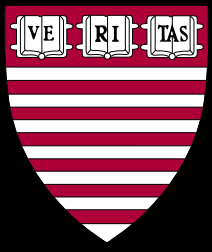
The Theodore H. White Lecture

with

Garry Wills

The Joan Shorenstein Center

PRESS · POLITICS



· PUBLIC POLICY ·

Harvard University
John F. Kennedy School of Government

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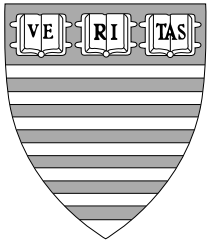

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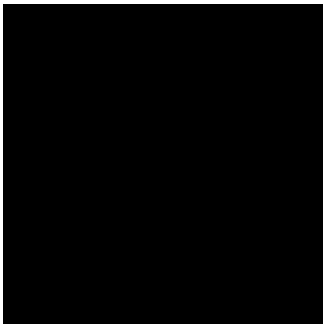

The Theodore H. White Lecture on Press and Politics commemorates the life of the late reporter and historian who created the style and set the standard for contemporary political journalism and campaign coverage.

White, who began his journalism career delivering the *Boston Post,* entered Harvard College in 1932 on a newsboy's scholarship. He studied Chinese history and Oriental languages. In 1939, he witnessed the bombing of Peking while freelance reporting on a Sheldon Fellowship, and later explained, "Three thousand human beings died; once I'd seen that I knew I wasn't going home to be a professor."

During the war, White covered East Asia for *Time* and returned to write *Thunder Out of China,* a controversial critique of the American-supported Nationalist Chinese government. For the next two decades, he contributed to numerous periodicals and magazines, published two books on the Second World War and even wrote fiction.

A lifelong student of American political leadership, White in 1959 sought support for a 20-year research project, a retrospective of presidential campaigns. After being advised to drop such an academic exercise by fellow reporters, he took to the campaign trail and, relegated to the "zoo plane," changed the course of American political journalism with *The Making of the President 1960.*

White's *Making of the President* editions for 1964 and 1972, and *America in Search of Itself* remain vital historical documents on campaigns and the press.

Before his death in 1986, Theodore White also served on the Kennedy School's Visiting Committee, where he was one of the early architects of what has become the Joan Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy. Blair Clark, former senior vice president of CBS who chaired the committee to establish this lectureship, asked, "Did Teddy White ever find the history he spent his life searching for? Well, of course not, he would have laughed at such pretension. But he came close, very close, didn't he? And he never quit the strenuous search for the elusive reality, and for its meaning in our lives."

Renaissance man, public intellectual, and cultural historian are some of the appellations used to describe Garry Wills. The Pulitzer Prize-winning author has written over twenty books with topics ranging from George Washington to Ronald Reagan, and from John Wayne to St. Augustine.

Born in Atlanta, Wills received a B.A. from St. Louis University in 1957, an M.A. from Xavier University of Cincinnati and an M.A. and Ph.D. in classics from Yale University in 1961. He has received honorary degrees from seven colleges. Having studied in a Jesuit seminary for five and a half years, Wills left because he found the life stultifying intellectually, spiritually and emotionally. After earning his Ph.D. in classics, he spent a post-doctoral year as a Junior Fellow at the Center for Hellenic Studies in Washington, D.C., before joining Johns Hopkins University for 18 years where he was an associate professor of classics and an adjunct professor of humanities. In 1980, he went to Northwestern University where he became the Welch Professor of American Culture and Public Policy until 1990, when he resigned his tenure to spend more time writing. Wills remains an adjunct professor of history at Northwestern.

Wills describes himself as a student of culture, and few topics have fallen beyond his scope. He has written essays for the *New York Review of Books* on such subjects as Italian film, opera, classical Greek arts and literature, religion, politics, Muhammad Ali and film reviews ranging from silent pictures to *Bulworth*. He also writes a column for the Universal Press Syndicate called "Outrider Column" and is a contributing editor to *American Heritage.* Wills' numerous books include absorbing studies of presidents such as Washington, Nixon and Reagan; biographies of figures as diverse as Chesterton, St. Augustine and John Wayne; and artful studies of key American documents such as the Declaration of Independence in *Inventing America,* the Federalist Papers in *Explaining America*, and a study of the Gettysburg address in *Lincoln at Gettysburg.* In 1992 Wills received the Pulitzer Prize as well as the National Book Critics Circle Award for *Lincoln at Gettysburg.* His more recent books are *St. Augustine* (1999) and *A Necessary Evil: A History of American Distrust of Government* (1999). Wills is the recipient of numerous awards including the Merle Curti Award from the Organization of American Historians, the Wilbur Cross Medal from Yale Graduate School, the National Humanities Medal, and the Peabody Award for Excellence in Broadcasting for writing and narration of "The Choice," *Frontline*. He is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters and of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

Garry Wills has made enduring contributions to cultural and political history. His discerning intellect, breadth of knowledge, and eloquent prose have placed him among the foremost writers and thinkers of our time.

THEODORE H. WHITE LECTURE
NOVEMBER 4, 1999

Dean Nye: Good evening, I'm Joe Nye, Dean of the Kennedy School. It's my pleasure to welcome you to the 10th Annual Theodore H. White Lecture on Press and Politics. I'm very pleased to see in the audience Walter Shorenstein who is, essentially, the founder of the Joan Shorenstein Center on Press and Politics. And Marvin Kalb, its first director, who has returned from Washington, is with us tonight. I should point out that Marvin was just honored last night with the Louis P. and Evelyn Smith First Amendment Award from Northeastern University at Ford Hall Forum. And I was intrigued by the title of Marvin's acceptance speech which is *"Is Freedom of the Press Much Too Radical a Proposition for the Timid of Today?"* That's our Marvin. Welcome back to both of you.

(Applause)

Dean Nye: The Theodore White Lecture commemorates the life and career of one of America's great journalists. Teddy White created the style and set the standard for contemporary political journalism and campaign coverage. He studied Chinese history and East Asian languages as an undergraduate at Harvard in the 1930s and planned a career as a scholar. In fact he was on that plan when he witnessed the 1939 bombing of Chungking, and that turned him to a career of journalism. During World War II he reported on East Asia for *Time* magazine. And over the next two decades established a solid career as reporter and commentator. But it was his coverage of the 1960 political campaign, particularly, *The Making of the President, 1960,* that changed the course of American political journalism, with the depth and breadth of its perspective.

And before his death, Theodore White also served here at the Kennedy School on our visiting committee and was one of the early architects of what would become the Shorenstein Center. Past Theodore White lectures have included such illustrious figures as William Safire, William Buckley, Cokie Roberts, Walter Cronkite, Jesse Jackson. And it's in that same vein that we're proud to have as lecturer this year Garry Wills, who is one of America's foremost public intellectuals, who'll be speaking on a subject that's of particular interest to us at the Kennedy School, American distrust of government.

As many of you may know we have a project here at the school which we call Visions of Governance for the 21st Century, which has been looking at the causes of distrust in government and what will have to be done about it if government is to change. In fact, we published a book on this subject which is called *Why People Don't Trust Government.*

To introduce Mr. Wills, I'd like to present Professor Tom Patterson, the Bradlee Professor of Government and the Press, and Acting Director of the Shorenstein Center on Press, Politics and Public Policy. Tom is one of the

leading scholars in his field. One of his works, *The Unseeing Eye,* is regarded as one of the fifty most influential books on public opinion in the past half century. And his recent book on the media's political role, *Out of Order,* received widespread attention from politicians, journalists and scholars. We're delighted to have him as one of our members here at the Kennedy School and delighted to have him running the Shorenstein Center. Let me turn now to Tom Patterson.

Tom.

(Applause)

Mr. Patterson: Thank you, Joe. The Dean mentioned that I'm the Shorenstein Center's acting director. In case there's any confusion about that title, that's acting director, as in interim director, I'm not acting director of the type represented by Warren Beatty last night.

(Laughter)

Mr. Patterson: This lecture series honors one of America's foremost writers and journalists, Teddy White. But it's also a tribute to Marvin Kalb, the founding director of the Shorenstein Center. The Theodore H. White lecture was Marvin's idea, and Marvin presided over this event for a decade starting with Walter Cronkite's lecture in 1990. The series is also indebted to Blair Clark, Marvin's colleague and boss at CBS News. Blair is a charter member of the Shorenstein Center Advisory Board, and he raised the funds to make this lecture an annual event.

Finally, we are here as Dean Nye mentioned, because of Walter Shorenstein's unstinting support. He established the Shorenstein Center in living memory of his daughter Joan. She was a hugely talented news professional who worked with Blair and Marvin at CBS.

Walter, Blair, Marvin a warm welcome. I would be grateful if you could just stand briefly so that we can acknowledge your contributions to this event.

(Applause)

Mr. Patterson: The Dean has stolen many of the things I that I wanted to say about Teddy White, but you know as the Dean mentioned, it was a captivating book on the 1960 Kennedy/Nixon campaign that made Teddy White a famous American. No writer had shown us the inner workings of a presidential campaign and we marveled at it. *The Making of the President, 1960,* sold more than two million copies in its first year of publication. It was followed by best selling books of the 1964, '68 and '72 campaigns, but White by then was getting tired. The candidates' hectic pace was also his pace, but unlike the candidates, well except for Harold Stassen perhaps, he had to run in every race.

He was also more than a bit discouraged by the impact of his books on election coverage. He had not dreamed that his behind-the-scenes portrayal would become the model of everyday election news, but it had. Strategy, personality and horse race had trumped issues as the bedrock of campaign coverage.

White was sitting in George McGovern's hotel room one day during the '72 campaign, and was appalled by what he saw. He said to a colleague, McGovern was a like a fish in the goldfish bowl, there were three different network crews at different times, the still photographers kept coming in groups of five at a time, and there were at least six different writers sitting in the corner, I don't even know their names. All of us are observing him, taking notes like mad, getting all the little details, I invented this method of reporting and I now sincerely regret it, I truly regret it.

White sat out the '76 campaign but returned in '80 to write a different kind of book. It had the obligatory behind-the-scenes accounts of the Reagan and Carter campaigns, but they were less than full. White's real purpose was to warn of the dangers of big money, big media, unbridled ambition, excessive partisanship and disaffected voters. His book was entitled *America in Search of Itself,* and it stands today as a sad prophesy of what our presidential campaigns have become.

We're fortunate tonight to have with us Teddy White's son, David.

David, please stand so that we can express our thanks to you for coming, and through you also acknowledge your father's many contributions to the field of press and politics.

(Applause)

Mr. Patterson: I became aware of Garry Wills, like many others of my generation, when I went into a book store and purchased a copy of *Nixon Agonistes.* His book offered a revealing look at our politics, too revealing, judging by the response of the Nixon White House, that put Wills on its notorious enemies list. By the way, you're in pretty good company tonight: Marvin Kalb was on that list and Dan Schorr also, who is in the audience tonight, was on the list.

