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American Statesmanship: Old and New

“Statesmanship” is almost un-American. The word has an elitist and obsolete ring. I will use it, nevertheless, both because it is serviceable enough to refer to the practice (and the theory of the practice) of government rather broadly understood, and because I want to try to rehabilitate, to some extent, an older view. I shall be concerned not so much with the practice of statesmanship as with the way Americans in significant public office, from the president down through at least the upper levels of the bureaucracy, understand their public roles (to use a much more fashionable term).

My beginning point is the observation that there is a strong tendency to resolve the role of the public official into two simple elements: populism, or radical democracy, and scientific management. Since I will be trying to follow some very accessible, though often vaguely understood and expressed, ideas to their roots, I shall not begin with any attempt at precise or elaborate definition—premature definition obscures the interesting questions. I refer to the broad sets of ideas these terms immediately call to mind. They are admittedly vague and they will need refinement and explanation, but they will turn out, as our common language so often does, to identify rather well the kernel of the principles involved. These elements not only tend to characterize American “statesmanship” (and it is precisely because they characterize it that the word “statesmanship” no longer seems to fit), they also are responsible for its characteristic narrowness.

I do not claim that American statesmen always *act* in terms of these principles. Indeed one of the facts of their lives is that they find that they cannot do so. They act in many ways as statesmen have traditionally acted, as leaders trying to deal with problems justly and prudently on their merits. But they have, to a very large extent, lost

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the understanding of the legitimacy of nonpopulist, nonscientific-management decision making. They "do" statesmanship in the broader and more traditional sense, but they do not understand it. Therefore, they often do not do it very well. While there is much truth in the frequent criticism that our representatives and (especially) our officials are unfeeling and arrogant in their indifference to opinions and concerns other than their own, the more profound phenomenon, I think, is their lack of confidence in their own judgments.

They are rather good at articulating consensus. They are usually reasonably good at implementing clear-cut goals. Much of the time, however, there is no consensus to articulate, or it is foolish or unjust. Most of the time, the goals are not very clear or are in conflict, and their implementation has to be pursued under conditions that do not stand still for the principles of scientific management to be applied. Nonpopulist, nonscientific concerns seem even in American democracy to be at the heart of statesmanship; yet the American statesman is likely to believe that they are not really his proper business, even when he spends most of his time with them. The result is that these nonpopulist, nonscientific sides of American statesmanship tend to be done poorly and, even when done well, tend to be done under cover.

While I shall not here be much concerned specifically with presidential statesmanship, President Jimmy Carter does provide an instructive case in point. It has become almost a truism that Jimmy Carter, who once seemed such an exotic in presidential politics, is emphatically in the mainstream. His first presidential campaign was built around the two themes that I have suggested are the dominant themes of contemporary American statesmanship: populism and scientific management. The American government was to be brought up to the level of the American people by opening up that government and making it more responsive to the healthy good sense and compassion of the people. ("Make the government as good as the people.") Carter's second theme—the answer to the question of what the candidate would actually *do* when he had opened up the government to the popular impulse—was the promise to reorganize thoroughly the whole government, to reduce the great number of agencies, to cut away at excessive bureaucracy, to improve planning, and to eliminate vast inefficiencies. In short, the promise was to make the government an efficient instrument for doing what the people, now again in control of their own government, want done. Once we became accustomed to the style and the accent, we saw that what was distinctive about the Carter campaign rhetoric was precisely the

clarity with which it expressed the distinctive themes of American statesmanship.

There are two qualifications to these observations. First, I have not referred to another strand of the Carter rhetoric, namely, a version of Protestant fundamentalism. In this he is, again, representative of American statesmanship as a whole. In leaving the religious strain of American statesmanship out of account, I admit the incompleteness of my sketch, while also indicating my opinion that this strain would not turn out to be bedrock. A second qualification is closer to my present concern. For better or worse (and opinion on that varies sharply), once in office President Carter did not behave the way his campaign rhetoric indicated that he would behave. True, the populist style was ably, even brilliantly, maintained, and the president pressed hard the theme of technical efficiency, in his reorganization plans, his energy proposals, his decision to drop the development of the B-1 bomber, and so forth. Yet, in substance, President Carter acted very much as other middle-of-the-road presidents have usually acted, attempting to respond to specific policy questions prudently and on their merits, within limits enclosed by popular opinion, but with a willingness to stand against popular opinion and to lead it when that seems wise and possible.

It is arguable that President Carter understood quite well the limits of populism and scientific management and built a rhetoric from them, in quite a clear-headed way, in order, first, to secure office, and then, once in office, to provide the shell for a much broader, more traditional statesmanship. The thrust of this paper is to doubt the feasibility, at least on any significant scale or over any considerable period of time, of a statesmanship in which there is such a sharp difference between style and substance.

At the level of scholarship or "theory," almost all political scientists understand American statesmanship in terms of some combination or variance of the two principles I have identified. Compared with this basic agreement, their disagreements, which seem so compelling in the discipline, are secondary. Scholars in public administration debate the principles of efficient management, the connection between efficiency and "responsibility" (which is understood as responsiveness ultimately to popular will), and the extent to which the science of administration can be divorced in theory and practice from the requirements of democratic responsiveness. Students of American politics debate how adequately the American system collects and orders and gives effect to public opinion. A human relations expert criticizes the formal organization tradition for inadequately perceiving the human requisites of true efficiency. A Richard Neu-

stadt criticizes the President's Committee on Administrative Management for its preoccupation with administrative arrangements and its failure to see the importance of the president's task of persuasion and consensus building. The pluralists criticize the antielite theorists for their simplification of democracy and their failure to see the varied and subtle texture of American society. The differences among academic students of American politics are great and the debate is vigorous and often illuminating. Nonetheless, with very rare exceptions (including some parts of the fast-disappearing discipline of constitutional law), the bedrock of principle from which all else derives in American politics is seen to be popular opinion and scientific management. The articulation of these principles and their relation to one another are the whole substance of American politics.

These themes of populism and scientific management are pervasive and deep. They are not, I repeat, always the terms in which American statesman act; they are not always explicit in specific policy discussion; they are often ignored or overridden in specific decisions. But they are the general terms in which American statesmanship presents and understands itself and is understood both by the people at large and by those whose business it is to study and understand it.

