

Constructing Political Reform

Criticizing the Current Situation

Newt Gingrich was in error in 1994 when he blamed government for ills of the nation. Yes, it was true that "the bond of trust" with the people had been broken. It was also true that the costs of government had become excessive, a fact that becomes particularly troublesome during times of real economic hardship. And it was also true that some governmental bureaucracies had become too large, too inefficient, and too unresponsive. The charge that there is government waste will always be supported by evidence. And the unresponsiveness of "government", and of specific governmental offices, can always be illustrated anecdotally. The current Speaker of the House of Representatives has a collection of depressing tales to tell, all of them, as he puts it, "about how the federal government is squandering or misusing your, the taxpayers', money."

But, contrary to Gingrich's allegations, the bond of trust that has been broken is less between people and government than between people and a presumptive professionalization of democracy. The pessimism and cynicism that is consequent is much less a reflection of loss of will and spirit than an accurate but disorienting recognition that we are being offered surrogate democracy through a degeneration of politics into techne.

"Democracy was born in conversations," the nineteenth century Danish writer N. F. S. Grundtvig declared. But the contemporary American

political conversation draws much more from the commercialization of that subject than from its substance. This full-scale commercialization is guided by the incentives of buying and selling, which process elevates public-relations denizens into political experts and transforms candidates for elected office into market commodities. The same marketing techniques are used to sell such candidates to the public that are used to sell toothpaste, beer, and laundry soap. The same polls are done on them that are used to demonstrate which automobiles, refrigerators, and television sets sell well. The commodity is different, but the commercialization of that commodity functions according to the very same rules. This is why candidates for public office hardly have any realistic chance of success at all unless they project positive images, particularly on television.

The good news is that the majority of citizens see through it. Some, of course, use this recognition to justify non-participation. Why bother, they ask, when nothing of any significance will come from it. Others continue to participate, but for the most part joylessly, because they really do not expect very much either. Lots of others take to politics avocationally, as their neighbors might take to fishing or to travel; these can be counted upon to continue their involvement, probably no matter what. But the majority of American citizens are rather lackluster today, for they do not expect persons who run for elected office to be able to deliver much good on their behalf. Why? Because they know that the system must be radically changed, but they do not believe that it will since the candidates who speak of this need tend not to make it a high-priority agenda item after they are elected.

Unfortunately, this is precisely the idea -- this recognition of the apparent futility of it all -- that is directing the election process. The "bond of trust has been broken" because American politics is no longer about trust.

No, it is no longer about vesting public responsibility in a person elected to carry forward the needs and aspirations of the people he/she represents. And when politics is about something other than this, whatever that something is, it has gotten seriously and dangerously off course, and is not fulfilling the indispensable role that democracy has assigned to it.

This is the profound tragedy in contemporary American life. At the very time when the nation is being seriously challenged to respond to responsibilities and opportunities throughout the world, the instrumentation that was designed for such purposes is being held in captivity, often by well-intended people who somehow agreed to let the requisite instrumentation serve merely instrumentalist goals. The political process, in short, has become narcissistic. It no longer functions in support of the achievement of a common good, but, in a phrase that was prominent in the Middle Ages, has become incurvatus in se, that is, "turned in upon itself," both creating and serving its own ends. The health and vitality of the democracy cannot be restored until the reservoir of national good will, currently being held captive, becomes unbound, and, thus, free to do what it knows to be right. Politics is anemic and ineffective in American society today, and the people are depressed, because we know, deep in our collective soul, that reform -- thorough reform -- is called for.