A reviewer of *Nixon Agonistes* exclaimed that Wills had done the impossible, he had portrayed Nixon as "a sympathetic, even tragic figure, while at the same time rendering him perfectly appalling." *Nixon Agonistes* was written before not after Watergate, an event that led Wills to say, "Nixon is like a man who pulls off a million dollar heist, only to get caught stealing an apple from a vendor's cart on the way out."

(Laughter)

Mr. Patterson: Garry Wills got his start at William Buckley's *National Review,* but if Wills was ever a conservative, and he says no, the Vietnam War laid that issue to rest. He broke with Buckley over Vietnam, and was twice arrested for protesting against the war. Did that make Wills a liberal, again he said no, and has often said that political labeling is a waste of time.

But there is a different kind of label that we can attach to Wills—he is about as close as we have to a true Renaissance man. Who but Wills among contemporary writers could write thoughtful and elegant books about Richard Nixon and St. Augustine, about Abraham Lincoln and John Wayne, about Ronald Reagan and William Shakespeare. Who but Wills could write brilliant books with such far ranging titles as *The Second Civil*

War, Roman Culture, The Politics of Celebrity, and *Witches and Jesuits.* In case you're wondering the last one is about *MacBeth.*

I suspect if he put his mind to it that Garry Wills is the only writer in America who could tell us something new and that we might be tempted to read about Monica Lewinsky.

(Laughter)

Mr. Patterson: How does Wills manage to write so intelligently about so many things? How do you become, as some have called him, America's foremost cultural historian? An answer comes through a question posed to him by a recent interviewer, "What would a job applicant trying to fill your shoes choose as his or her title?" Wills answered, "a student, a student of all kinds of things. That's why I insist on student, I can't imagine limiting myself to one thing. Everything leads to everything else, their interaction is what's so fascinating."

It's Wills' ability to see interactions that enabled him to take a solemn 272 word speech, the "Gettysburg Address," and turn it into a lively 317 page Pulitzer Prize-winning book, *Lincoln at Gettysburg.* In addition to the Pulitzer, Wills has received two National Book Critics Circle Awards and the Peabody Award. He has a Ph.D. in Classics from Yale and has written roughly twenty books. He's an Adjunct Professor of History at Northwestern University, a twice a week syndicated columnist and a regular contributor to the *New York Review of Books* and other periodicals.

And tonight, thankfully, he's with us. His talk has the same title as his most recent book, *A Necessary Evil.* No, it's not about Dr. Evil. I suspect that the cultural historian that is Garry Wills could tell us a thing or two about why Austin Powers and Dr. Evil have become pop icons, but that's not why he's here tonight.

When Wills talks about a necessary evil, he is talking about Americans' chronic distrust of government. That distrust is an important part of our political culture, and it affects directly or indirectly nearly everything we do here at the Kennedy School.

Professor Wills, the lectern is yours, a very warm welcome from the Kennedy School.

(Applause)

Mr. Wills: Thank you. I'm honored to be in this distinguished place, in this distinguished company. I'm happy to see some friends out there and even my former governor who was my gracious host in the Illinois State Governor's mansion for one night. And I'm especially honored to be associated with the name of Theodore White.

He did that rare thing for a journalist, he expanded the repertory of reportage, he gave us a whole new area to write about, and I don't share his regrets about the result of that. We hear now that there's too much backstage reporting, it seems to me there's often too little. For instance, the last presidential campaign began very early, when Dick Morris was pressing Clinton to raise lots of money to run very early ads. The more we knew

about that the better, eventually we found out, but we would have been less surprised at the finance scandals if we had known that even earlier.

As I say, it did come out, and one of the things that politicians should learn, is what might be called the Theodore White rule, namely, anything that your staff does is going to come out. Al Gore has not learned that.

(Laughter)

Mr. Wills: His Naomi Wolf episode proves that. He actually thought he could hide her, that's not been her talent so far.

(Laughter)

Mr. Wills: Just this afternoon at the hotel here, the *New York Times* called and asked me to do an op-ed piece on what this tells us about Al Gore's character. Well, I don't know what I'll say about that, but it tells us something about his intelligence.

(Laughter)

Mr. Wills: I mean especially when you learn that she got into the act through Dick Morris. You know, here's the evil genius of the administration he's trying to distance himself from, and he takes Dick Morris' protégée. I'm perfectly willing to think that he's very different from his boss, but he's certainly trying hard to erase the difference at the moment.

As I think about what Teddy White did, this adding something new. I wonder if there's something new that can still be added to our reportage. And I wonder if it's not a kind of educational function that the press could perform in terms of explaining the Constitution every now and then. An example arose last January when Congress, upset at the many sins of President Clinton, decided we'll show him, we'll take away one of his privileges, we won't let him deliver the State of the Union Address. Now that was a very odd notion, it never went far but, the mere idea that the State of the Union Address is a kind of presidential prerogative, is so at odds with what the Constitution says.

I wonder if there's something new that can still be added to our reportage, . . . the press could . . . explain the Constitution every now and then.

It says that he has to report to Congress. Subordinates report to their superiors. And you know that this was an accountability measure because it says that he must report "from time to time." Which doesn't mean occasionally, it's an 18th Century term of art, it means without leaving anything out, you pick up where the last one ended. And it occurs three times in the Constitution and it always has to do with the duty of reporting. Congress has to give a report on the public monies from time to time. It has to publish its journals from time to time, it has to be accountable to the people. And the president has to be accountable to the Congress.

The early State of the Union addresses showed that very clearly, they were very deferential. They said there are these problems out there and your job is to address them, all I can do is draw your attention to them. And we know that's what the Constitution intended, because the first State of the Union Address, by George Washington, was written by James Madison, who knew something about the Constitution. But we should also remember that he was not a stickler for separation of the branches, because he not only wrote that State of the Union Address, he then wrote Congress' response to it.

(Laughter)

Mr. Wills: And then he wrote the President's response to the response. Anyway, it seems like that would have been a nice opportunity for the press to point out some oddities of the Constitution that were not being paid attention to. There are others.

Now one time that happened, so it shows it can occur. When Al Haig, after the attempted assassination of Ronald Reagan, said "I'm in charge here, according to the Constitution", everybody said, no he's not and that was useful.

(Laughter)

Mr. Wills: On the other hand, when he was going down a long list of people trying to get Archibald Cox fired, and nobody wanted to do it, he said, "Your commander in chief has given you an order." And I don't remember anybody pointing out that the president is not the commander in chief of any civilian in the United States. The Constitution makes it very clear that he's the Commander in Chief of the Army and Navy of the United States, and of the militias of the several states, when actually called into service of the United States, that's all he's commander in chief of. But we hear it all the time, that the president is our commander in chief. It would be useful, occasionally, to point out that that's not the case.

When the War Powers Act was proposed, some people said this is unconstitutional, it's taken away some of the president's powers. It would have been useful to point out that it was unconstitutional because it was reclaiming only part of the powers that belong in their plentitude to Congress. Nobody is allowed to make war except the Congress of the United States, according to the Constitution. I believe Tony Lewis pointed that out at the time, and probably some of you others did, but not enough of us did.

Now all three of those cases were ones in which we assumed things about our president that the Constitution gives us no warrant to assume. And as I say, it's not a partisan act for journalists to point out occasionally, that these are not covered by the Constitution.

If we don't do that, then a thing creeps up called the imperial presidency. What's interesting about the imperial presidency is that in a way that was a growth in power in government that came about because we wanted a weak government. That is, we tended to inflate the power of the president under the Constitution, because we thought he was supposed to

be powerful enough to check the Congress. We thought that we have three branches that were supposed to be co-equal, and if the president was a subordinate reporting to his superiors that wouldn't be quite co-equal.

Well, it's also useful to point out that there is no such thing in the Constitution as equal branches, there's not even "co-equal." You know I just love that word, it's equaler than equal, boy it's *really* equal. But that goes along with our whole view that the Constitution was somehow supposed to check itself into immobility, that it was supposed to be inefficient. Two Supreme Court decisions, at least, had been based on the doctrine that the government was set up to be inefficient. It's not supposed to work very well, and that's the only thing that makes it good. It's a self-limiting, self-distrusting, self-checking government.

You know, it's as if we went in to buy a car, and we say, I want a really good car now, don't foist anything off on me that's not a good car. Put down in writing that it's guaranteed to break down, then I'll know it's good and that's what we say about our government.

. . . the government was set up to be inefficient.

How did we ever get the idea that the government was supposed to be inefficient? The Articles, which it replaced, were very inefficient. If that's what we wanted, we were there. There was no reason to leave it. And what does the Constitution say at the outset, "We the People of the United States of America, in order to form a more perfect Union . . .". Now what does "perfect" mean there—just dreamy, wonderful, as nice as can be? No, it's a technical term. Aristotle said that the perfect taleia Constitution is one that has all the parts it needs to perform a job. The Greek gynecologist Soranus said what your doctor tells you when you get a baby, it's a perfect baby, it's got all its parts, right number of toes, ears, fingers, all those things.

Now the Articles were imperfect, they didn't have all the parts. Why? There was such distrust of government in the Articles that only one branch was allowed to exist and that branch was under the control of the constituents who instructed their delegate, sent him for only one year, demanded open sessions so that they could see that the instructions were being followed, and could recall the delegate if the instructions were broken.

Now that's the kind of control they wanted, and they said if we have an executive who is representing not only separate locales but the entirety, who is going to recall the executive when he gets out of hand? So we just won't have an executive. Same with the judiciary. We won't have a judiciary, we'll have only one branch.

The result was a disaster. Jefferson said, "We spend so much time on administrative details that we get no chance to pass laws." And he said we need a more perfect government, used the term perfect. Madison said, we spend all of our time doing things like supply the army, set up

cumbrous adjudication procedures to judge between the claims of the states out in the western territory, because we don't have a judiciary. And we're not allowed to have a judiciary that sets up a body of law, standards that everybody knows about that are adhered to, which have some predictability.

So the first job was to set up different branches, not for inefficiency, not to check each other, but to be efficient, to have different tasks. Even the bicameral check within the legislature was explained by Madison in terms of efficient function. He said that the Senate has a higher age requirement, longer terms, staggered terms, because it's supposed to be the institutional memory of the government.

. . . the first job was to set up different branches, not for inefficiency, not to check each other, but to be efficient, to have different tasks.

When a treaty is drawn up, another country with the United States, they want to know that the government is going to be around for a while, that it's not going to go out of existence in two years, as the House does. And that's why the Senate is given diplomatic duties. It's the one to approve ambassadors, it's the one to ratify treaties, it's the one, in conjunction with the House, to declare war.

