Let me say, first, that I stand here with a lingering sense of surprise as to how all this could have come about. I associate myself with Rip Van Winkle. When he re-appeared after his long retirement he was a man about my age, verging on his mid-eighties, bearded, and probably needing a haircut. My most recent book was published before Pearl Harbor. I retired nearly 20 years ago, and I did not expect to have my repose interrupted by an invitation to participate in an occasion of this sort.

However, it is very pleasant to be remembered and I deeply appreciate the honor of being called upon to address this membership. The last time I was accorded this privilege was my presidential address 34 years ago.

Those of us who have worked over the years to strengthen the resources available for research can find satisfaction in the talent and skill of the generations that have put these improved opportunities to such productive use. There have been great advances in graduate training since my student days and the field is vastly more professional in character. This discipline has become so sophisticated that when I open the pages of the *American Political Science Review* nearly half of its contents remains a closed book to me. I speak the language of a simpler age of political science.

My mentor at Johns Hopkins, W. W. Willoughby, was concerned with deducing the fundamental principles underlying political institutions. We considered the nature of sovereignty and the bearing that the then current theories of pluralism might have upon this legal doctrine. This led to my curiosity about the actual role of groups in the political process and Willoughby permitted me to proceed, though he "assigned little importance to "purely descriptive" studies of the actual operation of political systems."

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Editor's Note: The James Madison Award is a career achievement award presented every three years to an American political scientist who has made an outstanding scholarly contribution to political science. Pendleton Herring is only the fourth recipient of the Madison Award. The other awardees were: Robert A. Dahl, Yale University, in 1978; Gabriel A. Almond, Stanford University, in 1981; and Herbert Simon, Carnegie-Mellon University, in 1984. For the full text of the Madison Award citation, see the Appendix in this issue of *PS*.
James Madison Lecture

Pursuing my research in that summer of 1927 in Washington, I tried to keep cool with Coolidge without the legal aid of a cold beer or a constitutionally permitted gin and tonic. The nation’s capital, and graduate study at Hopkins, then seemed closer to Woodrow Wilson than to the undreamed of New Deal days to come. I carried on my interviews with members of Congress, officials and journalists without need of any introduction. And in December I attended my first annual meeting of the American Political Science Association held at the Mayflower Hotel in Washington. There were nearly 300 members in attendance, about twice as many as at the previous meeting in St. Louis.

Reasoned discourse is our ultimate asset.

Professor Munro began his presidential address by recalling that 55 years before Walter Bagehot had published Physics and Politics. Munro noted that great scientific advances had been made since then but that this could not be said of the study of politics. So he was ready with some suggestions. His message was that political science be released from “the old metaphysical and juristic concepts upon which it had traditionally been based” and that we “turn to the natural sciences for suggestions as to postulates and methods.” But beware, he warned, of the sociologists and social psychologists who would get us deeper into the “morass of meaningless terminology.”

In the listing of dissertation topics in 1927 I could not find my title under the heading of American Government and Politics. It was put in a special category called “Social Problems Related to Government.” A study that presented groups as having an integral role in the process of representation smelled of sociology. The very morass that the president of the Association was warning against! But it is worth recalling that, despite Munro’s misgivings of these disciplines, this period marked a growing awareness of the value of interdisciplinary research and empirical inquiry. The Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences (1968, Vol. 12, p. 290) forty years later stated: “With the appearance of Herring’s Group Representation Before Congress (1929) the basic pattern of group research for the first half of the twentieth century had been set.”

I should like to call attention to the enormous growth of that group representation I observed 60 years ago and raise questions about its consequences. I noted then that the voter, when caught up in a matter of political, social or economic importance, did not immediately look to the political party. He found numerous organized groups to which he could turn. I concluded that “such organized agencies” had become a part of our representative system of government. The germ of organization has a culture in this country in which to luxuriate.

In 1927 it was estimated that there were probably 500 organized groups active in the Capitol. The most recent estimate of the number of lobbyists approaches 20,000. Special pleading of interest group spokesmen is competent and knowledgeable. Moreover, efforts to represent consumers and conservationists, clean air, pure water—in sum, a variety of pro bono groups—mark today a better counterbalance to narrow group self-interest. Such was not the case when I undertook my interviews in Washington in the summer of 1927. Now, more interests press for attention, more think-tanks and research groups offer their wares.