I can already feel readers' reactions to this assessment as I place these accusatory words on the screen. "But it was the budget," some will object, "that got us into these huge difficulties. Excessive spending. Spending beyond our means. And the only way to curb government spending is to curtail government activity, and this means that we must place strict limits on the power and scope of government." Such an attitude seems so right, so sensible, so much on target. And yet, when one looks carefully at how bud-

get excesses happened, the picture changes substantially. Here two facts are of utmost importance. First, the national debt tripled during the presidency of Ronald Reagan because his priority was to fight, and win, the Cold War, and he did so by upping weapons' spending by such large percentages that the Soviet Union was unable to compete. The achievement was the ending of the fierce and debilitating competition between the two super-powers, but the consequence was a debt of unprecedented proportions. Was the effort worth it? The answer must be a resounding Yes, but it would be a mistake to believe that there were no adverse consequences. Monies spent on defense is money that cannot be spent elsewhere. Thus, in the very moment that President Reagan was praised for being decisive about Marxist-Leninism, and the manifestation of this philosophy in the form of the communism that was being practiced in the Soviet Union, he was criticized for tolerating a domestic situation that found increasing numbers of Americans sleeping and living on the streets, increasing numbers of Americans without the assistance of the mental-health programs on which they had previously relied, and increasing numbers of Americans devoid of a living wage.

The second important fact is that the increased social costs that the nation has experienced in the past decade (attributed by the Gingrichites, with repetitious rhetorical vehemence, to spiraling welfare expenditures) is due in significant part to increased costs of medical care coupled with sharply rising mortality rates. Original Social Security and Medicare projected costs were calculated according to actuarial tables that did not foresee that Americans would soon be living much longer, and would therefore be demanding a much higher quality of life over a longer span of time. Without question, the costs of welfare have increased exponentially too. But any objective, fair-minded examination of federal expenditures will confirm that the most

alarming increases, and, thus, the most serious challenge to national financial stability, lie in the area of Social Security and Medicare expectations and promises. None of this is a direct result of expanded governmental bureaucracies. Hence, it is a "cheap shot" to blame current financial strains on alleged "out of control" spending practices.

The bond of trust that has been broken is due more to the imposition of a new, rapidly-expanding professional class between the people and those agencies and places where legislative decisions are made. In short, the mischief is not created by current government as much as it is created by the combination of the professionalization and commercialisation of politics. To get some sense of the force of this observation one need only think of the increasing numbers of persons within the population who earn their living through some parasitical relationship to the political process. Think of the increasing numbers of pollsters and pundits, the increasing amount of television time that is accorded to analysts and commentators. Consider the increasing numbers of lobbyists who fill the halls of government and crowd the offices of elected officials -- 80,000 paid lobbyists in Washington, D.C. alone, and thousands more in centers of state government. Think too of the great and gross role of PAC money in determining both the execution and outcome of elections. Consider the enormous pressure this places on candidates who recognize that they will not be able to compete against their opponents unless, as it is said, they learn how "to play the game", and are equipped to do so. How does a candidate maintain his/her humanity when the election process itself is designed to transform him/her into a commodity to be bought and sold?

All of this, in my judgment, is what is destroying the political process,

and, as the people know, the disease is spreading in epidemic proportions. By now the parasites have become strong enough to create their own arena, an arena that has elevated into, and is now generally recognized, as politics' primary field of operation. The bond of trust between the people and their elected representatives has been broken because it has been usurped by an industry that makes it money through professionalized co-optation. Yes, in the deepest sense, it remains true that "democracy is born in conversation," but today's conversations have degenerated into reluctant, dissatisfied, piecemeal responses to calculated programmed candidacies produced by skilled professionals who work the commercial market just as effectively, and often as blatantly, as those who are promoting any other commodity. And should candidates be successful, they will continue to be more attentive to the ones who were most responsible for their success than to constituent the Constitution holds they were elected to represent. This is where the chief problems with contemporary American democracy lie, and, as we have repeated, nothing significant will change unless there is systemic transformation.