The Decay of Democratic Statesmanship

That there has been a broad change since the beginnings of the American republic in both the theory and practice of what may loosely be called democratic statesmanship is widely agreed, and the rough outlines of that change are not in much dispute. American political society, and with it American statesmanship, has become much less elitist or, in the older term, aristocratic, and much more democratic or popular. The general view is that that is an improvement, a maturation, a sloughing-off of elements alien to American democracy properly understood. I will try to establish, on the contrary, that from the point of view of the founders this change represents a decay, and that that point of view makes sense. I will also try to give some account of the main elements of that decay before reflecting on its broad significance.

The indispensable beginning point is to take seriously the framers' commitment to popular government. This commitment stands out boldly in almost all they said and did; and yet it is seldom seen today for what it was. Part of the reason for this is our tendency to assume that men (and especially "elites") always act for reasons other than those they profess. Even if we overcome that paralyzing and self-defeating premise, we stumble on the framers' persistent and

often sharp criticisms of democracy. They seem to be either hypocritical or half-hearted in their commitment to popular government.

The explanation at this level is simple and, it seems to me, altogether compelling. Martin Diamond spent much of his scholarly life trying to show that the framers' devotion to popular government was the devotion of a true friend, who sees the defects of his friend, studies them, and combats them so that they should not destroy the thing he loves. Popular government is good, but it is problematic. It is not, in this, different from any other kind of government, as Madison explained so well to Jefferson (who understood the point, though he understood it differently from Madison). Each government has an evil tendency that is connected to its own vital principle. In a monarchy it is the king who must be watched; in an oligarchy, the rich; in a popular government, the people. Democracy is a problem in the United States precisely because of the extent to which the people are made the ruler. The beginning point, then, is that popular government is good but problematic in its own way, the specific danger being majority foolishness or tyranny. Democratic statesmanship must be understood, above all, in the light of that great danger, which implies its great task.

At the time of the American founding, the traditional solution to this problem was to build into the government representation of social elements that could check one another, and particularly the *demos*, with the aim of securing the benefits of all and resisting the dangers of each. The American Constitution of 1787 rested on a rejection of this traditional solution. Part of the reason was the unavailability in the United States of the elements of the traditional mixed regime, and especially of a hereditary aristocracy. We do not, the American founders often said, have the materials for such a mixture. A deeper reason, and the reason most of the Americans thought their solution to the problem was superior even to the admirable and time-tested British regime, was that in the modern mixed regime there was inherent a degree of deception, of resting the working government on appearances rather than on fundamental truths. The traditional mixed regime, as the Americans knew it from Blackstone and Montesquieu, softened the truth of original human equality with the willingness of men to take their places in a natural-seeming hierarchy. It relied heavily on a traditional class of leaders disposed to public service and popularly accepted as entitled to it. The problem was how to secure the benefits of the traditional mixed government without the materials and without the myths and deceptions that such governments involve. The Constitution of 1787 was the founders' answer.

From the point of view of traditional mixed government, this Constitution looks "democratic"; from the point of view of simple democracy it looks "mixed." Both of these terms were sometimes used by the founders, but the more common and accurate designations were "popular" and "complex." James Wilson caught the essence, I think, in this characterization:

In its principles, Sir, it is purely democratical; varying indeed, in its form, in order to admit all the advantages, and to exclude all the disadvantages which are incidental to the known and established constitutions of government. But when we take an extensive and accurate view of the streams of power that appear through this great and comprehensive plan, when we contemplate the variety of their directions, the force and dignity of their currents, when we behold them intersecting, embracing, and surrounding the vast possessions and interests of the continent, and when we see them distributing on all hands beauty, energy and riches, still, however numerous and wide their courses, however diversified and remote the blessings they diffuse, we shall be able to trace them all to one great and noble source, THE PEOPLE.¹

This government is popular but not simply popular. It does not, however, rely on mystery or myth to check the fundamental popular impulse. "Nondemocratic" "elements" are at work (though not non-democratic social entities, in Wilson's description), but they are out in the open. This government is like a glass-enclosed clock. Its "works" are visible to all and must be understood and accepted by all in order to function properly. Not many of the framers were quite as confident as Wilson of the reasonableness of the people, but the government they constructed was nevertheless understood by them all to be unusual in the relatively small demands it placed on a political aristocracy and in the relatively great demands it placed on the people. The Senate was to make its distinctive contribution, for example, not because it consists of people presumed to have some superior title to rule or people with huge social influence derived from family tradition or wealth, but mainly because the interest of the men in the Senate is constitutionally tied to certain "senatorial" duties and because the people would *see*, over a relatively short time, the benefits of such a nonpopular institution.

1. John Bach McMaster and Frederick D. Stone, eds., *Pennsylvania and the Federal Constitution, 1787-1788* (Lancaster: Historical Society of Pennsylvania, 1888), p. 11.

There were men of the founding generation who found this solution facile and feeble. Alexander Hamilton's reservations are the most pertinent for our present purpose. Hamilton feared that there would be nothing in the new government (and the new society) strong enough to check or channel the reigning popular impulse. Hamilton doubted the effectiveness of the Virginia plan (put forward in the Constitutional Convention by Madison, Randolph, and others) to check the excesses of democracy that had been experienced in many of the states. "A democratic assembly is to be checked by a democratic senate, and both these by a democratic chief magistrate," Hamilton wrote.² This looked to him like "pork still, with a little change of the sauce."³

While Hamilton labored brilliantly to explain and to defend and to operate this Constitution, his earlier reservations revived, as is well known, as he saw what he thought to be the weakness of the elements in the Constitution designed to check democratic foolishness and injustice. Tocqueville confirms this view, but at the same time presents a wider or at least a different horizon. Even more directly pertinent are the more modest administrative histories of Leonard D. White. It is striking that when White looked at the actual conduct of the government in the early years, including both the Federalist and Jeffersonian periods, it was characterized by what he called "administration by gentlemen." The federal government in its early years was operated by a relatively small group of men who were socially prominent and who took their bearings from English notions of the right and, more especially, the obligation of members of the class of gentlemen to serve their country by conducting its affairs, and to do that with wisdom, honesty, and public spirit. To the extent that White is correct, it appears the actual conduct of the government then depended crucially on the existence of the political influence of a class of gentlemen, with an ability and a commitment to prudent statesmanship for which the framers of the Constitution had made no provision. Once the residual, English-based gentry was used up, there was little to preserve or maintain it, and the underlying populism—Hamilton's "pork"—took full command.

