structure is as old as ancient Greek philosophy and as persistent as our American belief that checks and balances will produce responsibility. Forms, however, are no more

than the ways which have been developed in diverse places for doing the things that want doing. And doubtless there are always more ways than one of doing these things.

There must be certain realities behind governmental forms which touch upon our problem, and which are the determining factors that need to be illuminated in any such discussion as this. These relate to the character of peoples, their experiences and experiments, their capacity for self-control and understanding, their education, and their status as civilized human beings. Long ago, Boutmy, the French publicist, uttered a warning to his countrymen which is still challenging to us all. Said he: "Constitutional mechanism has no value and efficiency in itself, independent of the moral and social forces which support it or put it in motion." On this subject, Bryce said: "To any one familiar with the practical working of free governments, it is a standing wonder that they work at all. What keeps a free government going is the good sense and patriotism of the people, or of the guiding class, embodied in usages and traditions which it is hard to describe, but which find, in moments of difficulty, remedies for the inevitable faults of the system."

Of course, the fundamental reality behind any system of responsibility is the capacity of a people for self-government and their competency as individuals. We were fortunate that this capacity appeared early in American history. Any summing up of our American advantages would seem to indicate that no nation ever embarked on its career with happier auguries for the success of responsible popular government. Here was an excellent racial inheritance. Natural resources were abundant for an ample existence. Here was security from external danger such as threatened the peoples of Europe. All of the conditions for a peaceful and prosperous political life were present. There was neither prince nor pauper. There was a passion for liberty and a spirit of self-reliance. The environment made for a belief in equality and equal rights, and these, in turn, for an acceptance of the idea of popular sovereignty. Put together, however, all these bred a suspicion of remote control and an attachment to local self-government and local responsibility. It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that difficulties appeared when the attempt was made to transfer some responsibility and power to the new plane of national organization. Evidence of this is found all through the debates of the Convention of 1787. Even so, the prob-

lem of the organization of a national life and a governmental symbol to represent it seemed to many to be solved by the adoption of the Constitution.

But the possession of a favorable character does not of itself guarantee that a people will devote its first attention to the development of responsible systems of government. In the conquest of a continent, other problems appeared that seemed to most Americans more immediate and important than the perfecting of a national system of responsibility. To them, these problems seemed preponderantly those for which the individual himself had to be responsible, and in so far as they were social and political—well, there was the local government. The fact that our system was federal, and the legally separatist position of the states within the federal system, confirmed the opinion that public functions which transcended in scope local government boundaries were in the keeping of a geographical political entity—the sovereign state. National problems took on a sectional aspect at most, certainly until the Civil War. This was a country dedicated in spirit to individual enterprise and, so far as government was concerned, to a wide variety of state and local experimentation and responsibility. Our history, our environment, and our state systems of constitutions and laws worked against the idea of national unity and a national government.

We must not fail to understand, therefore, that the federal character of our enterprise was an experiment full of real difficulty for a people who were scattered far and wide in a continental area of diverse geographic and economic sections. We should remember also that this same federal principle which was such a necessary part of the experimental establishment of 1787 did survive, and doubtless was the indispensable condition for the continuance of our representative political society as a single national state. Without such a device, the United States could not have happened or persisted. But we need to realize that the impediments to an achievement of a responsible national government have been magnified and multiplied because of it. No unitary state ever faced such complications.

The achievement of responsibility in any society postulates a natural and harmonious flow of forces and ideas. Here we had conflict and its political consequences. Neither did we have in our federal union at any time, nor is there yet, an accepted or agreed-

upon division of the field of power as between general authority and the local units autonomous within their spheres. Ideally, such a division should so far as possible reflect fundamental principles operative in the society. Let it be ill-adjusted, or the subject of quarrels among parties without understanding or devotion to principle, and much more than the current public service will suffer. For in that situation the short-sighted will attempt for their fancied advantage to alter the constitution to their own ends by seducing words out of their meanings, by distorting sense and over-reaching principle, and by subterfuge and blandishments. Whatever the temporary outcome of such a course, the political integrity of the people suffers and the substance of responsibility is dissipated. We have had just such difficulties in the United States, and we are still at sea as to a proper division of powers. Our twilight zone is still a broad band of half light and shadow.