I can anticipate the objections. The analysis seems cogent, but what can be done about it? Various election groups (Common Cause, for one, and various organizations dedicated to campaign reform and more effective government) have made important proposals particularly with respect to political campaign finance reform. Further, in the conversation they held before senior citizens in Vermont, President Clinton and Speaker Gingrich shook hands in agreement after one of the persons present suggested that a non-partisan, blue-ribbon commission be established to make recommendations about campaign finance reform. Moreover, bills are pending before several legislative houses -- both state and federal -- to limit campaign spending and campaign contributions. In the State of California, Cal-Pirg has

been working diligently on this matter. In the House of Representatives, Congresswoman Linda Smith, Republican of Washington, has introduced a bill that, if passed, would limit campaign contributions to the state within which the candidate is running, eliminate all PAC contributions, restrict a candidate's personal contribution to \$5,000, ban meals, trips, and gifts to members of Congress, develop less complicated reporting procedures, and disallow franked mass mailings from office holders from 60 to 90 days before an election. It is too early to predict whether these efforts will be successful or not, but the increasing number of them illustrates that campaign reform pressure is mounting. The people simply know that something is seriously amiss, and blend their dissatisfaction with this component of present political practice with the animosity they feel toward television advertisements whose purpose is to systematically destroy the opponent's personal character.

In addition, campaign seasons are much too long. Other countries seem to deal with election matters in much quicker fashion, with no serious negative consequences. Office holders seem perpetually in search of money to be able to conduct the next campaign, and there is no doubt that this affects their performance as well as their ability to operate free of external pressures. On this score, Jonathan Rauch's highly unsettling book, Demosclerosis: The Silent Killer of American Government and Kevin Phillips' sobering Arrogant Capital confirm that the frustration and dissatisfaction cannot be restricted to the election process. Indeed, both analysts believe that contemporary American government has been severely crippled by having fallen under the domination of the ever-expanding power of lobbyists and special interests. Phillips notes that there are more than 90,000 lobbyists and 60,000 lawyers who work Capitol Hill on a regular basis, and that the lobbying busi-

ness has grown into a \$10 billion per year industry. Rauch quotes Jimmy Carter, who, when leaving office, offered this observation:

Today, as people have become ever more doubtful of the ability of the government to deal with our problems, we are increasingly drawn to single-issue groups and special-interest organizations to ensure that, whatever else happens, our own personal views and our own private interests are protected.

From all of these vantage points the way we conduct politics, together with the way we do government, really satisfies no one. Yet no one seems capable of effecting significant change. Rauch cites Bill Clinton's prescient statement on November 3, 1992, when he addressed the crowd in front of the Old State House in Little Rock, who were there to congratulate him on his election to the Presidency:

I think perhaps the most important thing that we understand here in the heartland of Arkansas is the need to reform the political system, to reduce the influence of special interests and give more influence back to the kind of people that are in this crowd tonight by the tens of thousands. And I will work...to do that.

But, predictably, in very little time, President Clinton found his administration mired in the very special-interests, single-issue legislative morass that his campaign, at least at times, was dedicated toward diminishing or dissolving. And it takes no great leap in analysis to observe that the same inflection has riddled the Democratic Party through and through.

Only minimal change will occur if we ask elected officials to legislate changes, or if candidates must secure agreements among themselves as a condition of modified policy. Current office holders will not be highly

motivated to change the procedures that enabled them to win elections. And individual candidates will not willingly give up political advantage -- or place themselves at a disadvantage -- in the interests of campaign reform. And yet we propose that the time has come to call a halt to present practice, even if this must be done unilaterally, that is, even if candidates or office holders put themselves at risk by subscribing to reform measures.

For starters, why not eliminate PAC money contributions altogether. A government of the people, for the people, and by the people is not assisted by influence peddlers whose primary loyalties are not to the achievement of a common good, but, instead, to furthering the cause of the agencies, fields or companies that pay their salaries. The real problem with lobbyists is that they transform office holders into lobbyists too, that is, into individuals with a legislative obligation to protect selected segments of the population. There are ways of tinkering with present practice, all of which would require the placing of stricter limits on the amounts of money that the PACs can give to campaigns. But the only way to fix this situation is to eliminate PAC money altogether. A little may be lost when this is done, but the gains are so much more greater and more substantial.