I exaggerate, of course. The constitutional scheme of checks and balances continued to function (indeed, in a certain sense, came into its own) under the Jacksonians. If the gentry were swept aside, if demagoguery thrived, the results were still mixed. Jackson's claims

2. Max Farrand, ed., *The Records of the Federal Convention of 1787*, rev. ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966), vol. I, p. 310.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 301.

for the democratic presidency (accompanied by a certain notion of administration) were challenged, deflected, blunted by men in the Senate and the courts acting much as Madison expected they would act. But I am here following one strand of American history and American political thinking. It is not the only strand; it may or may not turn out to be the strongest and most persistent one; but it does seem to be the one most clearly tied to the self-understanding of American statesmen. It became increasingly difficult as the nineteenth and twentieth centuries wore on for American statesmen to see themselves politically as anything more than mouthpieces of popular opinion.

The story we are recounting is completed, in the decisive sense, with civil-service reform, which is the end of democratic statesmanship and the beginning of the contemporary decay of practical statesmanship. The Jacksonian doctrine of rotation (and the Jacksonian program in general) was meant to take the government out of the hands of the few and give it to the many. As rotation declined into spoils, however, it seemed that the result had been to turn over the government from an honest and competent aristocracy to a dishonest and incompetent one. Indeed the concern of the civil-service reform movement that began to build after the Civil War was fundamentally with government dishonesty rather than with government incompetence. Like the Jacksonians, the civil-service reformers' concern was political and moral; and like the Jacksonians the civil-service reformers sought to remove an illegitimate and corrupting obstruction that had grown up in the way of the free, healthy, spontaneous expression of the political will of the American people. The civil-service reform movement is today often described as having been "elitist" and antidemocratic. It involved a "good-government" elite attempting to destroy the vulgar, corrupt, unsystematic, but democratic functioning of patronage-based political parties. This is not inconsistent with the civil-service reformers' view of themselves as returning to the principles of the founders. But what both this self-understanding and this sociological view of the civil-service reform movement missed is that the reformers had rejected, or forgotten, the central element in the founders' statesmanship, namely, a sense of the problematic character of democracy. In this fundamental respect they stood with the Jacksonians against the founders.

Even that, however, is not precise enough. Democracy was in a way still seen as problematic by the reformers, but the locus of the problem had shifted for them from politics to administration. They believed that democracy itself is not unproblematic (the problem here

is clearing away the rubble of various kinds that obstructs it), but its implementation *is* unproblematic.

This prepared the way for the next and, as it were, final step in the development of American statesmanship, the science of administration or scientific management. Before turning to that, however, it may be useful to summarize and to reflect on the significance of this development. Leonard D. White described this whole development as a healthy working through of the basic principle of the American republic (again Tocqueville's similar but more critical account is pertinent). As White saw it, bringing into focus a very widespread view, the development ran as follows: first came the Federalist period, characterized by elitist politics plus sound administration; then the Jacksonian period, characterized by democratic politics and unsound administration; and now, a "new Hamiltonianism," characterized by the return, as a result of civil-service reform, to the sound administration of the founders but now in the service of democratic politics.⁴ This view misses three major considerations: (1) The old Hamiltonianism was not antidemocratic, but it was concerned with the problematic character of democracy. (2) Democracy is still problematic; and in losing the sense of that problem (however much the framers may have missed solving it), the new Hamiltonianism is shallow in the decisive respect. (3) The administrative theory and practice of the old Hamiltonianism, although it was indeed related to scientific management, had a common-sense quality that may have given it more severe limits in some respects than modern administrative science but also a breadth and soundness that today's understanding of administration lacks. To that second aspect of the decay of American statesmanship I now turn.

The Decay of Rational Statesmanship

When Woodrow Wilson called in 1887 for a new science of administration he saw himself as building upon and to some extent restoring the work of the founders. With the decisive victory of liberal democratic theory, the making of the U.S. Constitution, and the repair of the major defect of that Constitution in the Civil War, the great task of regime building and constitution making was finished. There would still be a need to extend liberal democracy to other parts of the

4. See Leonard D. White's introduction to Lynton K. Caldwell's *The Administrative Theories of Hamilton and Jefferson*, as quoted in Louis C. Gawthrop, *The Administrative Process and Democratic Theory* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1970), p. 5.

world and a continuing need to modify and repair its constitutional structure. Nonetheless, the locus of the decisive problems of government had shifted from questions of constitution making and high politics to questions of administration. Wilson sought, then, to turn attention from largely obsolete and fruitless political controversy to the pressing and still unsolved problems of running the Constitution. Political theory had had its day; the task for today and tomorrow was the development and application of administrative theory. Wilson proposed that the democracies look to the systematic development of administration that had taken place under more autocratic governments, with the view to developing and learning to use the science of administration, the fundamental premise of which is that there is "but one rule of good administration for all governments alike."⁵

In many important ways, Wilson's proposal and the project of administrative science and practice that followed from it were indeed extensions of the founders' own project. In the most crucial sense, it can be said that, for the founders, the problem of government is a matter of administration. Government was no longer seen as a grappling with various and conflicting claims to rule, claims to determine the ends and character of social life. Instead, they believed the legitimate end of government is fixed: the securing of individual rights. In question, in terms of both forms of government and their operation, are the arrangements and policies that under given circumstances would be the best means to that fixed end.

This is the reason that discussions by the founding generation of forms of government have the curiously shallow quality that has frustrated so many analysts. Monarchy no longer "rides tilt against democracy," as Woodrow Wilson put it.⁶ There were still differences, and forms of government were still important (see *Federalist* 70), but they no longer carried anything like their traditional freight. Government was no longer seen as directing and shaping human existence, but as having the much narrower (though indispensable) function of facilitating the peaceful enjoyment of the private life. In this view, government and the whole public sphere are decisively instrumental; government is reduced to administration. Questions of forms of government, too, become instrumental. Much less is *at stake* in a dispute between "democracy" and "monarchy," for example. The question is merely what kind of governmental arrangements

5. Woodrow Wilson, "The Study of Administration," *Political Science Quarterly* (June 1887). An abridged version can be found in Gawthrop, *Administrative Process and Democratic Theory*, p. 20.