The House, by contrast, was supposed to be more sensitive to domestic needs, money was its sphere, and therefore everybody goes out every two years, unlike the Senate. So it's function that defines these things, not simply checking and balancing.

And they're not equal, the branches are not equal. The Congress can set up the executive branch, it establishes the agencies, it can take them away. It sets up the federal court system, it establishes the number on the Supreme Court. It can change that, it's been six, it's been seven, it's been nine, it can be anything that Congress wants it to be. And if the judiciary and the executive are not performing the way the legislature wants, if it's not executing the laws that it has passed, it's not judging properly, they can investigate and impeach, and convict, and dismiss, any member of the executive branch, any member of the judiciary, federal judiciary.

There's not reciprocal power of the president or the court to investigate Congress, to restructure Congress, to dismiss members of Congress. So the idea that there's a kind of equality is, on the face of it, absurd. How can there be an equality when the making of law precedes, in dignity as well as time, the application of the law, and the most direct representation is in the law making body. So that Madison said in Federalist 51, "in a republican government the legislative authority necessarily predominates."

Well, isn't it true that the president can veto a law, say, or that the Supreme Court can declare a law unconstitutional? That's true, they can do that, but what's the logic of the veto? It's a bad idea to have the executive

disagreeing with the law that he is executing. And he can often have legitimate complaints: he can say for instance, you've given me a law to execute, but you haven't given me the means to execute it. Or it's in contradiction with something else that you've given me in law. Or it goes against what I believe and people who are important to this nation believe, so you better reconsider this, which is what he says of course, he doesn't kill the law at that point, he has no power to do that, he sends it back.

And the Congress, again, because you don't want a grudging executive if you can avoid it, says all right, we will reconsider and we'll decide and if we really think this is what the law should be, we'll send it back to you this time with the two-thirds majority and then you have to execute it, you have no choice. No matter how you hate it, how you dislike it, it's your job under the Constitution to execute it and you have no further recourse. Ours is the last word.

And the judiciary review is similar in rationale to a veto. The court says, wait a minute, you just passed a law that goes against the fundamental law of the Constitution that gives you law-making authority. You better reconsider. They also are in effect throwing it back to the Congress, and at this point they've exhausted their entire store of ammunition.

The Congress, by contrast, has a whole range of options it can turn to. It can say, no it's not really against the Constitution, you've misunderstood, and we'll phrase it in such a way as to make clear that it's not against the Constitution. Or they can say, well yeah, it is against the Constitution, but it should be in the Constitution so we begin the Amendment process and we'll put it in. Or they can say, you are so wrong about the Constitution that you're not fulfilling your obligations under the Constitution and we impeach you. Or they can say, we think this court is totally misunderstanding the Constitution and the court is our responsibility, and therefore, we are going to add three more justices and see what they think. In all those cases the court has no recourse. Once again, what Congress says is the final word.

. . . the idea of equality between the branches has no basis in fact, and every time you hear co-equal being used it should make you feel the hairs on your head stand up a little, . . .

So the idea of equality between the branches has no basis in fact, and every time you hear "co-equal" being used it should make you feel the hairs on your head stand up a little, and you might mention that occasionally.

Well, but advocates of weak government say, it's not simply that the branches within government, the departments as Madison called them, are supposed to check each other, stop each other dead in their tracks, we also

have states that are sovereign so they can be a check on the federal government. My first memories of a political national convention are probably similar to yours. I can remember on the radio hearing "the sovereign state of such and such delivers its so many votes to so and so," with giddy delight. And it was great to roll that phrase out, "sovereign states."

Richard B. Morris, in a very devastating long article, established that the original states were never sovereign. Never at any time did they have the attributes of sovereignty, never at any time did they have an independent foreign policy, did they have a navy, an army, a post office, a mint, any of the things that you associate with the sovereign government.

What happened? The states, the colonies as they were becoming states, sent representatives to Philadelphia and said if the other states withdraw, then vote with them as the United States. And that was what declared independence, the United States of America. Oaths of allegiance were taken to the United States of America. When Benedict Arnold and others were accused of treason, it was not treason to their states, it was treason to the United States of America. So the sovereign power was the United States of America, from the very minute the United States came into existence at all.

Now there's one severe problem with that Richard Morris article. The Articles of Confederation begin by saying this is a compact between sovereign states. How do you get around that? Well, that's a very interesting clause, it was put in by Thomas Burke of North Carolina. And he put it in, without a lot of support by the way, in order to kill the rest of the document.

. . . if you know anybody in authority, if he or she is weak, does that make them more likely to be confident, fair, just?

And when it failed to do that, he went back to North Carolina and he said "Do not ratify the Articles, because they say you're a sovereign and then they say you're not. You are not allowed to have an army or a navy, or independent foreign policy. If nine states say you have to go to war even if you're among the three that don't want to, you have to do it." So Thomas Burke, the man who should know best, says that in the Articles of Confederation that phrase means absolutely nothing.

Now why do we want to have a weak government? I suppose one of the reasons is that we think a weak government will be unable to oppress us. That's not a very realistic approach. The Soviet Union, we now realize, was a very weak government, had a superficial hold on its population. Did that make it less tyrannical or more? Weak governments are not necessarily just ones. Even in your own experience, if you know anybody in authority, if he or she is weak, is that person likely to be confident, fair, just? Or more likely

to be panicky, arbitrary, random? Keeping government weak is no way to keep government just.

And the idea that government should be weak, the idea that we should fear government, that government is of itself semi-illegitimate from its birth, that it even proclaims its own hatred of itself by trying to check itself all the time, leads to very bad results.

For instance, every advanced country in the world wonders about American politics in certain areas. It wonders, for instance, why we love guns so much, why we tolerate by far the highest murder rate of any civilized country. They wonder why other countries can have comprehensive health care plans for their citizens, and this, the richest country in the world, can't. Why other countries can control campaign conditions, including campaign financing and we can't. Why other countries have educational policies that have a national standard that everybody has to live up to so that all people can be educated, all the citizens under a just arrangement.

. . . all you have to say is "the government is coming, the government is coming" and people will be scared out of their senses.

They wonder why we fear authority so much, that not only our own federal government is supposed to be kept weak, but that we fear tyranny by others, by the new world order or the UN or somebody, which means that we can't sign the Law of the Seas Treaty, the Land Mine Treaty, the Protocols of the World Court, the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, why we have to starve the United Nations for funds that we owe them.

Why is this? Because in all those cases, all you have to say is "the government is coming, the government is coming" and people will be scared out of their senses. If the government can take away your guns, you have no freedoms left. If the government can tell you what to do about health, doctors and patients will lose all right to choose the proper treatments and the proper relationship between them. If the government sets standards for education, it will dictate a government orthodoxy which will kill freedom of thought. None of that has happened in other nations that do this, why do we think that it has to happen in our nation?

One of the problems, is: If you think the government is bad of itself, that government is something that you should have the least of, that the best government, as Thoreau said, is no government—what's the proper response to that? If it's so bad, you can't really make it good, you can't decide that it has proper functions and restrict it to those. There are several reactions that seem to come to mind. You say well, government is government you can't do anything about it, so apathy and lethargy are the only response. Or you can say, it's always bad, so I'll resist always by any means I can, which includes guns, in the case of militias.

This pessimism about government is not a healthy way of controlling government or finding out what is its proper task and keeping it out of improper tasks. And that's another thing, we're often told that the Constitution was established by people who had a very pessimistic view of human nature, a dark view, and didn't trust each other, didn't trust fellow citizens, didn't trust the government.

. . . what the local people knew best about their blacks at the time, was that they needed beating, and hosing and being bitten by dogs and being sent to jail and being killed. And the foreign power that came in came to those people as a rescuer, as a defender of their rights as American citizens. And that was exactly what the Constitution was meant to do.

Well, there is a lot of that language, that pessimistic language, but it's not voiced by the advocates of the Constitution, it's voiced by their enemies, by the anti-federalists, those are the ones who said we can't trust government, government is always bad. We can't accept this Constitution because it's government and therefore, it's bad.

Madison came up against this in the ratifying debate in Virginia. Patrick Henry was very eloquently saying, this is an instrument of tyranny, this Constitution. Madison responded: "I go on the great republican principle that the people will have virtue and intelligence to select men of virtue and wisdom. Is there no virtue among us? If there be not, we are in a wretched situation, no theoretical checks, no form of government can render us secure. To suppose that any form of government will secure liberty or happiness without any virtue in the people is a kind of miracle idea. If there be sufficient virtue and intelligence in the community it will be exercised in the selection of these men so that we do not depend on their virtue or put confidence in rules but in the people who are chosen to represent them."

Now is that too optimistic? Is that too sappy? After all, we've lived with a language of cynicism about our government—it's full of bureaucrats and hacks and politicians who are self-seeking. Is there no virtue? as Madison asked. I think there is.

As a matter of fact, the people who talk about the government as the enemy remind me of the governors in the South during the Civil Rights movement, when I and many of you were covering that. It was the outsider who came in through the South in that period and violated the Ronald Reagan rule, that the local people know best their own needs, their own wants, what's appropriate to them, not foreign federal people. Well what the local people knew best about their blacks at the time, was that

they needed beating, and hosing and being bitten by dogs and being sent to jail and being killed. And the foreign power came in to those people as a rescuer, as a defender of their rights as American citizens. And that was exactly what the Constitution was meant to do—as you can see by looking at the number in the *Federalist Papers* that was written by John Jay about Indian affairs, he said, "We as a people under the Articles, have waged unjust wars against Indians, because the people who made decisions about how to react to crises were those who were living in friction at the borders with the Indians, where passions were inflamed on both sides, where retaliatory vengeance was something that blinded people to other considerations. If we have a federal government with the power to go to those situations, and take a cooler, more impersonal look at the matter, it can impose a just solution."

Well that's what happened in the Civil Rights Movement and that's what has happened over and over in our history. The most interesting thing I think about this country at the end of this century is that over the last two or three decades, we have had more active effective concern for individual dignity and rights than ever in our history or than any other country in history that I know of. We have had a totally new way of looking at the rights of women (half the human race), of blacks and other minorities, of gays, of the disabled, and in almost all of those cases federal action, debate, courts, laws, have played some role, fulfilling exactly the role that John Jay wanted them to fulfill, and going to the defense of the defenseless all around the nation.

Now that's the kind of government we need, and the kind of government we need to control, but also the kind of the government we need to respect.

Thank you.

(Applause)

Mr. Patterson: Garry Wills, thank you. That was a thoughtful and beautifully expressed talk.

We'll now take questions from the audience.