A second recommendation concerns the direct relationship between a candidate (and would-be office holder) and the people he/she most directly represents as this relationship affects where and how a candidate is allowed to solicit support monies. My suggestion would be that a minimum of 75% of these monies be raised within the state, district, county, or municipality wherein the candidates owns primary residency. The purpose of this proposal is sharply to curtail the influence of outside monies on local races. Why should voter-influence groups in Virginia, say, be allowed to determine the outcome of an election in California. Just as there is a residency

dency requirement for voting, so should there be a residency requirement for supporting a campaign monetarily. Were this recommendation put into effect, it would also limit the influence of groups, agencies, businesses, and other coalitions in Washington, D.C. on the outcomes of elections outside the nation's capitol. A healthy democracy is encouraged by tension between dominant ways of doing things in Washington and the highly diverse currents of thought and attitude that reflect regions and localities within the country. Effective government is hampered by the insider monopoly; democratic processes work better when the insider-outsider distinction is supported by powerful referents.

And, while we are proposing reform measures, let's propose one to restrict the number of mail pieces that a campaign can send out. Why not agree to no more than one campaign mailing to an individual or a household per election cycle. Think of the improvements in quality of prose if we did it this way. Candidates and campaign managers would spend more time carefully considering what they wanted most to communicate, since they would have no additional opportunity to clean up mistakes, revise priorities, either heighten or lessen the rhetoric, or change the timing of the mail piece. Everything important would have to be included in the one allowed mailing. The messiness that surrounds campaign offices, the waste of paper, the excessive amounts of money spent on mail and other delivery systems, all of this, and more, would be diminished if but one mailing per individual or household were allowed.

I don't expect to get very far with the next suggestion. I've tested it in various forums, and find that many citizens really love the excitement of politics, and can't seem to get enough of it. Some have even told me that

they are depressed the day after an election -- the way children feel the day after Christmas -- because they realize just how much time must pass before they can experience the same thrills again. Nevertheless, my suggestion would be that we Americans come somewhat closer to the British system and limit the duration of the campaign season. Great Britain seems to do rather well with a short period, say, five to six weeks. In the United States, by contrast, we tend to utilize about one of every four years of a Presidential term, and close to half of a House term, on the next election. By the time the voting day actually arrives, most citizens are pretty sick of the accusations and counter-accusations, and candidates are spent as well. Moreover, the extended election season tends to insure that vitriolisms will replace substantive dialogue. It is impossible to sustain meaningful discussion of issues over such a long period of time. I don't anything of any significant value would be lost if we shortened the time. Of course, the only way to enforce this would be to issue penalties against candidates who started too early, the way it is done, say, by the NCAA when colleges or universities initiate official athletic practice before the official opening of the season. I recognize that this is a difficult recommendation to advance, but I doubt that the nation would feel the loss of intellectual substance if such rules were set in motion.

It would also be important to change the term of office for members of the House of Representatives. There is much clamor today for term limits. How about a system which would include a shift from two to three-year Congressional terms? This would mean that members of the House of Representatives would serve half the length of time of members of the Senate, and the additional year would enable them to achieve something substantial before

they had to devote consummate energy toward the next election cycle. If there is still a national will for term limits, why not suggest that no one serves more than twelve years? This would mean that a U.S. Senator would serve for a maximum of twelve years, or two terms, and that a member of the House of Representatives would serve for twelve years, or four terms. I think we could achieve significant good by making such changes.