It would be a tempting undertaking to suggest at this point what might be done with our system by way of redividing or redistributing powers to the national advantage. Our literature is full of suggestions for such an enterprise, many of which have merit. A study of the current scene by as competent a body of men as made up the convention that drafted the Constitution would doubtless result in suggestions for change which might seem as revolutionary as did the instrument of 1787. Suffice it to say in this connection that we are in dire need of adopting an orderly habit of ascertaining and altering the dividing line in conformity with genuine changes of situation and with the pace of general opinion. It is at once the task and condition of responsibility to keep that line corrected. Not to do so may mean in time an altering of the political map, and even perhaps some new secession problems. In any event, it seems clear that if there is to be responsibility within the structure of a federal system there will have to come some generally accepted agreement in principle concerning the dividing line which separates local from national authority. Studies under way in the field of our duplicating and overlapping tax systems indicate that we are making a gesture towards the study of this problem. Even more fundamental would be an inquiry into the problems of commerce and the police power.

Some changes and accommodations will come inevitably and in some cases unconsciously, perhaps, by muddling through. They cannot be made over-rapidly, for it is a major premise in any

discussion of governmental forms and procedures that any national or local pattern for organizing a political society must be related intimately to, and grounded in, the history and habits of that society. Political institutions do not readily survive transplanting into uncongenial soil nor thrive under hot-house conditions. They must, so to speak, grow in the wild—they must, in so far as possible, be indigenous or of long adaptation. For the purposes of this discussion it is sufficient to suggest that we must find our own answer—an American answer—to the problem of so organizing our political society that we will be able to determine without revolution or violence what services it wishes to undertake through public agencies and how these can best be administered. It is a difficult business. Montaigne pointed this out long ago when he declared that nothing is more dangerous than to touch a political order once it is established. "For," he said, "who knows whether the next will be better?" It was his conservative opinion that we should not disturb settled political processes which are the result of custom and tradition on the strength of private opinions which express all too generally only moods, humors, or even prejudices.

And yet no more important problem faces us in America, or other peoples in distant places. It is a universal problem, as the history of the last twenty years the world over proves beyond question. It is a quest for a proper and stable division of labor in the area called by political scientists "politics and administration." The problem was not invented and has not been solved by our most recent political innovators—Nazis, Fascists, or Communists. They did not even state it. They found it completely unsolved and profited because of the failure of their predecessors to attack it successfully. It would seem to us who believe in the democratic process that these new parties which have taken over in the European scene have actually contributed nothing in the democratic sense and have succeeded only in establishing a new type of governmental tyranny. One thing they have done for us, however. They have challenged us to find a solution within the orbit of the representative system. They have announced with reverberating and thundering finality that democracy cannot find the answer. Democracy is through, they say, and, as Spengler puts it, "the day of Caesars has arrived." Let us remember for our consolation that time and time again throughout history that day has arrived and miserably ended.

Of course there are millions of Americans who believe sincerely and completely (1) that there is no problem of responsibility in government haunting us, and (2) that if there is, we must not do very much about it. Time and chance will work us out of any difficulty if only we give them opportunity. These millions will not recognize the fact that we are a profoundly different people, with very different environmental challenges, from those early builders of experimental political institutions in a vast wilderness of far-flung frontiers and unrestricted economic opportunities. Responsibility remains for them a completely individualistic conception. For the student of political theory, however, there is comfort in the fact that of recent years some political leaders have recognized that there is a problem and that it is worth doing something about—viz., the accommodation of political institutions to a changing environment.