6. Gawthrop, *Administrative Process and Democratic Theory*, pp. 77-78.

will, under given conditions, be most likely to secure the aggregate of individual liberty, which it is the business of any government to secure. (This is why constitutional and administrative questions, in contrast to *political* questions, are closely related for Wilson.)

"Statesmanship" in such a government is diminished in proportion. It can reasonably be called administration, though it may be administration of a rather high and demanding kind. The moral demands on statesmen in such a government are reduced to a commitment to serve the "permanent and aggregate interests of the society," as Madison called them. The intellectual demands are reduced to the formulation and implementation of appropriate means to fairly limited ends. To the American founders, however, even these demands seemed too great. The moral demands on the statesman were further reduced by putting him in a constitutional position, so far as possible, where his private interests would coincide with his public duty. The whole complex system of checks and balances and related constitutional devices have this aim. The intellectual demands (our special concern here) would be reduced through the development of the sciences dealing with the main areas of the statesman's (now rather limited) concerns. Thus, to the founders, the science of economics—or rather political economy—is queen; derivative from this are the subordinate sciences of, for example, military administration, governmental budgeting and accounting, and the arrangement of public offices. The American statesman of the future would be not a George Washington but a Robert Morris, a man whose private interests were closely tied to his country's fortunes and whose statesmanship consisted of the knowledge that a merchant and financier has of the way society works.

In sum, then, the American founders' view of statesmanship could be described as follows. There is never needed that kind of statesmanship which had formerly been regarded as its essence: great, "way of life"-setting, character-forming political leadership. That kind of leadership was based upon a misapprehension of political life, a failure to understand its decisively instrumental function. There may be needed, however, rarely but occasionally, what might be called high American statesmanship, or high liberal statesmanship, comparable to that of the founders themselves. The requirements here are an extraordinary (and perhaps ultimately inexplicable) devotion to public duty and an understanding of the principles of governmental structure and operation of the broadest and deepest kind. Note that this statesmanship is still, in a fundamental sense, "administrative"; it ministers to the private sphere essentially by securing private rights. Most of the time, however, an even narrower

statesmanship will be sufficient: the activities of reasonably decent and well-informed men, guided by the constitutional system and by moral and prudential maxims derived from widely understood principles of political economy, military science, public finance, and so forth.

Just as the popular principle became radicalized, so did the "science" of government or administration become radicalized. The founders' maxims of administrative statesmanship became Woodrow Wilson's "one rule of good administration for all governments alike," which in turn became Frederick Taylor's "one best method," and that in turn became the "maximizing" model (and all of its various elaborations and qualifications) of contemporary decision-making science.

Frederick Taylor is perhaps the crucial turning point. Taylor insisted that his techniques—such as time-and-motion studies—must never be separated from the broader "philosophy of scientific management." That philosophy was a simplification of modern liberalism. Taylor saw scientific management as the working principle of a whole social system in which there is ultimately social harmony among apparently competing groups and individuals. He believed that once the true principles of organized activity are discovered and applied through scientific management, political and social conflict, which is based upon ignorance and misunderstanding, will be dispelled. Compared with the founders' view of American statesmen, Taylor's administrative statesman is relatively narrow.

The context of the older statesmanship was still a political or constitutional order which was, indeed, expected to limit the statesman's horizon; but that horizon was, nevertheless, a political one, and that was reflected in his everyday judgments. For Taylor, on the other hand, the context is a presumed natural harmony. There is ultimately no need for politics—either as providing a broad political order within which economic activity is pursued or (therefore) as adjusting competing and (in terms of mere self-interest) irreconcilable demands. Taylor did not in fact entirely escape the need for the more traditional moral and political judgment. The increase in pay for Schmitt, the carrier of iron hogs, was not to be in proportion to his greater efficiency (which resulted merely from his willingness to accept the commands of the scientifically informed supervisor); it was to be enough to stimulate him to raise the level of his private life, but not so much as to demoralize him. It is not clear where the standard for such judgments comes from in Taylor's scheme (though it should be noted that it is not clear either where the standard for equivalent decisions by traditional liberal statesmen comes from). Nor is it clear

why the scientific manager does not attempt to pay Schmitt as little as possible in order to keep an unfair share of the benefits of increased efficiency for himself. The whole problem of the fidelity of the statesman, with which the framers were so deeply and, on the whole, effectively concerned, was largely ignored by Taylor. Not surprisingly, Taylorism came to be, or at least was widely thought to be, an instrument of management. It became, after all, part of a broader political context, for which Taylorism itself could not account and to which it could not direct itself.

This "philosophy" of scientific management, which seemed to Taylor so fundamental, quickly dropped away, distorting Taylorism in ways that seemed to have been invited by Taylor (as Taylorism distorted the administrative thought of the founders). What was left was the pool of techniques of scientific management, the best known of which are time-and-motion studies, and the notion of the "one best method."

Now, among the various methods and implements used in each element of each trade there is always one method and one implement which is quicker and better than any of the rest. And this one best method and best implement can only be discovered or developed through a scientific study and analysis of all of the methods and implements in use, together with accurate, minute, motion and time study. This involves the gradual substitution of science for rule of thumb throughout the mechanic arts.⁷

This notion, which is basic to scientific management and all its heirs, would have seemed strange to the founders with their more common-sense notions of administrative science. Yet, it could be argued that Taylor was merely making clear and explicit what the earlier science implied: that the theoretical challenge is to develop that science of "management" in the broadest sense that will ultimately or in principle utterly displace the ad hoc, muddled, and inefficient lore of the traditional craftsman, as well as the ad hoc, muddled, and inefficient judgment of the traditional statesman.

What I have called scientific management in the broadest sense has taken a further large step beyond Taylorism, but in the same direction. Taylor can be understood as radicalizing the founders' attempt to free the statesman from major concern with the broadest ends of his activities. The statesman provided for by the founders "works" the system without having to try to follow his decisions to

7. Frederick Winslow Taylor, *The Principles of Scientific Management* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1911), p. 25.

their broadest ends; the Taylor manager similarly develops his science secure in the knowledge that better means will naturally lead to good ends. In these ways both the founders' statesman and Taylor's statesman are substantially relieved of responsibility for considering the highest or broadest ends. In the concrete situation, however, both are emphatically end-oriented. Taylorism is a science or means to given ends. The science was instrumental in the way administration had always been understood to be instrumental, as subordinate to given ends. The rationale of practical statesmanship became severely narrowed, but it was not transformed.