If restricting mail pieces, length of the campaign period, why not also put large restrictions on paid television advertising? Viewers are thoroughly tired of the ceaseless barrage of 30-second and 60-second ads that fills the screen during the three to four weeks prior to an election. This is also the costliest portion of an election campaign. Significant savings could be found in reductions of viewing time. Furthermore, the influence of PAC money would be smaller factors if there were less television advertising time that needed to be purchased. My preference would be that paid television political advertising be abolished altogether, but I recognize that this is not feasible. But I think we do have a right to expect television stations to devote their public-service time to political campaigns in a clearly equitable manner, or, or if this is unfeasible, to offer paid-for time at significantly reduced rates. As indicated, my preference would be that strict limits be invoked on the amount of television time that can be purchased by a campaign. I also wish we could invent a way to insure that the content of television politics be more uplifting (or, at least, less denigrating) than what is encouraged by present practice. It is extremely difficult to have respect for persons whose characters have been stamped upon and whose reputations have been subjected to intense critical scrutiny. And when respect for candidates diminishes, so too does respect for the election process.

Following Congresswoman Smith's recommendation, I think it would

be an excellent idea to limit the amount of family money a candidate can use to finance a campaign. Ms. Smith suggests that \$5,000 be the limit. I return to the comment that Democratic candidates for Congress in our area have incurred personal debts of \$150,000 at the close of losing campaigns. What is even more ominous is that a recent successful candidate, Michael Huffington, spent \$7 million of his own money to win the Congressional seat and \$28 million more in his unsuccessful bid for the United States Senate. If Congresswoman Smith's recommendation be adopted, the candidate field would open to persons without large personal wealth, and no one would face the prospect of having to take out a new or second mortgages as a requirement for running for elected office.

I wish, too, that there were ways to insure that the truth be told about candidates. I recognize it is fashionable today to slant the truth, create innuendo, raise suspicions, and create uneasiness about a particular candidate in order to establish a standpoint on which to initiate a contrast. Without question there are great differences in moral integrity, intellectual capacity, previous experience, performance record, and individual motivations among candidates. But the way in which such contrasts are portrayed too often requires that the opponent be described not only as being unqualified for the position to which he/she aspires but as being manifestly deficient as a human being. Those who engage in such activity know full well that they are stretching the truth or engaging in overstatement, and those who read or see the advertisements recognize the same excessiveness. In athletics, for comparison, opponents usually talk about their rivals in highly positive terms, sometimes erring on the side of hyperbole. "It's really going to be tough on Saturday afternoon," a football coach suggests, "because the other team has a powerful running attack as well as the best offensive line that we will en-

counter all season." What if we were to follow the same practice in politics? "My opponent is a highly skilled legislator, who has had years of practice. But I am asking for your vote because I believe I am more in touch with all of you, and my votes are more representative of enlightened collective opinion within this region." Or, "You know quite a bit about my opponent, and quite a bit about me. What you should think about is that we have a basic disagreement about how we are going to protect the environment and still encourage business to adopt entrepreneurial postures. Of course, I believe my view is more trustworthy because it has the support of leaders within each of these two fields, leaders like _____ and _____ . " I don't know if this would work, but any attempt in this direction would elevate political debate and conversation substantially. Perhaps, then, there could be greater concentration on burning questions and unresolved issues, and less attention to matters of personality, appearance, rumor, and innuendo. What could be wrong about inserting good manners into the political process? Were we to do so, we would immediately attract more qualified candidates, that is, persons who are willing to commit themselves to a period of public service, but are dissuaded from taking such steps, within present circumstances, because of a well-founded reluctance to submit themselves to a process that is guaranteed to be demeaning and even threatening to their and their family's well-being. Why not take every appropriate step to make politics more humane? Why should entering the fray be tantamount to risking or losing one's good name? Furthermore, what real deep satisfaction can one find in defeating a candidate whom one has ridiculed as a "scumbag" or a "sleaze-ball"? It becomes infinitely sweeter to defeat someone who is held in high esteem, meaning that the esteem that has been accorded in this selection is higher still.