The World War interrupted programs that promised recognition of the need for institutional changes to fit a different America. Moreover, it turned our attention outward and stifled rather than stimulated any immediate recurrence to the problem of recasting our domestic polity. The idealism which had been aroused during the war dissolved as we became a creditor nation and as a hollow prosperity urged us to beat the cymbals to celebrate a new economic era which had no use for an analysis of internal political problems. Secretary Hoover's study of unemployment stood idly on the shelves. Then came the crash of 1929 and the years of the early thirties. Millions of minds were shocked into some recognition of the fact that we are an interdependent political society in need of instruments of public action which move swiftly and effectively on a national scale when the occasion demands.

We have just experienced an era of government action new for its swiftness and comprehensiveness in American history. We developed new governmental authorities with an almost complete disregard of all principles of design or of responsibility. Because of this experience and its disappointments in so many directions, many have come to see that our governmental establishment does require some accommodation. We now can understand why certain men who met in convention in Philadelphia in 1787 to draft a constitution were interested in establishing a government adequately powered and equipped to deal with national problems. We realize, too, that our assumption that that work was done for all

time is quite erroneous. The fathers did the best they could for their day and age, but they could not foresee all of the problems which would face their successors in a rapidly changing world. They, however, gave us formulæ of great daring and great possibilities which we have ignored and have been unwilling to utilize. The set of our minds and our absorption with other concerns have brought it about that we have used our mechanical proficiency and ingenuity in meeting other than public problems—and often perhaps even to find ways to defeat any attempts to bring about an experiment in solution.

Tradition in the United States has insisted on a comparatively colorless public service. Occasionally, as in 1933, we have broken with that tradition. But the agencies of public opinion, whether the party or the press, have frowned upon and even scorned any attempt on the part of those who tried seriously to adapt the forms and functions of government to new conditions and needs. Experiment and modification have been discountenanced as such, and not upon any appraisal of resulting evils and benefits. There has been that fear and suspicion of strong and able public leadership, no matter in what place or office, no matter how hedged in responsibility or how consecrated or disinterested. Always we have retired behind that delusively comfortable rampart known as the check and balance principle, behind which responsibility has been dissipated and disintegrated. Power was always to be checked or nullified rather than controlled and made to serve.

Under the conditions surrounding us in this modern interdependent world, this situation cannot continue if democratic institutions are to survive. Politicians—and there are many more good ones than we are willing to admit—and civil servants or administrators, as the case may be, must find that division of labor which allows each group to function to the best advantage of the whole people. The proper controls to keep each group in its place must be established if we are to have the necessary equilibrium for a government which functions rather than marks time. And there seems to be no place in the modern world for a government that merely marks time. Recent experience the globe over has proved this beyond question. There must be deliberation, to whatever extent is needed for making decisions in the light rather than by guess, and then, without loss of precious time, action must ensue. Opportunity there must be for the voter, without compulsion or pressure, to

replace the ins with the outs. But once the general will is freely and emphatically expressed, action should ensue or cease according to that will. From the point of view of the student of popular government, sound administration waits today upon the establishment of the principle and fact of responsibility. This is true for all levels of government—national, state, and local—within the orbits of their competency and jurisdiction. To no inconsiderable extent, satisfactory service waits upon agreement on these divisions of authority. It is most immediately imperative on the national level because our most baffling problems have become national in scope.

The proper relation of Congress and the presidency call for accommodation even more insistently than ever before. In a simpler time (1897), Woodrow Wilson declared in an address to the Virginia Bar Association: "If you would have the present error of our system in a word, it is this—that Congress is the motive power in the government and yet it has in it nowhere any representative of the nation as a whole. Our executive is national . . . and yet it has no originative voice in domestic national policy." To those who will reply immediately that Wilson's analysis has not been true for our recent history, it is only necessary to say that for a brief period during an emergency of fearful proportions we did have presidential legislative leadership in certain directions. It is also true that at no time in American history has that leadership been under such general fire as in the last two years. Moreover, never before has it been so clear that the office of the chief executive needed strengthening in its administrative or managerial aspects. In the recent "management bill" controversy, we had the interesting spectacle of a Congress which refused to take responsibility in at least one small field and at the same time would not let the President have it.