When we review the role of interest groups we see how effective such organized efforts have been in winning a response, and, over the decades, have brought about changes of great moment. The welfare state did not come into being as an orderly and articulated plan. I see it rather as the consequence of the pressure of special needs building up and demanding action. Over time, Congress has proved itself capable of mediating and sustaining these diverse pressures. The increased importance of
organized interests has been accompanied by a decline of party control and the ensuing fragmentation of leadership in Congress. The style is managerial. This has been accompanied by a great increase in staff assistance to members of Congress. These aides provide efficient responses to constituents and help legislators in dealing with lobbyists. They constitute a vital network for communication and weaving of alliances within the legislature. I think the full significance of their role remains to be analyzed.

When we turn to the executive branch of government, here again interest groups have had a major impact. Fears have sometimes been expressed of tyrannical rule of an irresponsible and arbitrary bureaucracy. But the federal administrative services do not constitute an over-powering monolithic entity but rather an uneven array of agencies, each with its own constituency of supporters and often facing its specialized critics. Officials serve their particular publics, congressional committees and interest groups. The problem is not tyranny but often too much responsiveness. In short, it is difficult to discern policy direction in this multitude of particular purposes.

Now and again the need has been expressed for distinctive, disciplined, programmatic parties to give focus and direction. It was in response to such a hope that about 40 years ago the Committee for a Responsible Party System was activated by the American Political Science Association. It produced a thoughtful report strongly urging a more responsible two-party system with competing, meaningful national programs each backed by members ready to follow a unified course of action. The "multitude of special interests seeking their own ends must be dealt with by stronger parties," the report stated. It was argued that the fundamental requirement in a two-party system is for an opposition presenting an alternative program. Nearly 40 years have now transpired and the variety of dangers predicted by the committee have not come about nor are we any nearer to their ideal party system. But the committee did accurately foresee that the alternative to stronger political parties for dealing with special interests was increased presidential power.

It is from the enormously dispersive nature of politics in our system, not to mention the diversity of interests and forces in the governance of a continent and the competitive forces in the economy that we turn to the presidency to bring a sense of purpose, some vision for uniting energies sufficient to command public support and to imprint direction upon the vast bureaucracy. As one presidency succeeds another, we see this drama replayed, and often in tragic terms. Or one could see comedy in the spectacle of presidents who campaigned against Washington coming to town and struggling to get some measure of control—to get the Beltway, so to speak, under their belt. Considering the magnitude of the task, how brief the time and limited the means!

I speak the language of a simpler age of political science.

The effectiveness of the presidency means establishing working relations with the Congress, the bureaucracy, the press and the public, and this has called for aides qualified to handle highly specialized duties involving foreign, domestic and security policies—not to mention the speech writers, pollsters and public relations specialists. A prince to rule must have courtiers and a President must have aides. Confidential, loyal, devoted staff assistance is an essential of governance. As one presidential aide says of his duties, "It's negotiating. It's persuasion. It's trying to acquire an understanding of a situation very rapidly and deal with it."

Assuming the competence of these officials, we have all witnessed what a strong sense of personal loyalty to the Chief Executive or strong ideological commitment to a course of policy can lead to. It is not an acceptable outcome. That "The President needs help" takes us back to the Oval Office of F.D.R. Since then, more than once the
James Madison Lecture

problem has arisen of how best to hold accountable officials who are to be commended for their selfless dedication to the chief executive. Every President has his priorities of attention and salience. But is it realistic to believe that the presidential span of control can embrace so many assistants and hold them truly responsible? Is a passion for anonymity a good idea? These non-elected, non-publicly-accountable loyalists are at the nerve center of policy formation. There is no easy answer.

A study that presented groups as having an integral role in the process of representation smelled of sociology.

Add to these the congressional staff aides, the special interest spokesmen and the recently retired officials serving as political insiders, and we witness an informal cadre supplementing the formal structure of government and actively participating in the political process—but adding unaccountably to the problem of achieving accountability.

When it comes to holding the President responsible, fixed terms of office can make waiting for the next election an overly long wait! And impeachment as the ultimate sanction is too drastic to be feasible. We fall back to the traditional court of public opinion, and the role of the press and mass media and welcome intrusive journalism!

It is in this connection that I would like to comment on the presidential press conference. Woodrow Wilson was the first to hold press conferences on a regularly scheduled basis, although this arrangement was not consistently followed and ceased with the coming of the war. Wilson spoke for background only, and the old transcripts of the meetings reveal how stiff the interchange and how abrupt and laconic many of his answers to the reporters’ questions. As remembered by one participant, Wilson’s replies came “crisply, politely and in the fewest possible words.” A pleasant time was not had by all. Too often the press conference offers the spectacle of a crowd of reporters bent upon badgering the President with intentionally embarrassing questions. Each side is ready to exploit the other for self-serving ends.

