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BALANCE IN GOVERNMENT: AN ANALYSIS OF THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS

An address by The Honorable Gerald R. Ford  
Representative from the Fifth District of Michigan  
and Republican Minority Leader.

[SEPT. 1968  
possible]

~~Ladies and gentlemen:~~

~~In my substantive remarks this evening, I will discuss four cornerstones~~  
*would like to talk with you about the*  
~~of our American political system and indicate my deep concern that each is in~~  
*because I am deeply*  
~~some jeopardy in this crucial period in our national and global history. These~~  
~~may be other fundamental American political concepts or principles that are~~  
~~suffering from the serious erosion of an "imbalance in government," but I will~~  
*These cornerstones of your political system are?*  
~~limit my observations to the following:~~

1. The system of "checks and balances" in the federal government, or the division of responsibilities between the Executive, the Legislative and the Judicial branches;
2. The relationship between the federal government and the 50 states;
3. The two-party system; and
4. The right of free speech and other related privileges and responsibilities.

Each of these four cornerstones ~~has~~ *has* contributed significantly to America's freedom and progress. All but one are constitutionally ordained. Their importance to the strength of our political fabric must not be underestimated. The wide swing of political pendulums and public opinion, which oftentimes creates an imbalance in government or in parts of it, must not destroy any one of them.

The first cornerstone was built by the wise drafters of our federal constitution under the theory of separation of powers. In those deliberations in Constitution Hall almost 200 years ago they made an important decision to give specific responsibilities to each branch of the national government . . . to give each of them strength and authority but ~~I hasten to add~~ *not* superiority over any one of the others. The finely tuned provisions in this historic document were designed to be a lasting bulwark against the concentration of power in the hands of one man, one group within our society or one segment of our government.

The architects of the federal Constitution were understandably concerned with concentrations of power and the tragic dangers that flow inevitably from

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its misuse because most of them, or their forefathers, had fled from tyranny, oppression and autocracy in Western Europe. They had suffered severe privation and maximum danger to find and establish a new land of freedom. Therefore, in the document for the governing of this newly-established nation there had to be safeguards. Although it was obvious from their deliberations that we should have a strong President heading the Executive branch, a strong Congress representing the Legislative branch and a strong Judicial branch headed by the Supreme Court, they made certain that in the document there were woven the essential checks and balances predicated on three co-equal branches of the government.

~~By my judgment,~~ Today we find an erosion of the power and prestige of the legislative branch, a change of the intended direction of the Judiciary and an awesome build-up of ~~the power and prestige of the~~ power in the Executive arm.

In this situation there is a modern-day parallel with the story of David and Goliath. Congress, the Legislative branch, is David. The Executive--the White House and all its agencies--is Goliath.

On the side of David are 535 elected officials--100 Senators and 435 Representatives, with a comparatively small number of employees--representing the American voters in each of the 50 states. The Legislative branch has a relatively small operating budget compared with that of Goliath--the Executive branch. Most importantly, however, those in the Congress regularly go to their constituents for approval or rejection. Their "record" is put "on the line." Each member is responsive to the views, the opinions of those "back home" they represent.

In contrast, the Executive branch today has nearly 3 million civilian employees with an annual payroll of approximately \$22 billion. In addition, there are about 3 million 300 thousand military personnel also under the Commander-in-Chief. The current yearly payroll for those in uniform in the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marines approximates another \$17.5 billion. The net result--about 6 million 300 thousand employees under the Chief Executive-- a 12-month payroll of nearly \$40 billion and a total federal budget to be spent by them for this year of \$136 billion.

This vast army of employees working in the Executive branch of the federal government is really isolated and immunized from the American voter. Out of

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the vast bureaucracy in the Executive branch only the President and the Vice President put their records on the line at election time and then only once every 4 years.

There is a growing apprehension that there is a potential and real danger in the burgeoning power of the federal government's Executive branch with all this manpower and such vast funds. However, I have faith that the minds of many of our people and the good judgment of Americans will cut down Goliath to proper size by strengthening the power and prestige of the Congress. Balance in this aspect of government will be restored.

I am pleased to report that the Congress itself is conscientiously, and I believe constructively, working toward that end. Early in 1965 a Joint House-Senate, bi-partisan committee was appointed to analyze our procedures, our internal legislative structure, in fact, all aspects of the Legislative branch. This study, these recommendations, should be most beneficial so that Congress can and will do a better job--hopefully helping to re-establish its proper place as a co-equal branch in our federal government.

Let me add a word on the relationship of the Legislative arm vis-a-vis the Judicial branch. It is my judgment that today the Judicial branch is to an unfortunate extent arbitrarily elbowing its way into spheres not intended at the time the Constitution was drafted.