This incident is but illustrative of the difficulties that there are in any attempt to uncover a responsible agency which can act for the people under modern conditions. In recent years, Congress and our legislative bodies have become less and less competent to plan and take the leadership for intelligent and comprehensive programs in the public interest. This is not because these bodies are less intelligent or less devoted than they used to be, but because the problems confronting the nation are so much more complicated and baffling. Somewhere the experience of those who know best the natural and human situations that need accommodation must be brought into play if we are to have balanced programs of action;

and these individuals or groups are unlikely to be in legislative bodies. They are accessible, however, and should be at the call of those who are responsible for the development of public programs. Probably the best that any legislative body can do is to debate the general merits of comprehensive programs and then declare for or against them. To emasculate them or bog them down with individual opinions crystallized into amendments, to make major changes or to call for an alternative emphasis, will distort the balance which is required if we are to attain realized responsibility. The presentation of public programs, indicating objectives, policies, and priorities, is the essence not of dictatorship but of responsible leadership. It is both political and administrative, and it straddles both the legislative and executive departments of any government. The British, of course, meet this problem through the use of a legislative committee chosen to be the executive. We in America have no such agency, doubtless because we have as yet no general recognition of the fact that there is such a function which needs to be implemented. We have isolated bits of equipment in secretariats and advisory boards, rudimentary budget bureaus, and baffled planning commissions or committees. Even the most ambitious of these, the National Resources Committee, is as yet for the most part merely tolerated by Congress. Jealousy is rife in a capitol where coöperative undertaking is imperative. Any leadership that emerges, whether presidential or legislative, is quickly eroded and dismantled, even though no alternative to such leadership is presented. This is the constant and inevitable consequence of a structure which sets up a division of the indivisible. This is also one of the reasons for the repeated failure of our parties to present to the voters a simplified choice of alternative policies which can be registered in a simple vote. The Gallup polls do better than that.

We succeed under our system, then, in producing at elections a spectacle in which Americans must vote their resentments; for their parties equivocate on issues, and adopt the mere strategy of adding together the opposing interests to gain places of power without responsibility. This scheme of things merely parallels the typical American process of rolling together the demands of district representatives into one barrel for a lump vote—a little for everybody rather than something worth while for all. We have no clear-cut and responsible way, apparently, of pooling executive, ad-

ministrative, and legislative experience for national action. Hence, forces too often are set in motion, as in pension or mortgage legislation, which grow with the years into the possibility of national bankruptcy.

We are thus faced with a very real dilemma. We can equip our government to meet the manifold tasks which we force upon it, and thus develop responsibility, or take the position that no matter how urgent or necessary public action may seem or be, we dare not allow the government to undertake the responsibility. If we are going to trust government, then, there are certain, possible courses for us to take.

We can increase the discretionary power of the executive—a kind of return to the Tudor theory in which the strong executive served as a national instrument of balance and control over contending interests. This would leave the legislature a mere discussion agency and the recruiting ground for public leadership. This, it should be noted, was the popular solution in post-war Europe, when parliaments and parties refused to accept responsibility for formulating and defending policies. The American people are just now in reaction against such an idea, and inevitably will be so long as our irresponsible establishment remains unchanged.

We might have the President and his cabinet deliberately seek closer relations with the legislature by frequent informal caucus discussions and create a continuing round-the-year joint legislative policy cabinet. If such a device could be formalized into the fabric of interdepartmental relationships to give it constancy and stability, it might point the way, at least, down the trail of responsibility. Something like this may be developing in certain of our states which have set up legislative or executive councils.