Let me ask the first question, and exercise the moderator's privilege here. You suggested that the press may have a role to play in helping us to better understand the Constitution, to drop, for example, references to co-equal branches of government. But one might argue that the notion of the press as a fourth branch which has no clear constitutional basis as far as I know, really leads to a kind of elevated notion of the press as a watchdog. It really feeds out of and comes out of that same kind of political culture that you're talking about. And in fact, may be an influence that puts more distance rather than less distance between the government and the public.

Do you have any response to that?

Mr. Wills: Sure, the press should not be partisan in saying, oh, so-and-so said something wrong about the Constitution. But you know, these are non-partisan issues. Saying that we don't have co-equal branches is not

really a Republican position or a Democratic position, it's the Constitution. And there's nothing that says that an American citizen can't say that, the Constitution doesn't say that.

You know, when people say to me how do you overcome the distrust of government, it's always hard to change a culture. But one of the things that you should do is perhaps not have academicians who do this also, or journalists who just parrot thoughtless phrases like co-equal. They indurate the prejudice, the ignorance and if you are going to say well, well, I'm not a teacher, I'm not telling the people what they should think, therefore, I can't say that calling the branches co-equal is nonsense. That seems to be putting inhibitions on the press that are unneeded. And also making it impossible to break through not only with the press but other people, these bad habits we've fallen into, like calling our president the commander-in-chief.

Ms. Geurmer: Thank you for your speech. My name is Mattie Geurmer, I'm a freshman here at Harvard College.

And the question I have for you deals with partisanship in American politics. Especially in my generation, a lot of the distrust that people have for government is for the two political parties, because they see them as machines and not representing their interests. Do you think that partisan politics detracts from government? Or do you think it's an important role that helps check each other in the Congress?

Mr. Wills: Partisanship always exists and always will. Even when there weren't parties, partisanship existed, and it exists in all the other countries in the world. That's one aspect of resentment of this government or this administration. But as I say, ours is qualitatively different from that. You have partisan animosities in every country that you can think of, but they don't have the kind of inhibition that we have about never letting the government say anything about guns or health or education or any of those other things. So underneath the partisan bickering, there is this solid ground of distrust of government, widely shared by both parties.

The distrust of government is so great that, for instance, the Clinton health plan, which deserved to fail on several grounds, was crippled from the outset. There was such fear of the old cry of socialized medicine and big government that they had to gerry rig the health plan so they'd say "it's not all government, see there's this private sector, there's this insurance component, there's this and that and the other thing," so that the accountability got very complicated. You couldn't just say, "well why don't we have a plan like Canada, a single-payer plan, because then "that's socialized medicine" and the issue would be dead. I'm talking about a qualitatively different kind of distrust of government than mere partisanship.

Mr. Siegel: I'm Jay Siegel, a member of the faculty here at the Kennedy School.

You seem to have suggested that at bottom you would place your faith

in the will of the people, generally, to keep the government on a sound course. Walter Lippmann, on the other hand, long held to the view that in order to get decisions from the government that were beneficial for the people, an elitist class was necessary. Would you care to comment on Lippmann's viewpoint?

Mr. Wills: Yes. The *Phantom Public* in 1929, by Walter Lippmann, followed what was a very urgent trend of the time. They were scared to death of technology in the 1920s. The Lynds wrote their book about Muncie, Indiana and said that the number of things that a housewife has to keep track of now are just beyond her. She can't choose the right implements, she doesn't know what's a good vacuum cleaner, she doesn't know the new marketing ploys, so we're going to have to have experts to tell her how to shop.

Well shortly after that, along came Lippmann and said, well if you can't buy a refrigerator without expertise, how are we going to buy a foreign policy, it's beyond the ordinary person. Therefore, we need these boards of experts who will set policy and the people will just ratify.

. . . Lippmann's book is a historical curiosity but it's not really a serious position we should entertain.

Now it's interesting that we're hearing the same kind of thing today about a good deal of our technology. They're saying, oh, the Internet is so complicated that the underclass will never be able to take part in it. One of the things that's wrong about that, is that in order to sell this stuff, refrigerators and the Internet and even foreign policy, you have to make it user-friendly, you have to explain it to people. And technology has done that in wonderful ways. Cars were very difficult to run at the outset, you practically had to be an engineer and then they got everything, self-starters, self-steerers, self-brakers, self-windows going up and down. The same thing is happening with computers by the way, they're getting idiot-friendly.

So I think that Lippmann's book is a historical curiosity but it's not really a serious position we should entertain.

Mr. Glazer: Nathan Glazer.

I noticed recently that on the right there are a few figures who are speaking about the need for a stronger national government. Young William Kristol and David Brooks, and Donald Kagan and so on, are trying to exalt Theodore Roosevelt and saying we on the right have been too distrustful of government, we need more government. Well, what do you think of this trend, is it parallel to what you are saying or does it come from different sources and aiming at different ends?

Mr. Wills: I find it quite comforting. I think the reason is that Newt Gingrich and others drove the anti-government position into such disrepute

that these people are trying to recoil in some measure, William Bennett is another one. And they're appealing not so much to Theodore Roosevelt, though they do that too, but to Hamilton. Hamilton is having a great comeback, even among Republicans and also among Democrats.

It's one of the most interesting things that's going on right now. You know there's a see-saw in our history, when Jefferson is down Hamilton is up—

(Laughter)

Mr. Wills: —and Jefferson is down now. But yeah, I think that's very encouraging and I was more encouraged when George W. Bush said in New York that his party has been too ready to say that government is just the problem and not the solution. That was a pretty brave renunciation of the Ronald Reagan maxim.

. . . Newt Gingrich and others drove the anti-government position into such disrepute that these people are trying to recoil . . .

We always have this problem of course, that you can't go too far saying government is terrible, because you want to get into it. And there's always something a little absurd about saying "I despise politicians, everybody in the Beltway is a fool or a knave, the government itself is rotten, so please send me there." And of course when they get sent there, they get accused of learning to like it too much, and then it's said that they lied to their people, they're not hating it. So the cynicism keeps breeding.

So politicians often do have to back off, sometimes blatantly, sometimes subtly. Having campaigned on term limits they get in and decide that term limits, don't really have such a good basis after all. That's something with a long glorious tradition.

. . . there's a see-saw in our history, when Jefferson is down Hamilton is up—and Jefferson is down now.

The most anti-governmental of the founding fathers of course was Thomas Jefferson. He was out of the country when the Constitution was drawn up and he thought that that was a fatal flaw in the document.

(Laughter)

Mr. Wills: But what he most attacked was the perpetual re-eligibility of the president. We should have only one-term presidents, until Thomas Jefferson became president, and he served two.

From the floor: When I spoke with leaders of the militias around the nation, they told me that they were concerned with governmental power not because of partisanship or things like that but because law enforcement was so strong. They pointed to things like Waco, things like Ruby Ridge. How do you respond to that?

Mr. Wills: Well, Waco was a disaster of course. I don't know if it was because of the strength or weakness and panic and fear. But to say that police work is often inefficient and oppressive is not to say that therefore, the solution is to do your own policing, become your own police force. It's to reform the police force, to reform the FBI, to reform the Bureau of Alcohol and Tobacco, not to form militias.

And it is a difficult question if people hole themselves up with guns and refuse to answer subpoenas et cetera. I suppose that one solution is to just wait them out for several years. They didn't come up with a better solution. But because the police beat Rodney King, does that mean that we must not reform the police but form our own police? That's a very dangerous doctrine. For one thing the police they form not only fight the police everybody else has, but if they fight them well enough then we'll have to form our own police, then we'll all have our own feuding gangs. So that seems to be not really a serious argument, to say that because the police are wrong we should make ourselves the police.

The most anti-governmental of the founding fathers of course was Thomas Jefferson. He was out of the country when the Constitution was drawn up and he thought that that was a fatal flaw in the document.

Ms. Spector: I'm Felicity Spector, I'm a student at the Kennedy School.

I'm wondering whether you subscribe to the theory of American exceptionalism. Is this a peculiarly American disease, this dislike of government? Are we in Europe more fond of our exceptional institutions?

Mr. Wills: In general, I subscribe to the idea that all nations are exceptional. None of them follow the same pattern really. We are exceptional, we're different in all kinds of ways, good and bad. One of the most exceptional things about us was the separation of church and state. It hadn't been done before. It was extremely exceptional, so radical that we still find it hard to convince ourselves it means what it means. But we're doing better.

What's normally objected to with American exceptionalism is to say that Americans are better than others, are more virtuous, are better able to do things. We are so exceptional that we can't join with the UN, with international organizations, because they're not as good as we are, they don't understand virtue in the same sense that we do. Which means we have to go our own way, and we can't cooperate with others. For instance, some want to say, oh, well we'll serve abroad but we can't ever serve under the command of a UN officer, only under our own.

Well that means of course that the advantages that we could get from cooperation with other people we foreswear. It's to our own advantage to

learn to cooperate. After all we're supposed to be a leader of the free world. Leaders have to engage their followers. They can't say, well, I'm too good for you to follow me. So that's the problem with American exceptionalism in its common use.

. . . we're supposed to be a leader of the free world. Leaders have to engage their followers.

Graham Greene made great fun of it when he said, in *The Quiet American,* that the whole history of the 20th century has been one of decolonization, you know, the creation of hundreds of new nations, the emergence of a third of the globe that was under domination. And Vietnam was one little chapter of that series, it was the French-Indochinese colony breaking up. And we thought we could go in, and against all this tide of history, just go separate ourselves from that. "Well, this has nothing to do with decolonization or nationalism, or anti-Europeanism or any of that, it's just us good guys teaching you good government."

So Pyle, his character in *The Quiet American* says, we're not like those countries, we come with clean hands. And that was the whole delusion of Vietnam. He said, it was a touching innocence, and he said, innocent people should wear bells like ancient lepers so people will know that there's danger coming.

When an airplane crashes, we don't say to the nearest airport, the local people understand their local needs best, so they should investigate this crash

Ms. Hamlen: I'm Sara Hamlen, I'm a student at the Kennedy School.

Do you think Americans trust the Internet or the government more; and what do you think in terms of preparation for Y2K, are they willing to trust the government to help them through January 1st?

Mr. Wills: Well we all want lots of government help there. You see, whenever there's an impending disaster, a hurricane or some kind of tidal wave or something like that, we all run for the government. Or when there's tainted meat around, then we suddenly say, oh my God, we don't want local people telling us that this meat is okay.

When an airplane crashes, we don't say to the nearest airport, the local people understand their local needs best, so they should investigate this crash and find out what went wrong, we only want federal people to do that. So for Y2K, I think, people would be glad of any help from government.

Do they trust the Internet? The Internet has so many different voices that they choose one voice and trust it, crazily, or confidentially and totally. It's like talk radio. People say talk radio will offer you all kinds of opin-

ions, but people only listen to one, one that they're already disposed to, so the pluralism doesn't seem to affect them much.