This traditional way of thinking about administration has the great advantage that the given ends guide and limit the search for means. That advantage, however, is purchased at a price that is scientifically unacceptable. The standard scientific formula becomes: Given a comprehensive measurable statement of ends, there is but one best means. It became increasingly clear that such a requirement is not only impossible in practice (that is not regarded as fatal), but also inadequate in principle. "Ends" are misleading reflections of prescientific judgmental statesmanship. What common sense calls "ends" are ultimately mere wants, and one cannot be expected to know what one wants until one knows what one might have and at what cost. The very language of means-ends is not merely imprecise or approximate, it is essentially misleading. The decisive break comes with its replacement by something like a "behavior-alternative" model (what are my possible courses of action and which do I want?) or a utility-maximization model freed from the teleological implications of the means-ends, but now at the price of crushing informational and calculational demands and utter subjection to essentially arbitrary preference.

This independence from ends, and its accompanying benefits and problems, is what characterized the most recent version of scientific management. While it is surely true, as earlier laborers in the vineyard of scientific management complained, that such fashionable schemes as "systems analysis" and Program Planning and Budgeting System (PPBS) are in many ways less new and original than they claim, there is today a rather widespread understanding of the fact that what scientific management has been moving toward is not statesmanship, and not even administration or management, but rather economizing in the true sense.

The contribution of "systems analysis" is to clarify and elaborate the proposition that all practical rationality, the rationality of administration, the rationality of choice, is economic rationality. "It should go without saying that all decision-making persons or groups attempt

to economize, in the true sense of the word. That is, they try to make the 'most,' as they conceive of the 'most,' of whatever resources they have."⁸

With this understanding clearly in mind, the new science of choice can overcome the two great defects of traditional statesmanship, which even the earlier forms of scientific management had not altogether corrected: its preoccupation with ends and its inability or unwillingness to replace mere maxims of action with objective measurement. In his preoccupation with given ends—those that seem important at the moment or those he is administratively responsible for—the traditional statesman or even the fairly sophisticated "manager" has failed to see the essentially economic character of all decision making. Thus, one of the men who helped to apply the new understanding to the Department of Defense, where it has had its greatest (though still disputed) success, explained that in 1961 military planning was in "disarray" because of the separation of military planning and fiscal planning. Military plans were made more or less incrementally and in terms of certain presumed military needs and objectives, with the price tag tacked on afterward. With the help of PPBS, the economic character of the decisions was recognized; thus costs and national security objectives were linked at the outset, while systems analysis provided quantitative information on various possibilities.

Although it is not always easy to understand just how far the claims of systems analysis extend, in general it can be said that greater sophistication about the economic underpinnings and techniques of quantification has been accompanied by greater sophistication in claims about practical applicability. The proponents of systems analysis are, generally, considerably less expansive than Taylor, for example, in the extent of their claims to replace traditional common-sense judgment. They emphasize that quantitative analysis can clarify and make more intelligent, but cannot displace, the nonscientific decision of the responsible administrator. Both implicitly (for example, in the "end" implications of "program" budgeting) and explicitly (for example, in various models of what Herbert Simon called "satisficing"), the proposals of systems analysis concede and even grapple with the limits of their science. If the practical claim is muted, the theoretical claim is even sharper and more comprehensive. Systems analysis admits, indeed emphasizes, that it can never absorb completely the "practical" side of practical reason. At the same time, it

8. Richard N. McKean, "The Role of Analytical Aids," in Gawthrop, *Administrative Process and Democratic Theory*, p. 253.

clearly affirms that it does in principle comprehend the "rational" side of practical reason. Systems analysis (or the science of the economics of decision making) is not all that there is to practical reason in decision making, but it is all there is to the *reason* of practical reason.

Some Common-Sense Corrections

Does this more or less historical analysis help us to understand contemporary issues of American statesmanship? It seems to me that it does. It encourages us to revive for consideration some rather obvious, useful common-sense observations about American statesmanship, what it is and what it ought to be. It also leads into some less obvious, more fundamental theoretical issues, the practical thrust of which is much more obscure, but which are probably determinative in the long run.

Populism. It is not difficult to grasp and to be persuaded by the need a democracy has of regulation and guidance in the face of some of its own tendencies toward foolishness and injustice. If we can add to our rather sharp consciousness of the dangers of "elites" a recollection of the dangers of majorities, our statesmanship will be better grounded. Indeed this lesson has never been forgotten in practice. What has been neglected is its understanding and justification in principle. Government still acts in opposition to simple democracy (when it secures the rights of minorities and individuals, for example), but mostly we talk as if the solution to the problems of democracy is more democracy. That is why there is a persistent *tendency* to resolve more or less complex notions of American democracy into some kind of simple populism.

This simplistic talk at the level of principle tends to undermine more prudent views at the level of practice. Even the modern Supreme Court, the strongest bastion of nonpopulist principle, has an increasingly difficult time giving an account of itself. Nevertheless, in the courts there is still a self-conscious and principled capacity to resist mere majoritarianism, weakened as this may have become. In the other parts of the government, such a capacity is much less evident. One of the results is, I think, an undermining of the statesman's confidence in his own judgment, in the legitimacy of relying on his own judgment even in the face of popular disagreement. The further and even more harmful result is that the people at large are constantly taught by their statesmen's rhetoric that their opinion is the touchstone of politics. Because this is not the case in

practice, and cannot be the case in any respectable regime, the contradiction strains the system, driving true leadership underground and depriving the system of popular confidence. The whole doctrine of elitism, in both its popular and scholarly forms, owes much to the absence in our public rhetoric (and behind that in our scholarly understanding) of a justification of the role of an "elite," a not simply responsive statesmanship in American democracy.

The danger of populism to popular government has to be met, I think, at two levels. At the level of institutions, the problem is basically recovering (perhaps in different forms) the lessons of the framers. I have mentioned the Supreme Court, and it is surely vital to our whole constitutional system that the broad understanding and acceptance of the legitimacy of such a contrademocratic institution, as Alexander Bickel called it, not be lost; or if it has in principle been lost, that it be recovered.