Some still favor the proposals of Woodrow Wilson made fifty years ago. Eventually, under such a change, the presidency might take on the character of the French presidency or the English kingship without its trappings. But there is an opposite possibility, and as we consider what is going on under our eyes in France and England, and with our long tradition to be overcome, this seems an unpromising immediate solution.

In despair, we might dismantle the functions of government to such a point that public duties would be few and unimportant and thus relatively easy and simple to administer. Such a program is

no real program, but under modern conditions is an approach to anarchy.

Some even propose to hand back our problems to the states for solution. It seems that in so doing we would produce forty-eight headaches instead of one, and would not solve the original problem. Moreover, the states have problems of responsibility within their own jurisdiction which remain highly perplexing.

Facing some of the implications here set forth, the President's Committee on Administrative Management was organized to study the administrative and managerial aspects of the presidential office. It undertook the task of finding and suggesting instruments which would aid the President in exercising his administrative powers, at least, and by the same token, his administrative responsibility to the people.

Before the President's message to Congress which recommended that the Committee's suggestions be made law could have any real consideration by Congress, however, both houses were involved in the bitterest debate of twenty years—that on the President's Supreme Court proposal. All of the fury aroused by that debate made sane discussion of the reorganization report almost impossible. The legislation drafted as a follow-up to the report was almost immediately dubbed "the Dictator Bill." The fact that the President wanted it was all that his enemies needed to know. From that moment on, both he and his propositions were under bombardment. Moreover, on at least one of these suggestions—the post- and pre-audit devices—the experts immediately differed. One group of political scientists (the Committee) came to quite different conclusions from those economists and political scientists representing the Brookings Institution. The debate on the President's measure went far afield, particularly in the House. By and large, most of it was not illuminating except to show that members of the Congress were unwilling or unable to discuss the place or possibility of responsibility in government.

The great misfortune in this controversy does not lie so much in the fact that Congress and the President did not get together in 1937, as in the fact that the real issues were not made clear to the public either in the debates and hearings, in fireside chats, or in the press. Had the proponents of the bill been able to advance the various suggested changes within the frame of a responsible gov-

ernment, they might have brought forth almost irresistible arguments for most of them, and they might have discovered how the others could have been modified so as to draw less fire. In the actual situation, however, the arguments for change did not take account of the whole problem which the national government faces. Perhaps it was impossible to do so. The opponents were in a no less happy situation. By all their lights, they believed they were justified in their course; but they were fighting in an unreal light. As the lines were drawn, the debate was of little profit to the public because too little attention was given by the Congress to the place or possibility of responsibility, and particularly administrative responsibility, in government. It was called a presidential plot, and that was enough to damn it. Debate often turned on parts of the report which were not recognized in the bill. Moreover, as it turned out, a constitutional question involving the veto and the two-thirds vote was raised in connection with the President's authority to give an executive order as one of supreme importance. It would have been difficult to get farther away from the real problems of administrative organization. Yet there was the issue as large as life to each side. On the heels of the President's Supreme Court proposals and in a scheme of government with no seat of final responsibility, the bill touched off a footless strife which, when once started, made impossible a discussion of pertinent problems. Moreover, the President's forthright statement that he had "no inclination to be a dictator," though a natural retort in the heat of a political battle, did not help in bringing back the debate into the realm of a discussion on responsibility. The whole struggle emphasizes once more a fact which students of government have pointed out repeatedly, that our Congress has an attitude toward executive machinery which is quite unique. It insists upon elaborate legislative restriction on the executive through the mechanism of statutory controls, and thus gives the President an alibi at all times for poor administration. It would be a more powerful influence for responsible government, and would represent the people better, if we had a tradition that the task of Congress is to bend its energies much more exclusively to a clear formulation of public policy and a vigorous and controlling scrutiny of administrative results. It is a short-sighted policy that fears the exercise of any executive discretion, for the final result of such an attitude on the part of the legislature has too often meant the downfall of popular assemblies

through the coercion of events. With all of the experience of recent years before our eyes, it is time to recognize, in our fear of dictatorships, that events themselves have a way of becoming the most real dictators of all.