I was just on a show with a woman in Pittsburgh, and it was only the second time I've been on a talk show with a woman, Mary Matalin, being the other one. And I said there aren't too many of you, and she said, no I'm a woman but even worse I'm a liberal, there are even fewer of us in talk radio. So the Internet offers this wonderful smorgasbord of things that you can choose, but most people are not going to shop on it, they're going to go honing into the thing they trust; it's the same way they dial in Rush Limbaugh.

From the floor: There seems to be a push from the right towards decentralization of government down to the states. Do you believe that this is something that people are accepting? And why do you think people would accept state authority more than they would federal authority? Theoretically it seems that states might be more responsive to the needs of the public. But if you look at it another way, you can say that that's fifty governments you have to keep track of instead of just one.

Mr. Wills: That's right. Well that's a continual tug of war of course. The states have a different role, and they always were meant to. As Madison said, "we're not trying to get rid of the states." He said something though that they were not too happy about, he said, "the states are to the federal government as the counties are to the states, they are administrative units." And his argument for them was efficiency again, division of labor. There's a lot that the federal government shouldn't do because it's just not efficient in doing it. So local people should do best what local people do best.

But of course this all gets tied in with this nutty idea that the states are somehow sovereign, that they're reclaiming their sovereignty, that they're acting out a partial sovereignty which is a contradiction in terms. So that we have some justices and other people now trying to say that the 10th Amendment means that the states are reasserting their sovereignty. The 10th Amendment doesn't say anything about sovereignty, it says powers not delegated to the federal government are not delegated to federal government. It's tautological. Of course they're not, if they're not delegated, then they belong in the states.

Justice Scalia, by the way, on this, as on some other things including the independent counsel law, is very sensible. He's all for state's rights, but he says it's not in the 10th Amendment, it's in the structure of the document. The 10th Amendment has nothing do with sovereignty.

From the floor: I was wondering a little bit on this phenomenon you describe as being very American. The same thing seems to be happening in other parts of the world. And I was wondering is it because we are becoming more like you? I'm from France. Or is it because there's something new that's coming up?

Mr. Wills: You're saying distrust of government is happening in other countries too?

From the floor: Yes.

Mr. Wills: Which countries did you have in mind?

From the floor: It's everywhere, in Europe.

Mr. Wills: Well yeah, there is distrust of government all the time and should be, it's a healthy attitude to take toward anything powerful. It's the attitude we take toward others who have power over our lives. We should distrust doctors, and lawyers, and accountants, not because there's anything wrong with those, but because that's the way we keep them accountable. We say, explain to me why I have to do this; explain to me why this surgery makes sense; explain to me why I'm paying you this amount of money; in all of those ways we are asserting our need for accountability.

On the other hand, we don't want them to be amateurs, we want them to be professional, to know things we don't know. So when you're hiring an agent, there's a constant tension between accountability and trust, trust in their expertise that we don't have. Now that applies everywhere and should apply everywhere.

. . . there's a constant tension between accountability and trust, . . .

We have certain things that go beyond that, and other countries have certain things that go beyond that. Distrust of government in many countries around the world now is a function of ethnic tension, of different governmental components being assembled quite recently in time, of religious fundamentalists and other tensions. As I said, every nation is exceptional and you have to look at each one for the reasons for distrust of government. In Canada, for instance, the distrust between the English and the French speaking segments is very strong. That's quite different from ours.

So I don't think that there is a universal rule, except the healthy human instinct for distrust of government. And I'm trying to single out what's specific about our situation.

Mr. Patterson: One last question.

Ms. Glick: Thanks. Caroline Glick, I'm from the Kennedy School.

President Clinton, in a few speeches that he's given these past couple of weeks, has been saying that one of the reasons why his plans aren't passing is because people in the Congress feel that the United States is so well off that they don't have to cooperate anymore between the branches. In terms of leadership and the capability of leadership to succeed in the United States, does the United States have to be in trouble in order for Americans to delegate enough responsibility to their leaders to actually take on leadership challenges and to succeed in them?

Mr. Wills: Good question. Leadership is easier in times of peril, because people cry out for it and cling to it. So in war it becomes almost dangerously easy, and we're willing to give up too much of our distrust of govern-

ment, we become too docile, we allow the government to get away with things like imprisoning Japanese-Americans. So it's quite true that our great presidents tend to be our war presidents, or presidents in times of crisis, depression or whatever. I think President Clinton has a certain justification for that. On the other hand, one of the reasons he has trouble with leadership is that he destroyed his credibility as a leader so disastrously.

Leadership is possible even in prosperous times, but it's difficult, it's much more difficult. I spoke to this group some years ago and used the analogy of sailing, that if you're up against a good wind, the boat responds instantly to the tiller, if you're in a dead calm you just work it back and forth and nothing happens. Well that can be the case with prosperity.

. . . in war . . . we're willing to give up too much of our distrust of government, we become too docile, we allow the government to get away with things like imprisoning Japanese-Americans.

On the other hand, a lot of our advances have been made in times of prosperity because we're willing to take chances. The '60s, for instance, was willing to do various things in terms of civil rights, and women's rights in the seventies, and minority rights because we were prosperous, because we could take a chance. And something like that may be happening now in things like gay rights, there's very extraordinary progress in that at the moment, which might not have occurred when people are scared and quick to accuse each other of horrible things.

So there's a different kind of leadership needed in times of prosperity and we can often do things then that we could not do otherwise. So let's try to take advantage of that.

. . . there's a different kind of leadership needed in times of prosperity and we can often do things then that we could not do otherwise. So let's try to take advantage of that.

(Applause)

Mr. Patterson: Garry Wills, thank you again for joining us tonight.

THEODORE H. WHITE LECTURE
NOVEMBER 5, 1999

Mr. Patterson: Let's get started here. I'm Tom Patterson, the Bradlee Professor of Government and the Press at the Kennedy School, and Acting Director of the Shorenstein Center. I see many familiar faces from last night as well as some new ones this morning. Last night was a wonderful event, maintaining the tradition of the Theodore H. White Lecture series, and we do have one former T. H. White Lecturer here, Dan Schorr. And certainly what Garry Wills did last night maintained that wonderful intellectual tradition that has marked the series.

This will be a discussion, and then we'll open it up to the audience, but I first wanted to give Garry Wills an opportunity to see if he wanted to add something to what was said last night, we'll start there.

Garry?

Mr. Wills: I just wanted to thank you people for having me once again. I was walking around this morning, remembering when I've been here on other times, Jonathan Moore reminded me of one on a panel. One of the other times I came to the Kennedy School I was covering the McGovern campaign, the Dukakis campaign, excuse me.

(Laughter)

Mr. Wills: Easily confused. And I came to look at his student evaluations for the course he taught here after he was out of the governorship, and they were very high. It's quite unusual for politicians, usually these politicians get hired to teach and they have some trouble because they're not used to it. McGovern I brought up because after he lost, the dean at Northwestern asked me, because I had been following him around, whether I thought he could teach a course there? And I said, well, he got his doctorate from Northwestern after all, in history. He wrote a dissertation on a mine strike. So I said, that's probably a good idea.

He signed him up and a thousand students signed up to take his course. About 800 were admitted, armies of TAs were deployed to handle this immense, huge lecture course, and he told campaign anecdotes and senate anecdotes for three or four classes and then he had nothing to say. So people streamed for the doors and they ended up with practically more TAs than there were students. I was glad to see the Kennedy School has a better record, at least going by those wonderful evaluations I read of Dukakis.

Anyway, just thank you again, it's nice to be here.

Mr. Patterson: Thank you, Garry.

One of the good things about being the acting director of the Center is you have some opportunity to shape the panel that gets to respond to the Theodore H. White Lecture, and I think we have an extraordinary group of people here to respond to and add their own comments to what Garry Wills said last night.

With us this morning is Thomas Edsall, political reporter with the *Washington Post.* I think Tom, before scholars, before nearly every journalist, pinpointed the growing role of money in American politics, and *Power and Money,* for my mind, is one of the very best books in this area. He has also written about the politics of inequality and the impact of race, rights and taxes on American politics.

Also with us this morning is David Gergen, who is now here as the public service professor at the Kennedy School, White House advisor to four presidents, editor of *U.S. News & World Report,* and in addition to his Kennedy School position, still remains editor-at-large at *U.S. News* and has an association with Duke University.

Jane Mansbridge, also of our faculty, the Adams Professor of Political Leadership and Democratic Values, one of the very best people in the area of social movements and collective action problems, and one of my favorite members of the faculty. Jenny is the author of *Beyond Adversary Democracy* and the award winning *Why We Lost the ERA.*

Then Linda Wertheimer, senior host of National Public Radio's news magazine "All Things Considered" and her 1995 book *Listening to America* celebrated NPR's 25th anniversary. And we kind of have a double connection at the Shorenstein Center with Linda; she is a member of our senior advisory board and my first year here we were quite fortunate to have her husband as one of the fellows. That was a real treat and gave us an opportunity to get a little more closely related to the Wertheimer family.

So, we have a wonderful group of panelists, and I would ask each of them to respond to, but also to lay on the table anything in the general ballpark. We're going to stay within the realm of distrust of government and associated topics. And also we'll try to think hard this morning about where the press fits into this mix.

So that within that broad but constrained mandate, let me ask Tom Edsall to speak first.

Mr. Edsall: Thank you very much, nice introduction.

This is my hometown, I was born in the Mt. Auburn Hospital. I may be the only townie here today. Last night I went on a walk and I went over to Charlie's Kitchen, where I used to drink as a young man, and in those days you could get two beers and two hamburgers for a dollar. At any rate, they no longer sell that but they still look the same.

In listening to Garry last night and reading the book I felt a little badly that he didn't talk more about what he focuses on in the book, which is this whole growth of basically anti-government sentiments, nullifications, interposition nullifiers, secessionists, insurrectionists. This is a whole theme I think he has touched on very effectively, more than touched on, that goes to the heart of a lot of the debate we've had in the 1980s with the rise of conservatism, what kind of conservatism is it, is it really conservative? How destructive is it? And how creative is it?

And it seems somewhat historical and academic but in fact I think he has really begun to explore an area that goes to the heart of the American ethic and the conflicts within that ethic. In listening last night to the speech, Garry talked about the limitations we have in this country, that this is a country where we cannot have effective gun laws, we can't have national health care, we can't have campaign financing.

And in thinking about that, that's one way to look at these as the costs of what we have. We have an economy that is doing better than any European economy at the moment, we have more innovation. We have high poverty but we have high wealth.