*Civil Disobedience*

I subscribe to the views of the late Supreme Court Justice Felix Frankfurter who so convincingly espoused the philosophy of "judicial restraint." I believe he also soundly raised an arm of caution to the courts and suggested they might wisely stay out of the "thicket" of political matters, relying in such cases on the "ultimate sound judgment of the conscience of the voters." Quite frankly, I favor a strong and firm attitude by our courts in those areas where their "arm" can bring reason, order and respect for law to our system.

In retrospect is it fair to ask: "Have the Frankfurter words of caution been wrong?"

Another cornerstone in America's political fabric is the relationship between our respective states and the national government. Those who met in Constitution Hall in the City of Philadelphia represented sovereign states or commonwealths. Their purpose was to put together a document for the new nation that would permit the federal government to assume those responsibilities essential for the national welfare such as the common defense, a postal system

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and the like. Such powers were delegated, but to the sovereign states the traditional role of local government was retained.

In recent years there has been a growing abdication of this role and these responsibilities with a corresponding expansion of the influence of the federal establishments. The shrinking potency of the states can be attributed in part to archaic state constitutions, inadequate sources of revenue, and a lack of dynamic and resourceful leadership at the state level. Whatever the cause, the result has been a federal octopus moving steadily forward making vast inroads into the functions initially carved out for your state and for mine. For example, today we find our states by-passed by substantial federal funds controlled by multiplying federal officials going directly to local communities. In many instances these substantial federal arrangements also by-pass responsible local authorities.

This new pattern for the extension of federal control is most vividly illustrated by the President's poverty program, but there is a similar trend developing in the area of primary and secondary education. Under legislation enacted by Congress in 1965 your state education officials can, and undoubtedly will, be by-passed as the federal authorities gradually extend their encroachment.

Fortunately many of our Governors, Democrats and Republicans, are showing a growing concern. During the consideration of the poverty legislation in 1965 thirty-seven Governors objected strenuously to the elimination of a provision in the law that gave to our Governors some control and responsibility in the administration of the vast sums allocated to their states for the attack on the problems of poverty.

*There is a hopeful note, however.*  
~~In addition,~~ Citizens in many of our states ~~are recognizing~~ *are recognizing* the need ~~for the~~ *to* modernize ~~their~~ *their* state constitutions to meet the ~~challenge of~~ *needs of rapidly growing* populations. Michigan's outmoded constitution was supplanted by one that gives new and better tools to elected state officials. In my travels this year to forty of our states, I ~~found a general~~ *found a general* realization that the state constitutions of the past are not adequate for the solution of the problems of the future.

Yes, I am convinced that we need not accept the inevitability of a bigger federal government and a lesser role for our states. Dynamic leadership, up-to-date constitutions, sufficient local revenue, combined with a resolution to do the job at home, in your state and mine, can stem the drive to federalize completely the republic.

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A two-party system has been a bulwark of strength for freedom and progress in America. A two-party system is not constitutionally ordained in our land, but early in our history it was found to be the best way for most of our citizens to participate in the political arena and to give expression to their political philosophy. By having a two-party system we have avoided the loss of freedom of one-party governments. There is no freedom in those one-party governments behind the Iron Curtain. Furthermore, by having a two-party system we have

avoided the chaos and confusion that exists in multi-party governments.

*our two major political parties are not equal in strength. The Republican Party still is definitely the majority party, but we are moving left, and this is good for the country.*  
~~Today we do not have two strong, nearly equal in strength political parties. This imbalance, if permitted to exist for too long a time, will have serious repercussions.~~

Competition between two major political parties has been healthy for Americans just as competition in business and in the professions produces a better result for all concerned.

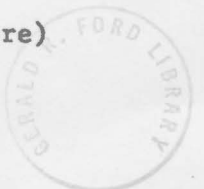
Let me assure you that although I speak ~~for~~ for the minority, the Republicans, I do not believe that those in the minority can or should sit back and bide their time. There are some, a very few fortunately, who argue that the minority party should await a national disaster at home or abroad and then move in, pick up the pieces and build from the shambles. This I contend is neither the tradition nor the heritage of the Republican Party in the 1960's. This was not the role of the Republican Party under Lincoln or Eisenhower. We must by the competence of our candidates, by the record of legislators and administrators and by the philosophy that we espouse earn the respect of our fellow citizens.

I am glad to report we in the minority party leadership realize <sup>that</sup> under our system no Party can be doctrinaire, sectarian, narrow in its appeal and still attract the majority of the electorate. The high ground of moderation with unselfish unity is not only common horse sense for a political party--it is also representative of the people and in keeping with the underlying genius of the American political system.

With this format we aim to correct the imbalance in our two-party system. We are dedicated to restoring vigor and competition in the political arena so that the cornerstone of two-party government will again function for a better America.

A fourth cornerstone of the Constitution involves the right of free speech with its many ramifications. I would do all possible to keep this priceless

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"right" inviolate and to protect the right of those who wish to exercise this privilege. Yes, we want the right of dissent and disagreement. We oppose a monolithic society. We need, however, responsible dissent and an educational dialogue between those with varying viewpoints.