This is not the occasion to describe the various changes in style and frequency of the conference other than to record that all these efforts indicate that it is an institution subject to experimental modification. Now the questioning goes no further than the “follow-up.” This developing forum deserves a real “follow-up.” Cannot a more dignified and appropriate format be designed to promote discourse? It has been suggested, for example, that the press corps might designate groups of 8 or 10 of their members who could periodically carry on a sustained conversation with the President that admitted of more depth of analysis and enlightenment. Over a span of three score and fourteen years the press conference has developed a question hour of greater importance perhaps to the presidential system than the famed question hour in the House of Commons is to the parliamentary system. Though an incremental, unplanned development, the presidential press conference, I submit, can become a much more significant instrument for enforcing a highly significant measure of accountability.

The germ of organization has a culture in this country in which to luxuriate.

Do we not accept the media as integral to the process of representative government? Here is a force that has evolved largely as a consequence of technological advances. I refer not merely to the printed word or to the TV screen, but to the electronic world that has made communication virtually universal and instantaneous. This recent development has come upon us so rapidly that its consequences are yet to be clearly discerned, but they affect a wide range of political relationships.
The media can make the voter more aware of his government and bring public affairs closer home. Through TV, the citizen can be present at congressional hearings and gain an appreciation of the thought and effort that goes into law-making. The process is played before our very eyes. If not an active participant, one can become at least a spectator at the game of politics. Whether politics is thereby made more meaningful to the public is hard to say. The percentage of non-voters is not reassuring. But voluntary organizations offer participation on a wide choice of issues. Fifty years ago, political ties were often close in terms of political clubs and friendly ward heelers; for most voters there was little immediate touch with the larger scene. Today the mailing list is a potent device for trying to involve millions of individuals in hundreds of causes. Local contestants seek financial support nationwide. The morning mail can bring appeals from senators in Maine or California. You can be enrolled in plastic card support in any number of causes. The ballot is supplemented by a credit card endorsement of issues that engage one’s quick emotions or deep convictions. The strength of one’s commitment can be expressed by placing a dollar mark on the favored side of a controversial issue. Here is an easy, moderate, genteel form of political engagement for our laid-back electronic citizenry. And here is a range of choice undreamed of in the simpler days when issues were reserved for political campaigns and election days.

The increased importance of organized interests has been accompanied by a decline of party control and the ensuing fragmentation of leadership in Congress.

Modern methods of communication, for all their rapidity, immediacy and vividness, can convey the superficial or the thoughtful—they have the capacity for enhancing the accountability of government to the governed or of distracting and diverting attention to the trivial. We might well ask: Is TV affecting the nature of the very process it is presumably merely watching and reporting upon? Are sight and sound affecting the message? Is politics becoming opera? The pictures placed before the public by photo opportunities and by TV reports compel attention and often prompt an emotional response. The message essential to a full understanding of the issue or event is not spelled out. The span of attention needed to form a thought is reduced to a flick for those of us fed our news by the Tube. There is not time to ponder and analyze and reach a reasoned judgment or opinion.

The pictorial nature of TV provides a stage and a good actor properly plans to the full the role in which he is cast. This means that the quest for popularity associated with the movies and theatre has become a goal for political success. Leadership relies on popularity, an attractive personality and a trust-inspiring manner. These attributes are well suited to the air waves. TV can picture the leader playing his role to the applause of the admiring public, in five days turn an unknown Marine into a celebrity and (almost overnight) run a presidential front-runner through the disposal. To get at the substance of policy is more difficult. The statesman, when struggling to weigh alternatives and reach responsible decisions, is not on stage.

The problem is not tyranny but often too much responsiveness.

Our institutional framework as it is today provides for the interplay of competing interests and thereby protects our freedoms. The health of the body politic is demonstrated by its capacity to throw off the infection of political corruption and to regain strength even though laws are broken and structural weakness or individual shortcomings revealed.
But guarding civil liberties does not insure wisdom in the day-to-day course of public policy. Achieving representative government does not resolve the problem of attaining responsible leadership. The voices of multifarious interests make imperative some sense of direction—of national purpose. Coming to grips with the substance of policies, defining the issues clearly, informing the electorate and reaching responsible decisions is the challenge. The response and accountability on the part of government is a continuing and uncertain process. It is found in the morning paper and the nightly TV news, in political debate and scholarly analysis. Sometimes the erring are punished and sometimes accountability might be described as a sequence of confession and admission followed by admonishment, forgiveness and forgetting. To seek responsible government as a choice by voters between the distinctive programs of disciplined political parties is to misread the nature of our system. The political aim realistically must be accommodation—not conquest! Changing institutional relationships would have a very limited effect on underlying political forces. Those of us who actually experienced Prohibition can tell you how limited a constitutional sanction can be when faced with a deep contrary sense of conviction. This is something to keep in mind when assuming that divisive issues can be resolved by constitutional prescription.