We have a system that tolerates extremes and in that system there are going to be costs that Garry has very effectively noted, and there are also going to be extraordinary benefits. One of those benefits, as Garry pointed out last night, has been the expansion of the whole concept of equality, women, blacks and now gays. He described this as the government taking the role of defending the defenseless. That is one way to look at it.

. . . the bombing in Oklahoma City . . . took the guts out of the whole Gingrich revolution of 1994 in a way that has not really been fully recognized.

I think another way to look at it would be to describe it as government taking the role of providing access to citizenship and opportunity to those who have not been allowed access, to the marginalized. But it's to make people who may have been defenseless able to defend themselves, to compete. It's another way of looking at it, as opposed to them being victims, it's more putting people into a position of equality and in this country, competitive equality, which has become increasingly important, I think.

Garry's book and his lecture focuses on, for example, the power of the gun lobby, the role of the anti-government forces. I think at the moment that debate has taken a major shift, and the shift occurred really with the bombing in Oklahoma City, Timothy McVeigh's bombing, again something Garry goes into in the book. That changed the course of conservatism and took the guts out of the whole Gingrich revolution of 1994 in a way that has not really been fully recognized.

You had a whole movement taking place with Gingrich in office, you had the Waco and Ruby Ridge incidents building a whole logic and ethic of anti-governmentism. And then suddenly you have Timothy McVeigh bombing the Oklahoma City federal building, killing I think 168 people, and suddenly people began to see the real liabilities in this radical, whatever you want to call it, insurrectionist is the way Garry describes it, movement.

Then at the same time, shortly thereafter, you had Clinton declaring that the era of big government is over, and in a certain sense ending a period of

Democratic big government philosophy. Now I think there is a real reversal. You've got, as Garry pointed out, George Bush endorsing government. And if you look at the gun debate, the gun debate has shifted for the first time in this country to be pro gun control. It is clearly the positive position to be in in most states and absolutely in a national election.

Clinton, in 1996, used his support of the Brady Bill, the assault weapon ban, and he used it very effectively, to gain suburban voter support. Bob Dole, who had been a critic of gun control, had to abandon it because he knew it was a liability. The Republicans now are torn and split by the issue. There has been one of the most striking reversals in one area politically and that is gun policy.

Now I think we are moving into a new debate, not just over the role of government but what both Gore and Bush are talking about, the use of faith-based organizations, for example, to act as surrogates for government, or to receive government money. To what degree can these faith-based organizations continue to be advocates of religious goals at the same time they're trying to pursue social welfare goals? All these things are mixed together.

But again, in conclusion, I just wanted to say that Garry's book goes to the core of the whole debate of what is the relationship of the citizen and the state to the national government. And that's one that I hope we explore further this morning.

Mr. Patterson: Good. Thank you, Tom. The Kennedy School is obviously not agnostic on the issue of whether government can be a positive force, but we're striving for strict neutrality on partisan and ideological issues, and that includes kind of spatial balance, so, I started on my far left and I'll go to my far right, David Gergen?

Mr. Gergen: Thank you, Tom.

I have only one beef with Garry Wills, he writes much faster than I can read.

(Laughter)

Mr. Gergen: And it's been a problem for a great many of us over the years. But I must say that I and countless others have benefitted from his work. He has illuminated the past in ways that I think are both instructive and inspiring. In his book *Certain Trumpets*, which is about leadership, there are chapters there that are among the most important that I assign to my students here at the Kennedy School.

His book on George Washington, hard to find these days, but it's still a very interesting book, about the way leaders gain power by resigning from positions. It has been instructive to Bill Bradley, as recently as this campaign, or when he left the Senate, he said he found that whole concept that Garry Wills had developed to be important to what he was all about.

And Garry Wills' book on Lincoln, if you have a chance to read it, will make you just jump right out of your seat and want to walk over the Mt. Auburn Cemetery. To understand the importance of that cemetery

movement to Lincoln's address at Gettysburg, it's really quite interesting. So there is so much that I agree with him on and I am so much in awe of his erudition that it's a little challenging to sit here and talk about or take issue with some of the things he has said, both in his book and last night.

I would like to probe him a bit harder on three points. One is about history and understanding the founding. He makes a compelling argument that the founders intended in 1787 to create a more efficient government, a more effective government, and there is certainly much that supports that. But the suggestion was that checks and balances have no real meaning, they were not intended to paralyze government.

That is quite true, but at the same time I wonder whether he also believes that the founders did intend to have limited government. While we wanted to have more effective government, they were moved by the experiences under the Articles of Confederation, Shays's Rebellion was very much in their mind as they went to Philadelphia. As they created a government that was more effective and more efficient, they clearly put checks upon those in authority and they distributed powers rather carefully.

After last night I went back to my Clinton Rossiter to read about the presidency. He has a couple of long chapters about checks put upon the executive by the founders, to ensure that even in the hands of a George Washington that the government would more effectively carry out the laws, but that no executive would become a monarch, there would not be the "squint toward monarchy" that some talked about.

So I'm wondering, Garry, whether in fact even as they intended more effective government there was not an intention on the part of the founders to have limited government and distribute powers not only in the national level but the powers left in reserve for the states. The 10th Amendment is not entirely an empty concept.

The second point I'd like to raise is about journalists, which is very much at the heart of what this conversation, I take it, will eventually cover. And Garry Wills made, I think, a very strong argument last night that journalists do not go back, as we should, to our history and bring it forward and help people to understand the context.

I'm wondering to what extent you believe historians may bear some responsibility in the way journalists approach history. It's very important to understand that there were days when historians at American universities taught students in a serious way about American history. Today in most American universities, Allan Bloom makes this point, if you go to most American universities you can get a survey course on American history and after that you cannot get a course on the founding or the American Revolution.

I think it's important we have developed courses on race, class, and gender. But there is no course in most American universities on the founding, there's no course on the American Civil War, there's no course on the Second World War. We have taken those courses essentially off the board.

And if we really want journalists to understand the past, do not historians bear some responsibility?

Also, I wonder what we're teaching our students sometimes. Garry, you talked last night and cited we the people, in order to form a more perfect union, and you explained to us what perfect means in that context. But we the people also has meaning, and one has to bear in mind that the historical standards that recently came out, back in 1994, said we should no longer refer to the American people, it's the peoples of the United States, as if the singular idea of the people, American people, is one that is now in disfavor. The history standards of the State of New York and the history standards of the State of Maryland had similar perspectives on this. So journalists are somewhat confused about history, could historians please help us?

. . . while Washington is paralyzed, many of our governors are some of the most effective public servants we have . . .

And the final point is on the distrust of government, something which does occupy a lot of our thought. And the suggestion last night was that the critical way to strengthen trust in government is through the national government. There is no question that we must do things to reform the national government so it is both more responsive and more respected and more effective in dealing with issues.

But my impression is that much of what is going on in this country today, which is helping on this struggle to make government more respected, is indeed happening at the state and local level, that while Washington is paralyzed, many of our governors are some of the most effective public servants we have and some of them are doing terrific jobs trying to reform education. While Washington is paralyzed on HMOs, many states are moving forward on HMO legislation. In fact, there is real energy and dynamism at the state and local level which we could celebrate.

This school has something called the Innovations in American Government Program, I happen to have something to do with it, and we award each year prizes to the most innovative programs around the country in government. And it's just astonishing how good some of the people are who come in the door from the state and local level. They are just terrific and they are very much on point about trying to deal with some of these problems in a very constructive way.

Recently, at Palisades, where they had the education summit, CEOs and governors came in from around the country. One could not tell the difference between a Democrat and a Republican. You couldn't tell the difference hearing Gray Davis speak, versus John Engler of Michigan, versus Jim Hunt of North Carolina. They were all out there trying to share ideas. So even as we face this rather appalling sight that we see today in Washington,

there is much going on, I think, that is healthy for the future of government at the state and local level. Thanks.

Mr. Patterson: Thank you, David.

Linda Wertheimer?

Ms. Wertheimer: I would echo what David has just said about some of the states and the way that state governors have been approaching the job of governing. I've had a number of conversations with governors recently in which they've told me that they basically have just laid aside their dealings with the federal government because they find it just doesn't work, even though there are areas where they need the federal government's help.

I talked to the Governor of Kansas for quite some time late in the summer. He said, apart from the agriculture bill, which he would be very grateful if Congress would pass one, he said apart from that they were just moving ahead on their own on all the issues they thought were important to Kansans.

But I would also suggest something that Garry did not mention last night, and that is I've always felt that America's vision of the size of its government has a great deal to do with state and local government. I mean I think it is extraordinary, as you travel this country, as I'm sure all of you have done, to find that in every single state there is a big building with a dome, that is at least as large as the national capitol building is, and is surrounded by all its domains and demeans, which seem to me to be at least as large as those that surround the federal capitol.

There is also generally, some palatial skyscraper named after a local hero which is there to house the local, the sort of limbs and outward gestures of the federal government as they reach the states. And even in states where government is really frowned upon, states like Texas, you find the most extraordinary palaces to government at the county level.

I mean people have made huge books of photographs of county seats in the State of Texas, and they are extraordinary buildings, most of them I think built in the Victorian period when we took to dividing our country up into sections, and then into counties, trying to make everything square, which is I guess an indication of the American feeling of dominating our situation.

It's also true that Americans encounter enormous numbers of uniformed services as they go about their daily lives. There are cops at every level, there are the state cops, there are county sheriffs, there are city police and then there are the federal cops, which please, God, most of us don't ever have to encounter, in the form of the FBI and the IRS and the DEA. But we certainly do have encounters with the local constabulary.

I once made what I now regard as a classic mistake, I was doing door-to-door kind of campaign stuff and I went downtown in a medium-sized midwestern city and I arrived at a very pretty square, I was on the north side of the square. And I was asking people for their comments on a particular election, and they were all doing convincing imitations, very

irascible convincing imitations of Henry Kissinger. Something which really drives me very crazy is when ordinary citizens give you a really pompous: "No comment."

(Laughter)

Ms. Wertheimer: And finally I realized that my mistake was that I was standing outside the motor vehicle bureau.

(Laughter)

. . . American people . . . curse the lack of efficiency on the local level and want to know why when they are digging up the street there is one man digging and three people standing there.

Ms. Wertheimer: Most citizen's encounter with their government at the motor vehicle bureau or the post office, and in both cases it's bound to be unpleasant. And I think a lot of our derisory feelings about government arise from that, arise from the immense size of government, when viewed from the grass roots.

Now we who live within the Beltway think of government at large as the federal government. But I think government is pretty damn big at every level and that's one of the reasons why people feel the way they do about it, apart from and in addition to the historical reasons, the mythology that Garry outlines so compellingly in his book.