Another institution that has seemed promising to me in this regard is the bureaucracy which, for all its limitations, does introduce into the political system elements of stability, intelligence, and equity that are not altogether dissimilar to the qualities intended to be provided by the original Senate. The advantage of the bureaucracy from this point of view is its very invincibility (a democracy has a much harder time dispensing with the bureaucracy than with the Senate, as Max Weber—with somewhat different intentions—has shown). The disadvantage is the bureaucracy's narrowness and its strong tendency toward the merely technical, a tendency strengthened under modern doctrines of scientific management. A properly schooled bureaucracy might, however, be a solidly based source of the intelligence, stability, equity, and public-spiritedness that a democracy needs.

But institutional arrangements are probably not sufficient, and the degree to which the founders relied on them may partly explain the power of the populist principle. For the institutions require what I have argued has been seriously lacking, namely public justification and, therefore, continued legitimacy in the eyes of the people, who are the ultimate rulers. What some of the founders neglected is that in a popular government, however much it is modified with various "sauces" (and the bureaucracy is a fairly penetrating one), the people have to be reasoned with by their statesmen. This means reasoning not only at the level of specific policies but also at the level of constitutional principle. Precisely because the American government is so transparent, relatively speaking, so little reliant on lords, kings, and priests, American statesmen must keep alive its basic rationale. At the least this means not playing the easy game of populist rhetoric,

which cannot but undermine, in the long run, the capacity of the system to act well. At the most it means finding ways of reinforcing and deepening the people's common-sense understanding that government, even popular government, is more than a matter of registering and implementing dominant opinion.

This task of leadership is crucial, and it provides a kind of rough test of contemporary statesmen. Any American statesman whose public face is populist is not performing his highest duty, no matter how prudent and successful his specific policies may be. This points us, however, to the deeper consideration to which I have made reference. The founding generation, people and leaders alike, could grasp the principles of checks on popular opinion and could make informed judgments about specific institutions and policies because they were persuaded of the truth of the foundation and end of that government. That there can be majority tyranny is a notion that makes sense to men who see government as designed to secure inalienable rights. If this truth is denied or lost sight of—as is surely the case today—it becomes exceedingly difficult to hold any ground against the populist impulse.

The loose relativism that today penetrates popular political and ethical understanding tends, of course, to support the kind of loose populism I have been examining and criticizing. Such relativism is the ultimate obstacle to any thoroughgoing mitigation (by which I do not mean some kind of aristocratic displacement) of simplistic democracy. The great popular—and final—challenge today is, "Who's to say?" The question implies not only that it is extremely difficult and dangerous to give anyone (or any governmental institution) the power to "say" what is right or what is to be done, but that there is in principle no way to "say" what is right or what should be done. Liberal government exists in a tension between popular control and individual rights. With the washing away of the ground of individual rights, consent in one form or another seems to be the only place for a statesman to stand.

If this describes the popular view, the scholarly view is fundamentally identical. Almost the whole range of dispute among scholars about how American democracy does and should work takes place within the "consent" arena. What is popular consent? How is it articulated, and how is it to be most accurately recorded and responded to by government? These are the agreed issues. There are occasional forays outside the field of populism, but their general feebleness tends to support my broad point. The "new public administration," for example, has been dissatisfied, mainly on political grounds, with the subordination of the old public administration to

dominant public opinion. The *ground* on which the new public administration might resist popular opinion is a treacherous bog consisting of supposed silent or suppressed majorities (a path out of the bog and onto the safe ground of populism again), or an almost undefended commitment to socially disadvantaged people (as the definition of social equality and social consciousness), or a more or less simple existentialism, which the new public administration is not the first to see is the main alternative to democratism. If sheer preference or commitment is all there is, why not mine?

Scientific Management. Just as a serious examination of the insufficiency of populism yields a number of common-sense corrections, so does the serious examination of the insufficiencies of scientific management. But as contemporary populism points to the underlying issue of natural rights, so contemporary scientific management points to the underlying issue of the nature of human reason. In this case it may be more helpful to touch (with some apprehension) on this underlying issue before turning to some common-sense thoughts about statesmanship or practical reason. We are not going to be much helped here by the thought of the American founders. They were far less articulate and self-conscious in their thinking about practical reason, or decision making, or the science of government, than they were about the political side of government. Their thrust was in the direction of systematic science, but this science did not seem to be inconsistent with, or likely to replace, traditional prudence. We who live with the sometimes unintended results of their work and thought need to try to recover and reflect upon some of their more or less hidden assumptions.

Our problem is to understand practical reason or, in the contemporary term, "rational" decision making. The issue is well framed in Herbert Simon's forceful and influential attack on the maxims of so-called practical judgment. Simon's argument is that these maxims, which are supposed to guide practical reason and which are the glory of the "practical man," are in fact empty because they are self-contradictory. For every maxim there is a counter-maxim: look before you leap; he who hesitates is lost. The sum of practical rationality here is zero. If the practical man decides well (for example, if he maximizes his values), either he is lucky or he is proceeding according to a rationality more systematic and scientific than he knows, which it is the business of the science of decision making to elaborate and extend. (This is a theoretical elaboration of Frederick Taylor's scientific management.)

The issue here is, What is rational decision making? I think many

of the critics of scientific management have given up the game too easily, granting a Simonian understanding of what rational decision making is but contending that the sphere of rationality in decision making is much more limited than Simon and others suggest. Practical judgment turns out to be either an accommodation to practical political necessities or an unavoidable arbitrariness. (It is the current willingness of systems-analysis proponents to admit these limitations on practical rationality that has typically muddled the issue in the current literature.) I think the attack must be carried further.

I will not claim victory here, but I do want at least to open the question whether scientific management misunderstands the essence, if not the scope, of practical rationality. I will frame the issue as a proposition: the two critical principles of the current understanding of practical reason, or rational decision making—the notion of the “one best method” and the assumption that all practical reasoning is essentially economic reasoning—do not make good sense.