It couldn't be enforced, but it could become highly recommended that everyone involved in politics at any level read some indispensable texts before getting deeply involved. I would start with Aristotle's Politics, Book I, wherein the author roots the subject in fundamental differences between animals and humans, noting that humans have the gift of speech and possess the ability to make distinctions between good and evil, justice and injustice. The purpose of politics, according to Aristotle, is the creation of the good life, which begins with the acceptance of responsibility for the bare needs of life, and culminates in the ongoing effort to link good life with social state, both of which, he believes, have been created by nature. Listen to Aristotle's affirmation:

A social instinct is implanted in all men by nature, and yet he who first founded the state was the greatest of benefactors. For man, when perfected, is the best of animals, but, when separated from law and justice, he is the worst of all.... Wherefore, if he have not virtue, he is the most unholy and the most savage of animals.... But justice is the bond of men in states, for the administration of justice, which is the determination of what is just, is the principle of order in political society.

The temper or tone of this description of the function of politics, and the work of the state, is a far cry from almost everything that gets talked about, or thought about, when the subject of politics is introduced in today's discussions. But human nature has not changed. Thus, if Aristotle is correct, the same foundation that supported politics in his day is the one to be most trusted in our day. There is no reason why politics cannot be reconnected to justice, good order, and virtue in our deliberations over it. Clearly, human-kind of going to be affected by politics, and humans are going to organize themselves into states (and cities as well as nations). The only question is

what sort of politics will be allowed to prevail, and what organizational principles will become formative. Debates and discussions concerning these choices should certainly be spirited, but there is no requirement that they be demeaning.

Listen too to Alexis de Tocqueville, who certainly recognized that the practice of democracy is hardly neat and tidy, but also insisted that its functioning had clear and definite purpose. Tocqueville, as visitor to America from France, was impressed with the "tumult" and "clamor" of citizen involvement in politics. "No sooner do you set foot on American soil than you find yourself in a sort of tumult," he wrote in Democracy in America. "A confused clamor rises on every side, and a thousand voices are heard at once, each expressing some social requirements." Tocqueville believed it fitting to applaud the intensity of such activity because he understood Americans to be making the following affirmation about the fundamental purpose of democracy, which is "not to achieve the greatest strength or glory for the nation as a whole but to provide for every individual therein the utmost well-being." This includes "protecting" every individual "from all afflictions," by "making conditions equal." This is the objective, namely: "making conditions equal," which is tantamount to "establishing a democratic government."

Candidates for public office should train themselves on such texts. Professionals who wish to offer assistance should be guided by the same principles. The challenge to the intellect should not be restricted to matters instrumental, that is, to matters of political strategy. The drain on a candidate's energy should not come from the hours spent on the telephone in pursuit of campaign funds. When we transpose politics from an exercise in competitive marketing into a contest over competence and mastery of the content of the subject, we will attract candidates who are both qualified and willing to run,

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and we will restore trust with the public. My son Todd said to me once, as we were chopping wood for our fireplace, "Dad, do you realize what a privilege it is going to be to be Michael Douglas' representative in Congress?" I answered that I did, but it was gratifying to be reminded. This, of course, is how it was meant to be. Persons running for political office should regard the holding of that office as a high privilege, the qualifications for which should be constructively and positively motivating.

It would also be beneficial, too, to treat running for public office, as well as holding public office, as temporary service. This returns us to the consideration that politics has been able to hold democracy in captivity because politicians have become professional office holders. Clearly, competence accrues to the experience one has in being in office, and there are some office-holders who are extraordinarily gifted and proficient in what they do. But the general rule ought to be that individual citizens, from all walks of life, make themselves available to perform the tasks required within representative government. Then, as Thomas Jefferson further recommended, after their time of public service has ended, they should return to their communities, and, presumably, to what they were doing previously, and live out their lives among the family, friends, and neighbors whom they represented in government. By this time, it is someone else's turn to serve in a similar capacity.