Now that the happenings of the last decade have focused the attention of the American people upon national problems and the handicaps under which the national government labors in planning and coördinating its measures to meet them, it may be possible to bring into the open some intelligent discussion of the whole problem of responsibility within our democratic system. We are engaged on many fronts just now in defending democracy against attacks from within and propaganda against it from without. It is entirely possible that the democratic idea is fighting for its life in this generation and, because of certain economic determinants, against great odds. Other peoples have forsaken the democratic mode upon the theory that it was failing to meet the crisis as a responsible agency of the people should.

Let us face this challenge squarely and ask ourselves whether here in the United States, under modern and ominously complex conditions, we can develop a *de facto* responsible government to act for the American people, as a representative and effective instrument of their will. It is time for thoughtful men to give attention to our situation. Without question, there must be certain and continuing responsibility located in our government at Washington. It should be clear, for instance, that the President needs a better staff organization and the advantage of the best administrative techniques. It is clear also that Congress has to act within the limitations imposed upon it by its size and the local character of its membership. It is certain that there must be developed at Washington some provision for a kind of career service which in a very real sense straddles both the legislature and the executive departments. Our check and balance system assumes that the executive is responsible directly to the people. Somehow in times of great stress the nation as a whole does exert itself, and it tries to determine public policy by giving unusual attention to the election of a president. For a time, while the President retains his popularity, there seems to be realized responsibility.

But Congress, too, is directly responsible to the people, and it wishes to be on the ground floor also. Before long the meshing of legislative and executive experience and responsibility which should

be the result of a party election seem to fail and the gears begin to clash. Programs, variously initiated, often excellently conceived, do not have a decent trial or become reasonably effective, for they are not administered by those who are experienced in governmental organization and procedure, and existing facilities and personnel for such administration are not called in. In other words, the career service and the loyalties which it represents are not drawn upon in planning as well as in executing policies. The responsibility which theoretically we thought we had provided for does not work out as we supposed it would under the traditional American system.

In any program for the development of a more responsible government, it would appear that the President will have to take leadership. Perhaps under present conditions and traditions we somehow expect it even though we do not provide for it. With an adequate budget bureau staff set up on a career basis, and with a real cabinet of the general planning and coördinating type—which, of course, he can have if he wants to appoint it—and with rather permanent under-secretaries as a part of the civil service, it will be possible to develop carefully prepared national programs which the people need and want, and which will have some chance of success if soundly administered. Given a proper staff organization, if the President could have an experienced coördinator and general manager as a deputy administrative president, perhaps as a cabinet officer without portfolio, he would be still better armed. If, further, this deputy by tradition could become a non-political and non-partisan agent, we should be on the way toward the development of administration as an art in the national government. The American world of business and industry has done this, as have many local governments in many states.

Many years ago, David F. Houston, who occupied two cabinet posts with Woodrow Wilson, made some such suggestion in these words: "It is a question in my mind whether the president can long continue to be the formal head of the government, the chief of his party, and the leader of Congress. It may be a task too great for any human being to stand up under; Congress will resent his attempt to lead it. He must at least have the presidency better organized. He should have as his first aide one of the ablest men in the country and under him three or four men of exceptional ability: one to see that the problems affecting a number of departments are dealt with promptly and in the right fashion; one to

establish the necessary contacts with Congress and the public, including the press, and the other to supervise the executive offices. The president should ask Congress to authorize him to do this and to give him money enough to pay a respectable salary to each of them." Why should the Congress or the American people fear such a development? Under such a set-up, Congress would have the opportunity to become a real reviewing agency of responsible administrative operation. It could give proper attention to well-planned programs of public action. In so doing, it would inevitably develop political leadership on the basis of national needs and policies. In that case, it need not fear or suspect administrative discretion and action, for it would review and criticize rather than try to check it. Moreover, it has the purse strings.