As already suggested, the crux of scientific management is the notion of “one best method.” Does it not make more sense to say that practically there often *is* no one best method? The road to the one best method is not the road to rationality but to insanity. There are many cases where it just does not matter much which one of alternative choices is made (whether, for example, to ride elevator A or elevator B). It is not rational to worry or calculate much about something that does not matter much, even if one could conceive of and even perhaps discover some marginal benefit one way or the other (elevator A is closer to the entrance and thus more used and thus more worn—or is it therefore better maintained?). In other cases, the difference between alternative possible choices may matter very much, but there may be practically no way to know which one is better. It is likely that the outcomes cannot be known in crucial respects. There is, of course, a good deal of thinking and research on decision making under conditions of uncertainty, but again the premise of this thinking is that these conditions *limit* rationality. My suggestion is the common-sensical and, I think, practically indispensable notion that one of the most important elements of practical reason—or “rational” decision making—is precisely how well or poorly such limits are grappled with.

The man who insists on calculating, and constantly postpones decisions in order to get more information and make more predictions and calculations, is acting *irrationally* in any sensible view, though he is merely persisting in a rational pursuit according to the strict economizing model. Herbert Simon speaks of “bounded

rationality," yet he more or less admits that it is only because of these irrational boundaries that any given exercise of rationality makes any sense at all.⁹ Simon's main response to the insanity of the maximizing model is what he calls "satisficing," which is a much more common-sense (and, incidentally, traditional means-end) approach in which the decision maker is satisfied with the decision that is "good enough" instead of insisting on maximizing. That seems altogether, may we say, reasonable. But for Simon it is a necessary falling short of reason. We "satisfice" because we have not the wits to maximize. If we can maximize, we would be silly to "satisfice." On the contrary, I think we "satisfice" because we have the wits to know that we *cannot* maximize and that we would be insane to try to do so. The notion of the "one best method," that human rationality is the maximization of utility, is, as I have tried to show in an extended analysis of Herbert Simon, a fragile bridge suspended between two great fires, the arbitrariness of preference and the insanity of infinite calculation, by which it is consumed.¹⁰

The second side of the contemporary view of practical reason is the contention that all practical reasoning, all rational decision making, is essentially economic. That does not mean that there is any claim that all people do act as economizers—or even that anyone actually does it (it turns out to be quite impossible); but so far as they are rational they are economizers. The genius of "economic" rationality is that it is unqualifiably comprehensive and it is also a purely instrumental science. All "ends," "values," are reduced to "utility," which provides the ultimate test of the science of rational choice without threatening its purely instrumental character. Clearly, there is some truth in this whole understanding. To take the previously given example of military planning, it is surely correct that for military planners utterly to ignore questions of cost does involve their avoiding the "hard management choices" that must be made. In government, at least, every decision (well, almost every decision) can be and at some point must be reduced to a decision about budget, about economizing. Clearly, economizing is involved in practical reasoning, is necessary to it; the question is whether that is all there is to it or whether that is truly its essence.

Consider the experience and the character of the Bureau of the Budget or, in its present form, the Office of Management and Budget

9. Herbert Simon, *Administrative Behavior: A Study of Decision Making Processes in Administrative Organization*, 2nd ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1957).

10. Herbert Storing, ed., *Essays on the Scientific Study of Politics* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1962), pp. 63–150.

(OMB). The centrality and independence of the OMB are undeniable. It is hard to imagine a government without such an institution performing such a function (though it is perhaps not quite as hard to imagine as we might today think, and the effort might be instructive). It is easy, moreover, to agree that the director of the OMB, whoever he may be, is the superior, despite his lack of cabinet position and his lower salary, of most heads of departments. But is it imaginable that the OMB should govern—would that be reasonable? My point is simple, but I think very pertinent to the present issue. It is surely important that generals be compelled to face the issue of cost/benefit, and the people who do that compelling are as vital in practice as that element of practical rationality is vital in principle. But must not generals remain generals? Could the OMB defend the country? Could it conduct foreign relations? Could it protect individual rights?

What we need to consider here is the effect of economic *thinking* and whether its claim to be practical rationality makes sense. Is not the beginning of military rationality some kind of understanding of an adequate defense, rather than some abstract notion of maximizing utility or even the rather less abstract notion of “more bang for the buck”? Are not similar understandings the essential basis for practical rationality in other spheres? The legitimate rights of minorities ought to be secured. Old people ought to be able to live decently. All of these raise or point to economic questions, but they are not “economizing” in themselves. The question is whether such end-oriented views are not independent, indispensable bases of practical rationality.

The crux in practice is what kind of decision results from one view or the other. Grant that a general will make bad decisions if he utterly ignores questions of cost (which the fact of limited resources makes it extremely difficult to do). But then consider what kind of decision the economist is likely to make. Is he not likely to be easily shifted from a “utility” that is costly to one that is less so? Is he not likely to prefer utilities and costs that are measurable over those that are not? I do not claim that the economists *necessarily* make such errors in practical reasoning—any more than it can be claimed that the general is necessarily irresponsible or indifferent to cost/benefit—but that is the tendency.

One of the common criticisms of scientific management in various forms, including systems analysis, is its indifference to structure and institutions and, at the same time, its thoughtless tendency to foster centralized institutions. The basis of this criticism is the traditional fear that the centralization fostered by the pursuit of administrative efficiency will threaten democracy. It should be noted that

the claim that scientific management has a centralizing tendency is controversial. Some defenders of systems analysis have contended that it is neutral with regard to structure and indeed can foster decentralization. Taking advantage of an ambiguity that is unresolved in Max Weber's account of bureaucracy, they contend that the development of objectively rational bases of decision reduces the dependence on their authority and therefore on hierarchy. In Weberian terms, the stronger and more comprehensive the definition of jurisdiction, the weaker can be the lines of hierarchical authority (subject, of course, to the necessity of enforcing jurisdictional definitions which are relatively unexplored by scientific management). In practice, surely, and, as I have tried at least to suggest, in principle also, scientific management is centralizing. It is centralizing in the sense that Frederick Taylor understood perfectly well, that the crucial and governing activity is development of the science itself, which can only occur (except derivatively) at the top. It is centralizing, further, to the extent that gaps in the science make it necessary to resort to central *authority* to support the science itself. And it is centralizing to the extent that (presuming a comprehensive science) there remains a continuing need to *enforce* the rational design of the science.