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*You can be enrolled in plastic card support in any number of causes. The ballot is supplemented by a credit card endorsement of issues that engage one’s quick emotions or deep convictions.*

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There are policy areas particularly resistant to compromise or to bipartisan resolution. Questions with respect to the vast range of entitlements, taxation and fiscal policy call for more rational treatment than often is given. The ever-present nuclear threat is not eased by the complexities of arms control.

National security policy is an area where self-correcting restraints may falter. We all recall Eisenhower’s warning of what might today be called the military-industrial-scientific and even -academic complex. As is obvious, we are spending enormous sums of money and intellectual energy on weaponry that no one dares use. But this enterprise creates vested interests that are reinforcing and resistant to criticism or attack. Political forces have created this complex in the name of national defense, but we have no experience, no real test of whether domestic political forces can de-escalate this build-up. Can Congress keep this hydra within bounds? The beneficence of military expenditures can distort scientific inquiries, beguile academic attention and engage industry in financial loyalties of huge dimensions. We simply do not know the full range of its power. The scope of its influence is yet to be tested.

It may be that arms control agreements will provide a release from the internal constraints that presently make for such difficulty in reckoning with the interests vested in this complex. When no longer justified by national security necessities, their growth and demands may be brought under control, but the outcome depends on factors beyond domestic politics. The event does not rest simply in our hands. And this is perhaps the concluding lesson taught by the last six decades.

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*Achieving representative government does not resolve the problem of attaining responsible leadership.*

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The future is to be worked out not solely by the maneuvering of domestic politics but in bargaining and contending with allies and opponents abroad. In an increasingly interdependent world the range stretches from the calculated plans of multinational
conglomerates of great financial strength to the unstable regimes of the third world where the rule of law and other cherished values of our own do not hold sway.

The words of Einstein are often cited: "If mankind is to survive, there must be a change in our way of thinking." Before political accommodation can be reached, distrust must erode. And this means a change in deep-seated attitudes in both the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. This may already be under way to some extent — we will have to see. It is relevant to note that here at home profound changes in attitudes and beliefs have occurred in intimate relationships.

No one, fifty years ago, could have expected confidently that policies on women's rights and race relations could change so basically within a generation or so. Deep prejudices have disappeared. Despite the daunting crises in war and peace and cold war, the temptations of affluence and the despair of economic depression, over the last six decades our democratic system has served us well. There persists the tension between the demands of self-government and our capacity to understand and respond.

A scientific approach to politics may sharpen skills in dealing with complexity. Technology can improve methodology. But policy decisions in the final analysis call for responsible judgments. Here, reasoned discourse is our ultimate asset.

We still live in what, over one hundred years ago, Walter Bagehot called "The Age of Discussion" and where, in his words, "free policy choices are made and order and innovation fused by animated moderation." Admitting that an informed public is the final arbiter, and hoping that animated moderation prevails, the political science profession has a distinctive contribution to make in advancing both a better understanding of public policy and the meaning of our democratic institutions.

We can stand with Munro's pleas of six decades ago for "objectivity of attitude" and "observation of the actualities," but be less scornful of the "jurist concepts" and legal principles he was ready to discard. (Political science stripped of political philosophy would be an arid discipline indeed!) It is ironic to note that the triumphs of physics in this nuclear age have added vastly to the difficulty of decisions facing political leaders and increased the complexities of analyses for students of government and society. No help from physics here, even by analogy. Perhaps the course to follow is better stated by a poet than by a physicist. In the words of Robert Frost:

I don't see but you must continue
To use the gift you do possess
And sway with reason, more or less.

Our political system has surmounted great crises, domestic and international, social and economic. As I look back, I see that the decades have brought an increasingly free and just society. Freedom lies in the interplay of interests and justice in the rule of law. Basic to our form of government is the contingency of power — nothing is final. As I recall our yesterdays, I conclude that for us the politics of democracy holds out the hope that there will always be a tomorrow.