Treating elected office as temporary public service is to approach it as if it were similar to Peace Corps work, or to being in the armed services, or, perhaps, like the years of missionary service encouraged within the Mormon tradition. It was never intended to be life-long, and was never conceived to be the most important task that a person would undertake. I feel this point with particular force by virtue of the struggle I experienced when knowing

that a successful campaign would take me away from the profession that I know and love. Considerable personal reassurance came my way when a physician friend of mine talked with me about the possibility that he too might run for elected office, on the precedent that I had established. He too only wanted to do it for a brief period of time, then, he hoped, he would return to his medical practice, with the benefit of the experience of temporary public service. Were we to approach elections and office holding this way, we would take some of the unnecessary tension (indeed, frenzy) out of politics, for we would be reducing the size, strength, and influence of the emerging "political class".

Each of these suggestions and proposals are based on my confidence in a Grundtvigian principle that I learned some years ago, and which, to this day, has not failed me. It is the conviction about being "human first" to which all are designations and attributions are secondary. We are human even before we are American or Democrats or Republicans or Christians or Jews or Muslims. We are human even before we are politicians or teachers or physicians or postal workers or business people. Thus our political practices should reflect this truth about us, that we are human first, before it engages any other ambitions, no matter how appropriate or worthy. A politics that honors this truth can become a humanizing undertaking. It can assist in creating the just society in which activity, according to Aristotle, it finds its highest purpose. When politics is approached this way, it can be understood to be a noble undertaking. The nobility attached to it is not primarily for purposes of elevating aspirants and office holders, but to make certain that the work that is done under political auspices is good work, useful work, commendable work, constructive work. When this is the prevailing spirit, and when opportunities for personal self-aggrandizement are diminished,

"politicians" should be no more obvious objects of ridicule and scorn than persons in other fields and professions. Of course, leaders are always subject to close scrutiny, and such scrutiny always produces criticism, some of which will always be negative. But there are ways to insure that negative criticism is also constructive criticism, when bonds of trust have been restored, and when everyone expects that the fundamental humaneness of the endeavor will be respected. All of this, in my judgment, would do good work for politics, and help bring it back into becoming a range of endeavor which citizens acknowledge, respect, and even (at times) love.

Of course, the kinds of reform we are calling for cannot be accomplished by political office holders and candidates alone. Some real obligations ought to be assigned to citizens and voters. Over thirty decades ago John F. Kennedy electrified the electorate with his inaugural injunction: "Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country." Those words were spoken in January 1961. In the nearly thirty five years that have transpired since that time, have we become a citizenry that asks what our country can do for us? Here the evidence is most disturbing. Of course, everyone has been asking the government to do things, to provide necessary services, to lend support to those who are unable fully to care for themselves, and to extend authority to causes and groups that are striving for legitimacy. So, there is ample evidence that Americans, living since the Kennedy era, have indeed been asking what their country can do for them. This is the general picture. The details within the picture have been formed, as expected, by the confluence of special interests and single issues. Citizens tend to be asking their government to make the provisions on a highly selective itemized basis. During our campaign, for example, we heard from hundreds, probably thousands, of voters, who were concerned that what govern-

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ment had been offering them would be cut or eliminated. The concerns of these people is completely understandable. What we didn't hear -- not even one time -- was a proposal for something that government ought to be doing that it is not doing, or for something additional. Here, too, the "demosclerosis" rule applies: citizens are dissatisfied with the incapacities and excesses of government, yet become incensed when proposals to reduce these excesses threaten the predictable delivery of goods or services to which they feel entitled.

Rauch deals with root-causes this way:

Who is the cause of demosclerosis? Not villainous lobbyists or wicked insiders or crafty foreigners. Look in the mirror. John Kennedy told Americans to ask what they could do for their country, not what their country could do for them. They adored him and ignored his counsel. Now they must listen, or pay the price.

If the system is to change, it will be up to the people to effect such change. The alternatives are clear. But the clock is running. It is time for serious political reformation.