Scientific management radicalizes the claim for "unity" in administration. When Andrew Jackson defended his removal of subordinates even contrary to congressional legislation, he presented a view of administration as well as a view of democracy. Administration was seen as residing crucially in the president, with the administration serving as his eyes and hands. The Whig view, on the other hand, rested not only on a different (more "pluralistic") view of American politics but also on a different view of administration. The Whigs saw public administration not as a closed hierarchy leading to the top but as pools of official discretion, loosely connected but largely independent. Jackson and the Whigs were primarily concerned with what today we would call the issue of responsibility—Jackson, to the president; the Whigs, to the law. But the implicit views of public administration are especially interesting here, and the Whig view in particular since it is the one that seems always to lose. This view emphasizes the importance of the exercise of experienced, informed, responsible discretion as the heart of administration. Sound discretion, not obedience to higher command, is the essence of good administration, though both, of course, are always involved. Administrative structures should be built to provide the right conditions for this informed good judgment—independent regulatory commissions are a case in point. The Whig view of administration is modeled, one might say, on the judge. (One could describe modern administrative

science as the decisive displacement of the judge as the model administrator by the administrative assistant—even, increasingly, in the courts themselves). A major aspect of the Whig model was the notion of the judge's responsibility, but I want to point to another side, the kind of practical reason the judge exercises. His judgment here is confined and guided by more or less severe limits of the law, but within these limits the judge is expected to secure a personal grasp on the whole and to exercise his best judgment. He is thus, characteristically, assisted by law clerks, whose very immaturity, transience, and small numbers reinforce the judge's personal responsibility and judgment.

It seems reasonably clear that any government, to be well administered, needs a judicious combination of these two principles—each may appropriately predominate in its own time and place. But what we need to recover is an understanding of the claim of what can be called the judicial model of *rationality*. Partly because of our failure to grasp the *reason* of that model, it always tends to lose out in a contest with centralized, hierarchical rationality.

Perhaps the most striking omission in scientific management is any concern with the moral side of decision making, especially of political decision making. There is some current renewed interest in the ethics of administration or decision making, but it tends to result either in (fringe) codes-of-ethics thinking, the assumption of which is that ethics surround practical decision making but do not really enter into it; or in (sterile) case studies of the confrontation of (arbitrary) public policies and (arbitrary) personal preferences.

What we can roughly but usefully call the moral side of public decision making was for the American founders the major concern; today the intellectual side has occupied almost the whole ground. Yet in any kind of practical situation the question of the fidelity of the decision maker is crucial. The question that Frederick Taylor could not answer (or could answer only by assuming a simplistic harmony)—Why will the scientific manager not try to exploit his workers?—was for the founders the vital issue of statesmanship.

Robert Hutchins once observed of university administration that the intellectual problems, adapting means to ends, are small compared with the moral problems. A fairly simple example: It is on the whole easier to know that someone does not deserve academic tenure than it is to decide not to give it to him. As I cast my mind back on the many administrative situations I have been involved in, I am struck by the importance of the moral character of the people in charge. I think of a small army unit that constantly threatened to come unhinged under the leadership of an intelligent and able but

weak commander and which was held together only by the stern, mule-skinner army morality of an old, extremely inefficient master sergeant. I think of political science departments whose fortunes (so far as they are not determined from the outside) seem to wax and wane far more in rhythm with the integrity and moral stature of department heads than with their administrative ability in the usual sense. I do not mean to assert the simple-minded proposition that good men make good administrators, or even that good administrators need to be good men—although that is not a bad place to start. I think that one could defend the proposition that moral stature is vital to administration or statesmanship of any consequence. And that is precisely what is lacking in our statesmen trained in and oriented to scientific management. They are no more really bad men than really good ones; rather, they tend to be morally uninteresting children. That dimension—moral stature—is missing or severely truncated.

The reference to Robert Hutchins suggests another common-sense correction of the scientific-management view of statesmanship, namely that the good statesman has a good understanding of and commitment to the ends of his organization, whatever they are. University presidents these days tend to be bookkeepers and brokers among their various "constituencies." That may, often, be good enough, but such administrators work in the shadow of men who knew what universities are for and how any particular university fit into that broad function. Greatness in a president of the United States, in a president of a university, in a general of the army, or in a chief of a governmental bureau is determined among other things by the grasp he has of the *ends* of his organization. A fairly loose grasp may be sufficient most of the time, but even mundane statesmanship is rooted in some such understanding. If an ordinary public servant does not need the grasp of the American regime of a Lincoln, he does need, as John Rohr suggests, at least the grasp of a reasonably competent student of some parts of American constitutional law.¹¹

A final common-sense observation, harder to explain and defend, and for that reason more directly pertinent to the underlying question of practical reason, is that the essence of statesmanship is to be found in the old distinction between line and staff. The curious thing about decision-making theory is that it is not about decisions but about getting ready to make decisions. The rationality of scientific management is the rationality of the staff, but it does not reach, it does not treat whatever it is that is finally *decisive*. Decisiveness is, after all, universally acknowledged to be central to good administra-

11. John A. Rohr, *Ethics for Bureaucrats* (New York: Marcel Dekker, 1978).

tion of any consequence, yet it has no place in decision-making theory.

EDITORIAL NOTE

Herbert Storing had not quite completed his work on this essay when he died, suddenly, on September 9, 1977. A comparison of this draft with his outline for the essay indicates that a final section, "Conclusion," was never written. The portion of the outline covering the "Conclusion" is presented below.

The reader is cautioned that Mr. Storing may have intended some changes as he developed the ideas from the outline into their final essay form; however, a careful comparison of the outline and the essay as a whole indicates that he followed the outline, as far as he went, quite closely.

Conclusion

Authentic American statesmanship has decayed, but it decayed (as it were) from within.

1. Premise: statesmanship is in the service of the private sphere. This means that the activity of statesmanship is not seen as "fulfilling" and tends to be held in low esteem.

2. This is magnified by the American founders' effort to rely even on this instrumental statesmanship as little as possible.

3. Radicalization of popular principle

4. Radicalization of science as government principle

Thus statesmanship is not much respected; doesn't much respect itself ("civil servants" want to be "professionals" or even "government employees" rather than "civil servants")

Statesmanship tends to narrow itself to the role of the respectable technician, leaving the big decisions to "politicians" who in turn have to find their justification in being spokesmen of the popular will.

There is an alternative tradition, growing out of what the framers did rather than what they said.

They were pulled between the private and public lives; usually they chose the public, and not merely out of duty (and anyway, what's the basis of that?)

There is also a strain of popular recognition of need for nontechnical leadership and of leaders who see that need and try to meet it; always a presumption against that—which has been radicalized.

(this will not, however, be the last point made)