The placards of some demonstrators read: "Why Die for Viet-Nam?"

How many of us remember the similar questions raised by irresponsible voices in Chamberlain's Britain, little over a quarter century ago: "Why Die for the Sudetanland?" and "Why Die for Danzig?"

We know now--and many did then--that these voices were serving the purposes of Nazi aggression. The placard-bearers cried for peace--while the seeds of Buchenwald and Belsen were taking root.

Today, draft card burners and those who ~~blockade~~ shipments of military supplies cry for peace-at-any-price--while the seeds of Communist atrocity take root. And yet the appeasers speak of morality.

You and I are living in the most troubled of times.

America is badly shaken by ~~the~~ deep divisions over national policy--~~the~~ ~~great debate over~~ Vietnam, the continuing civil rights revolution and its concomitant black power movement, the role of the United States in a world crackling with social upheaval in emerging nations, and the unceasing expansionist efforts of world communism.

We are witnessing a large variety of protest movements in this country as Americans register their disagreement with public policy and rebellion against the establishment.

I believe firmly in the right of dissent--but I feel we must distinguish between responsible dissent and protest which produces violence and anarchy.

It is truly alarming that ~~responsible~~ dissent in this country ~~now is moving~~ *has repeatedly* *emptied* rapidly into ~~the area of~~ *the destruction of life and* violence and ~~disruption of orderly procedure--on our~~ *large campuses and on property near government buildings*

For instance, some of those taking part in the massive anti-war demonstration October 20, 1967, at the Pentagon showered both physical and verbal abuse on the U.S. troops called in to keep order. The demonstration cost the taxpayers more than \$1 million when all the expenses were added up.

What of campus demonstrations against the Vietnam War? They have become increasingly militant and disruptive--"lie-ins" in protest against recruitment

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by the military, the CIA, and the manufacturer of napalm used in Vietnam.

Such "lie-ins" clearly violate the rights of others. Any student who wishes to be interviewed by the military recruiters, the CIA, or chemical company officials should be free to do so without interference from others.

I agree completely with the American Association of University Professors, which recently condemned disruptive student behavior on campuses across the Nation. Like the Association, I believe strongly in student democracy. But disruptive student actions interfere with the search for knowledge and the personal rights of others.

In a recent statement, the Association said: "To obstruct or restrain other members of the academic community and campus visitors by physical force is destructive of the pursuit of learning and of a free society."

It is vital that all Americans recognize the need for government by law as well as the ~~right to responsible~~ <sup>right to responsible</sup> dissent. It is only with respect for law and adherence to a government of laws that young Americans can properly assume the positions of responsibility which await them.

The strength of Americans is great only if they couple it with discipline, direct it to worthy goals and bind themselves to purposes that are larger than any one person's ego and nobler than the common objectives of men.

To realize great achievements, a person must properly assess his or her own value, assume full responsibility for all of his or her actions, and so live that his or her conduct reflects love and respect for others.

I want to see Americans fight for their ideals and help clothe with truth the pronouncement that "all men are created equal." May they beat injustice to earth--but let them do so in reasoned defense of liberty and not in empty-minded defiance of law and order.

If we are to have genuine progress in America, we must restore the rule of law and build a good society. We must ~~not make~~ <sup>not make</sup> excuses for lawless behavior. We must safeguard the rights of all Americans regardless of color. We must enforce our laws against the mob and against ~~the~~ criminal and subversive elements operating behind a cloak of civil rights. We must attack and vanquish the misery that flourishes in the ghetto and feeds the fires of disorder.

We should join hands to build America, not seek to tear her down. This is a time for inspired ~~leadership~~ <sup>efforts by</sup> Americans of all ages, and especially the

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young. . . a time for us to fashion a good society in which all Americans can live in decency and dignity.

I have talked as though I am fearful, apprehensive, and pessimistic. ~~I am, but to a very limited extent. On the other hand,~~ *Actually,* I am optimistic . . . and let me tell you why. I have a strong abiding faith in the good judgment of the American people. When alerted to dangers to their government they respond.

Most of our citizens would agree with the late statesman Sir Winston Churchill who said, ". . . democracy is the worst form of government except all those other forms that have been tried from time to time."

There is an ever-growing realization that our system is the finest in the history of mankind. We believe in our Constitution. Those wise men who put it together almost 200 years ago created a historic document that has made it possible for 13 poor, struggling colonies to grow to a Nation of 50 states that today is at the <sup>N</sup>pinacle industrially, agriculturally, militarily and--more importantly--spiritually.

In concluding, I recall a statement made by Benjamin Franklin the day work was completed on our Constitution. He was asked, "What have we got--a monarchy or a republic?" Franklin answered, "A republic--if you can keep it!"

The responsibility for the American people then . . . as it is now . . . is to keep our Republic . . . to keep it strong, progressive, free. We have in the past; we will in the future. Thank you.

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