Among other things we need just now is a widespread understanding of the fact that under our traditional check and balance system and with the shifting that is going on in the field we call the division of powers in our federal system, it is extremely difficult, to the point of being impossible, to get and keep any national responsible leadership in a legislature chosen as is ours. Only through such an understanding can we ever work out some alternative for a parliamentary system which will give us what the English seem to have. That we need more responsible governments, national and local, few thoughtful men will deny. The fathers doubtless believed that they were inaugurating a system of national responsibility within a limited sphere. Our trouble is that the orbit of our national life has been extended enormously and our minds are still imprisoned by attitudes which were sound in the days of a simpler economy. We must get a new look at the whole problem of responsibility as it is affected by the development of the field of function, of democratic control under actual conditions as we find them, of structure as it hampers action when action is necessary, and in the light of the present attack upon democracy itself. To allow the drifting process to have its way in the kind of world in which we live is highly dangerous. To allow suspicion and the clash of economic or political interests to prevent our government from making the necessary accommodations to meet modern situations is to risk too much. We owe it to the future, as well as to ourselves, to give as genuine attention to our national political problems as did the men of 1787.

The debates of 1787 indicate that the fathers deliberately turned

their backs upon what might have become the parliamentary system, fearing to establish an all-powerful legislature. They established instead a Congress and an independent executive, each presumably representative of the whole people. Congress, however, fails to be a representative national body or a responsibly functioning institution. So far as the electorate can see, the presidential office seems to be the one national responsible position immediately related to the whole electorate. The core of that responsibility centers in those functions of the President which have to do with political leadership and his relations with Congress. These need development and implementation so that the President and Congress can become a government in the technical sense. Meanwhile, the President's administrative functions might well devolve in much larger measure upon some more permanent administrative establishment which will provide the basis for long-time planning and the balancing of programs as well as the day-to-day operation of the national government. In this way, we should bring our national career service into a closer relationship with both the President and the Congress and have a real reviewing agency of administrative acts, particularly in connection with the debates on the budget.

Responsibility in modern times and in a democracy must include the power to act for the people when action is necessary. To distrust or fear the grant of power is to deny validity to the whole process of modern government and to encourage anarchy. It must be remembered that more than ever before liberty is coupled with efficient government exercising power in behalf of the people. The people themselves can make this power responsible only through governmental action which represents their will. To distrust a controlled and responsible government means that we leave the use of power in hands which are not responsible to ourselves. This is not the way to freedom, but to a new kind of serfdom, in our world as now organized. A responsible governmental establishment is more necessary today than at any time in human history, for much more is at stake than ever before. A paramount question which the world faces is whether responsibility can be achieved and maintained through the democratic process. Our country can furnish the best proving ground for such a test. We have ample physical resources, and therefore no imperialist designs; we have discovered

that many races and nationalities can live happily side by side; we have a system of public education that provides wide opportunity, even into the realm of higher and professional instruction; we still have faith in elections and in the electorate; and we have an almost universal use of the most effective devices for intercommunication. Moreover, we still suspect military establishments. We are thus in position so achieve responsibility and maintain democracy if we can set up goals to which we can give a common allegiance. If we can do this, our loyalties will suffer no strain and the tendencies toward disintegration need not appear.

The dictators have taught us at least two things: that there are no guarantees worth while in the modern alternative to democracy, and that people are willing to make great sacrifices—yes, even their immediate freedom—for announced desirable economic and social goals, though their attainment may take many years. Meanwhile, dictators, too, use what appear to be the methods and trappings of democracy in order to pose as popular choices. And they cultivate patience in the multitude even while they whip up passions of various kinds to cover up their own failures to perform in the arena of domestic polity.