And that too is I think where we run into some of the peculiar sort of contrasts in the way the American people feel about government. They curse the lack of efficiency on the local level and want to know why when they are digging up the street there is one man digging and three people standing there. And why they dig up your street for the gas main and then fill it up and then come back and dig it up for the water mains and fill it up. So I think local government is one of the reasons why Americans mistrust government. And as hopeful and as thoroughly admirable as I think many of the governors that we now have are, I think that local government has given rise to a lot of the ways we feel about government.

Now, just to completely change the subject, the other thing that I find fascinating about the American's feeling about government is the very peculiar way that it has expressed itself in recent elections, which is just so bizarre. President Ronald Reagan runs on fiscal responsibility and runs up historic deficits. That members of Congress endlessly talk about waste, fraud and abuse yet somehow cannot manage to discover any, at least not in the amounts they indicate in their rhetoric exists.

Members of Congress who have served for many years get out and attempt to run as outsiders, an extraordinary thing to do, and it just makes you wonder what on earth they think the people back home, I mean how stupid do they think their voters really are?

I find that the demagoguery about Social Security and Medicare has no basis in fact. The United States is running surpluses and has huge amounts of money. Congress venerates the elderly as they do no other voter. That kind of thing, which I suppose is a symptom of what Garry is talking about, has contributed a great deal to our sense that the Congress is irrelevant and irrational, and that therefore, by extension, so is a large portion of the government.

But I am sort of deriving some hope from a couple of recent events, in addition to the abilities of some of the governors that we've observed around the country, and that is the impeachment of the president. Now the president behaved in a disgusting fashion, and I think all the people in the country understood it to be disgusting.

. . . the impeachment . . . may have given some people some sense of restoration of power, some sense that the Congress can, in extreme matters, be made to pay attention to the voter.

But the Congress overreached when it attempted to impeach the president for what he did, and the American people felt strongly that it was an over reaching, and they said so and it still went on, and they said so a little bit louder and it still went on, and finally they said, just a minute here, just hold it, stop this, this is not happening. And finally, the Senate heard them and stopped. And I think that may have given some people some sense of restoration of power, some sense that the Congress can, in extreme matters, be made to pay attention to the voter.

I also think that we are hearing from our listeners an extraordinary amount of concern about what happens in the Balkan countries, and what has happened in the countries, from virtually Pakistan east, when religious adherence moves into the government, how extraordinarily bad that is for most of the population. And how very much we do not want that kind of thing to happen here. I think that has also sort of freshened people's feelings about the separation of church and state, which was beginning to slip it seems to me, as the Christian Coalition and other groups were gaining power.

So I think that the American people have taken some notice of interesting things that have been happening, and I hold out some hope that perhaps in the next round of elections, where it seems to me that thoroughly sensible people are running for president on all sides, that we might actually begin to turn around the notion that we should reject the activities of our own government.

Mr. Patterson: Linda, thank you.

Jane Mansbridge?

Ms. Mansbridge: Well I want to thank you, Garry, for an important and delightful talk last night, and for an important and delightful book. It's

important because you aim at what I too agree is a dangerous streak in American culture, this is a streak of such deep distrust in government and in actually being governed that it cripples us in the ways we can help one another, and particularly help the most vulnerable among us, through any kind of common action. And I think Tom Patterson is right in saying that the press contributes greatly to this mistrust, from a mix of its own incentives.

But it's not just the right, there's been a little bit of a stress on the right here, it's also the left that I know and love, the left of the protest of the '60s. We pervade an analysis that the government was evil, irredeemably corrupt, illegitimate. And that analysis then turned on us, it turned on any attempt to use the legitimate powers of the government to help the vulnerable.

So I think this is an extremely important book, we could spend quite a bit of time, I hope we will in the question period, talking about the different kinds of dynamics that we can set up, why is the motor vehicle department such an alienating institution? Well there's a lovely little circle there, you're angry at the government, you cut back on taxes, you don't give it very much money, you assume there's a lot of waste. And the people in the motor vehicle bureau, there's not enough of them and so forth, so the lines stretch out down the block, so you get mad at government and cut back the taxes, et cetera, et cetera.

So there's a lot we can talk about, congressmen running against Congress. Most members of the public say they think their congressman is very good, but they think Congress is terrible. Well that's because their congressman, who they know, has run against Congress. That's not the only reason, but each individual runs against Congress and then you get this larger dynamic.

The book is not only important, I think it's delightful, and Garry did not pay me to do this but I think you should all run out and get a copy. Because it's filled with this dazzling skewering of myths, in the style he is so incredibly good at. Last night, those of you who were there to hear the talk, saw him skewer the myth of the sovereign states, saw him skewer the myth of the coequal branches of Congress.

Let me just touch on a few other skewerings. Take the idea that the best idea to defend our country back in the Revolutionary War days was to have each farmer at home with a musket ready to jump out from behind a tree and put to ruin those foolishly regimented redcoats. That's what you learned wasn't it? I mean our wonderful country, there we were with our muskets, jumping out, and those silly redcoats all lining up ready to be shot at like little ducks.

In fact, the book quotes William Casey, future head of the CIA, touring revolutionary battlefields, writing that our forbearers won the revolution, just as the Vietnamese won their struggle by irregular partisan guerilla warfare, that's the myth.

The reality, Garry tells us, is that the militias were in no way universal. The socially prominent avoided service by paying others to go in their

place. John Adams never considered fighting. The majority of males didn't own usable guns. In the French and Indian wars a contingent of 200 Virginia militiamen went to the front bearing only 80 muskets. The captain of the New Hampshire militia said, not one half of our men have arms.

The inheritance list for white males, where records were kept, only 14 percent of the men owned guns and half of those were broken and unusable. There was only one gun then for every ten people in the colonies. And now there is more than one for every man, woman and child in America, and more than three for every adult male in the population. We're not duplicating the days of the militias.

The militias were also terrible fighters, they were often outcasts, they'd been lured or illegally pressed into service through promises of bounty payments. George Washington, trying to lead them, said they made him feel ashamed for his countrymen. They had very short enlistment times, high rates of desertion, and they performed terribly on the battlefield, it was not just George Washington who couldn't bear to lead them, it was Sam Adams and Thomas Jefferson and Thomas Burke, they were all in despair, they wanted regular soldiers, not these militia.

There was only one gun then for every ten people in the colonies. And now there is more than one for every man, woman and child in America, and more than three for every adult male in the population.

Take another myth that I found: The idea that Thomas Jefferson had much wisdom in matters of government. When he was selected Governor of Virginia, he was so chary of governmental power that he told General Friedreich Von Steuben, whom Washington had sent to organize the government defenses, that because the legislature had adjourned he had no authority, as governor, to assign militiamen or slaves to help the general fortify a narrow on the river, which the general wanted to fortify to keep the British from coming up. It needed 40 laborers, and Jefferson said he was really sorry, he couldn't authorize those 40 laborers. And the British just steamed, went right up the river and sacked Richmond, that was the end of Richmond.

So then there is John Brown, another hero, Battle Hymn of the Republic. One night in 1856 John Brown and three others took three men, presumed slavery supporters, from their homes, along with one man's young son, and hacked all five to pieces with broadswords, lots of little pieces of five men lying around after John Brown got hold of them. This is on every page, the sort of myth of the independent entrepreneur, so to speak, with a sword or a musket.

The frontier, wonderful myths about the gunfights of the frontier. It turns out that nobody but an expert can do with a six-shooter most of the things we see in westerns. You can't fire from the hip, you can't fan the gun, you can't draw quickly from a holster, you can't fire from a galloping horse, you can't fire a gun from each hand, you can't fire one shot after another with any kind of accuracy, you can't even fire guns that work every time. And there were hardly, not as many gunfights as the movies would suggest. It turns out that the shootout at the OK Corral was the only gunfight Wyatt Earp was ever in. Handguns were banned in many of the cattle towns.

I used to teach at Northwestern, where Garry teaches, and there was a famous textbook there which had a sentence in it: "Seldom did a group of drovers leave town without contributing to the population of Boot Hill." Wrong, historically incorrect, it has to be taken out of all the next texts.

Or the myth of Thoreau, the great conscience of America, Garry shows he had a dark underside, not only hating and distrusting government, but despising, to a startling degree, his fellow human beings. He wanted to go to Walden to get a place where men, in his words "could not pursue and paw him with their dirty institutions."

By night, Thoreau wrote about the other places in the town, "by night every dwelling house gives out bad air". He thought the city must have a bad influence on children, to see so many human beings at once, more herds of men.

So I think I've given you a little bit of what makes this book a page turner, I stayed up till 2:00, couldn't put it down. But Garry, though I'm 95 percent on your side, though I agree with you that distrust of government goes too far and hurts us deeply, helps from the decent polity that we are, I harbor a fondness for this distrusting libertarian Marlboro Man wannabe culture that we have.

You touch on one or two possible virtues in a couple of pages at the end and you treat them so briefly. But I want to ask you, don't you think some of the energy of our entrepreneurship, some of the vitality of our culture, some of the creative spark, some of what makes us rather attractive to the rest of the world comes from the same sources as this distrust of government? This kind of adolescent defiance in American culture? That's what I admire, maybe because I'm half English and half American.

Of course I can see what we lose in comparison to more sensible people, but I can also see what we gain. These militia made of vagrants and deserters, those insane refusals of Jefferson to go a hair beyond what the legislator might have authorized, those fantasized cowboys with their twirling six shooters. Don't you think, see something admirable in the refusal to be governed? In this particular mythmaking, as opposed to the French myth of civilization or the British myth of the white man's burden. Both of those myths are myths of order, our myth is a myth of disorder, but can't disorder be the crucible of much that is good?

(Applause)

Mr. Patterson: Jenny, thank you.

And I think we could start with that question, posed by a former colleague at Northwestern University, to Professor Wills. Respond to Jenny or to any of the other points and then we'll start to open it up a bit.

Mr. Wills: Okay, let me just briefly say how much, how useful this is, I wish (this is always the case), I wish I could have done this before I wrote the books. I could take advantage of all these insights.

Tom is quite right, I think, that there is this tremendous shift and Linda indicates it too on the impeachment, the Congress badly overplayed its hand, the Gingrich revolution. Remember when that happened, it seemed that that was the end of the Democratic party, just for a start, and the end of many other things. Peggy Noonan was signed up to go down and celebrate the glorious revolution that was going to change all of our history.

. . . our myth is a myth of disorder, but can't disorder be the crucible of much that is good?

In fact, I was just reading last night this good book, *Why People Don't Trust Government,* done here, and something that was written right in the aftermath of that, it's kind of typical and not at all strange, this is why the people don't trust government. In the book, it's Richard Neustadt's contribution, he says: "the once dominant Democratic coalition of voters assembled in the time of Franklin Roosevelt so often labeled dead before, must finally be presumed so after 1994. We seemingly are on the verge of the ultimate success for Richard Nixon's southern strategy," and so on. Now everything has changed. It quickly changed back because as I said they overplayed their hand.