There can be no question that democracy today is being asked to take a responsibility for which originally it was unadapted. The concrete institutional goals for which our early democracy crusaded had to do with personal freedoms and guarantees against governmental interference. It assumed that responsibility for the general welfare could run to the people themselves without much common political action through governmental mechanisms. Today, the general welfare, and even those individual rights to life and the pursuit of happiness, depend in a much greater degree on coöperative efforts through the only agency which is common to all the people—their political establishment.

To perpetuate democracy and responsible government we are faced with certain imperatives.

1. We must discover and proclaim a social and economic program which will provide for Americans the essence of economic security and the personal freedoms which were inherent in our earlier system of democratic opportunity and, as we supposed, guaranteed by a responsible constitutional government. Political democracy must have its base in economic democracy today as it

did one hundred years ago, or it will disintegrate. Here is an integrating principle that should furnish a concrete goal for which a whole people can make common sacrifices.

2. We must accept the principle that the common agent of the popular will—the people's government—will be forced to undertake as public functions what the common need requires. The state of the arts, the distribution of natural resources, the organization of our economic life, work opportunities and the accepted standards of living—all will play a part in the determination of what this common need is.

3. We must make a conscious and continuous attempt to adapt the structure of our government to the changing environment in which political institutions work. No governmental forms are sacred. They are subject to the same laws of adaptation as are other structures, organic or institutional. If simple checks and balances fail, let us discover accommodations which may allow them to succeed.

4. We must recognize that, in spite of theoretical divisions of the field of governmental power, many of the problems facing our people have become national in their scope and must be met in some large part by a national attack. No amount of rationalizing or reasoning from precedent will change this fact.

5. We must promote an understanding of the democratic method and its implications. Self-government is impossible without a responsible citizenship. Any people which is uninformed, ignorant, short-sighted, inattentive to ideas or events, which has no capacity for independent decision, which has no defense against emotional contagion, which is fickle and gullible, is not prepared for the hard task of self-government. It lacks the stuff from which responsibility can spring. This the fathers recognized, and they determined that Americans, at least, should be armed for self-government through education. Today we are even more dependent on the educational process. And it needs to be much more persuasive throughout our whole population.

6. Most important of all in its final implications, we are faced with the youth problem and its relation to responsible democratic institutions. For how shall youth glory in a democratic process which fails, at least for the time, to open their door of opportunity? Youth the world over for generations fought the democratic fight. Just now youth everywhere listens to, and in many places has

followed, the siren song of the dictator and the power state. Youth wants work, wants a home and family, wants to be heard in popular assemblies, wants a decent standard of living, and wants those freedoms which are understood to be an American heritage. But youth now waits after leaving school an average of two years before finding a job which, on the average, is after all but temporary. Youth dares not establish a home or undertake family obligations until there is some semblance of secure employment. Youth faces the fact that the modal age of criminals in this country is nineteen, and that our crime bill is computed at thirteen billions a year. Everywhere the growing dependence on force as an instrument of economic and political advantage is in evidence. And so youth asks what the democratic method is doing in any responsible way to work out answers for its problem or to help it find its own. In some very real sense, then, our enduring quest for responsibility continues as a challenge to youth in each new generation. It goes on and on from age to age, showing its various facets, its changing aspects, its new and sometimes disturbing imperatives. Youth needs to believe in the democratic way if democracy is to be maintained.

To those, then, who maintain the faith, to those who still believe in representative government, I suggest that the American people are at this moment in dire need of a social goal to which they can aspire with confidence, a governmental structure which can meet the strains and stresses now and in the future to be put upon public agencies, and a citizenship which can be trusted to act responsibly in the premises. The quest for responsibility is a process of education—long, hard, and continuing. Men have followed this quest through the ages. It is our peculiar American obligation to carry on, with hope and confidence, so that our heritage may descend, strengthened and buttressed, to our children and our children's children.