And he's quite right that there's a tremendous change going on on the gun front. In Orange County a Republican womens' group has now organized itself, advocating gun control so effectively that it got a long front-page story in the *Wall Street Journal*. So when that happens it's like Jerry Falwell talking to gays or when George Wallace suddenly decides that he has to woo black voters. You know a movement has arrived when Orange County women are willing to advocate gun control.

The battle is just beginning though, of course. What's hurting the gun people now especially plays into what others have said about local forces. Local forces are now beginning to sue gun dealers and gun manufacturers, repeating the process that was used against tobacco. So you get things like the Minnesota suit against the tobacco industry and that has really scared the gun manufacturers. Colt has discontinued some of its models, Smith and Wesson has now a contract with its dealers saying that they must take steps to prevent sales to middlemen who distribute these guns to criminals.

I don't know if it's so much the change in the atmosphere toward government as the tremendous threat that's coming from individual suits. And we have to remember that even though these suits have done much to control tobacco, it's still around. In fact, I was just reading this morning that it's rising among young people, now they're back up to the level of adults, and of course they will continue to smoke. So these are frays in a long continuing battle, on guns and on tobacco, and on government in general.

. . . Mayor Daley, this is the younger Mayor Daley, is a much better mayor than his father because he has mainly relied on trust rather than fear in his relationships with the community

But I certainly agree that he's right that the emphasis should be on access to citizenship rather than protection as the federal government's role with people. That's a much better way to put it, and I wish I had put it more like that.

Secondly, David, you're certainly right about the historians being much to blame for this. And you're certainly right about the local authorities, not only state but mayors. I come from Chicago where Mayor Daley, this is the younger Mayor Daley, is a much better mayor than his father because he has mainly relied on trust rather than fear in his relationships with the community. And he signaled that right from the outset. One of the first things he did to show that he was not his father was early on in his tenure as mayor, he joined and marched with the gays, in the Gay Liberation Parade, not something the old man would have done.

And the confidence in the government at that level has noticeably risen. The morale of Chicago is an extraordinary thing right now. Everybody says that, even the people who are historically distrustful of the government, like some of the black leaders.

When he talks about, when he quotes Rossiter and others that there certainly were supposed to be checks on government, yes, they wanted limited government, all constitutional regimes want limited government. But for instance, the check on the executive is not so much a matter of checks and balances in the mixed government mode, but the fact that the executive is subordinate to the Congress.

What I was arguing last night was that it's the non co-equality that makes for the president being subordinate, that the executive should be subordinate to the legislature, and they are.

Madison thought that there were two things that needed checking. He thought that the principal checking apparatus was the election, that if the election is not the source of the power of government then the government has failed. And unless the electorate holds their agents responsible, then nothing you can do in terms of mechanics will improve things.

On the other hand, he did believe that there was a danger of accumulating power in the government. And he, like everybody at the time, didn't think it was in the executive, that's another myth, we feared another king, so we had to put a lot of checks on the executive. That's not true at all, what they feared was the legislature. In the anti-federalist documents, taken out of the polemics around the ratification, the real fear is the Senate, the Senate will become aristocratic, it will collaborate with the executive through the joint appointment of officers and through treaty making and that kind of thing, and absorb the executive back into the legislative and become an aristocracy that will perpetuate itself.

Of course one of the things they most objected to was the six-year term. Madison admitted that that was the source of the danger. And he said that the legislature, although it has to predominate, so clearly has to do that, that it's the most dangerous element and therefore, he at one time proposed a joint veto. He didn't think the presidential veto would really be strong enough because it would just momentarily check the legislature and it would override.

He wanted a joint veto between both the judiciary and the executive, trying to beef up the objections if the legislature seemed to be running out of control. That lost in the debates but it shows where he thought the danger was. But in general, the check on the executive is simply a matter of keeping it subordinate to the legislature.

. . . I love the picture of pitchfork Pat Buchanan, that millionaire who was born in Washington and has lived there all of his life, leading a peasants' charge against Washington.

Linda, talking about local power, I just was in Pittsburgh, and I don't know if you've seen the county building there, from I think 1913, it's like a huge castle out of Hollywood's Robin Hood, it's an immense thing. And the old county power was a famous factor in the history of the county there, the county around Pittsburgh. In fact, they had a very old system in which their distrust of government was so great, that they had a joint panel of three county supervisors. It was too dangerous to put in the hands, this tremendous power of the county was too dangerous to put in the hands of one person. And that hasn't worked too well, because it's just an invitation to endless squabbling. So for the very first time, they had an election just last Tuesday, for a one-person leader of this great castle of county power.

And it's true that there is a lot of resentment of the local government mainly over piddling things, you know, like helmet provisions for riding a motorbike and that kind of thing. But the rub up against the most immediate form of government can be infuriating.

I liked a lot of what Linda said about the people running against Congress. You know, I love the picture of pitchfork Pat Buchanan, that millionaire who was born in Washington and has lived there all of his life, leading a peasants' charge against Washington. That's the most, I guess, phony thing I've seen in politics in all my life.

(Laughter)

Mr. Wills: And on impeachment, I think she's dead right, that not only did the Congress over-reach itself, Starr did. And you know, we often hear that the electorate is apathetic or dumb or falls for manipulation by campaign managers and all that kind of thing, but when you come right down to it, they were so smart in seeing through Ken Starr from the very outset. It didn't take him a matter of weeks before the people started saying that they distrusted him, which I'm sorry to say, was not true of the Washington press corps, he played them like an organ for a long, long time.

. . . the whole emphasis on individualism. . . . does work itself out at times into individual liberties, though often it has led swaggering militia types to inhibit the liberties of minorities.

Jenny, my old friend from Northwestern, yes, one of the strengths of American culture, overdone, and having a lot of bad effects, including our gun culture, is the whole emphasis on individualism. And that does work itself out at times into individual liberties, though often it has led swaggering militia types to inhibit the liberties of minorities.

But it is deeply rooted, and should be, in our religious heritage. You know, there's nothing more individualistic than the Congregationalist vision of the individual going out and having a face-to-face encounter with God, the lonely soul all by itself. No one else can save you, no intermediary, no priesthood, no hierarchy, even your own family can't. In the old Congregationalist churches you couldn't belong to the church just because your parents are part of it, you had to go off and get saved.

. . . the most original thing in America is the separation of church and state, . . .

Well that vision of a kind of one-on-one relationship of every person with God is one of the really great points of American history. And it stands behind what I mentioned last time, the most original thing in America, the separation of church and state, which has been good for the state and good for the church and good for people.

So there is that whole side of the American experience where I do believe you're dead right that, for all of its faults, for all of its limitations, for all the myths that it has spread, we don't want to get rid of it. Luckily we can't, probably we can't even get rid of the excesses and flaws that it causes, but at least we should see that there is a core, with a very valuable, treasurable worth in it.

Thanks.

Mr. Patterson: Garry, thank you.

Let me just pursue a line of argument here that might be a question about how we read history when we try to put all of these pieces together. And how much of this distrust that you talk about is kind of truly and deeply imbedded and therefore inherently a part of our political culture and ideological versus how much of it's instrumental. If you think about federalism and the invention of federalism at the time of the Constitution, that was really a pragmatic decision, there was really no elaborate theory of federalism, the states existed as colonies, and so you form a union and you maintain the states as entities within that union.

You look at the early 19th century in the southern states and they're very comfortable with the Doctrine of Nullification when they disagree with the federal government. And yet in the 30 years before the Civil War it's hard to imagine an application of federal power that was more substantial than the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850. They turned to the federal government when it suited their purposes.

Jefferson's party, the Democrats, the small government party, becomes the big government party, and you get the New Deal, the Great Society, and the use of government as an instrument to affect the lives of your coalition.

Now some of that obviously gets institutionalized, but you know if you think about modern-day liberalism and conservatism as we kind of conventionally define them, you know one of them is not the party of government and the other the party against government, in fact they both look at government instrumentally. So in over-simplified terms, the liberals look at government and they like it in terms of the redistributional instrument but they don't like it when it comes to what it might do in terms of our individual lives so we push the notion of rights quite far.

And then you get the conservatives who love non-government in the area of the marketplace, but have a fondness for government when it comes to thinking about how we can control and limit certain behaviors and direct behaviors in certain directions.

So I guess my question is, in this long reading of American government and politics, how deep that one thread is versus this more pragmatic instrumental notion that we might have, which brings the politics out more, I think, and also brings out another dimension of the American character.

Mr. Wills: Yeah, well actually that's one of the themes of my book, that both left and right can appeal to this. First of all you get nullification up

north during the embargo time, then it travels south and people flip-flop. And as I point out, the left has used anti-governmentalism and Jenny is quite right about that. And when the left did it, the south, which up to that point had been against governmental intrusion said, FBI get over to those communes and find out what those radical hippies are doing, spy on them. And they were all for law and order for advancing all of the values of discipline and central authority.

Those kinds of shifts are normal at the partisan level. What makes for a difference in America is that each one of those shifts gets a kind of extra boost or easy ride from the fact that they can appeal to a revered set of maxims about government. So it's quite true that people shift around and when the conservatives want to use the government to get into areas like abortion or censorship of pornography or that kind of thing, they're quite ready to reach for it.

But underlying all of this is the fact that both sides, when it suits their purpose, can get a kind of instant respectability and more effect than they might get otherwise by appealing to this accumulated body of opposition to government on principled grounds, apparently principled grounds, that the government is supposed to hate itself and check itself and distrust itself and practically annihilate itself.

And that's why other countries have partisan flux, fluctuations and see-sawings and yet they don't have this kind of instant check on any proposal, for instance, for universal health care, just to say government can't do it, shouldn't do it, "socialized medicine," and freeze it in its tracks. Even people who have wanted to use government find themselves inhibited by the fact that part of the time they've been buying this myth and much of their constituents have been buying this myth and certainly their enemies at the moment have been buying the myth. So it's a powerful tool that can be used in all kinds of ways, and the existence of the tool is what I'm trying to draw attention to.

Mr. Patterson: Thank you. Let me ask one more question from the chair, just to sort of push this a little bit toward the press, politics area.

And that is to ask you for a comment rather than to ask you a question. Where do you see the press fitting into this mix? One can make the argument that an adversarial press, and it is more adversarial in this country than in nearly every other democracy, is in part a consequence of this particular belief, but it may also contribute to the maintenance of that particular notion.

Mr. Wills: We can all say horrible things about the press and they'll all be justified. But one of the good things that has occurred over the time that I've been involved in journalism for last several decades, is the raising of the level of education in the press. And especially the deliberate effort of many news media to say if you're going to be talking about, say economic issues, you should know something about it, or about law or about medicine.

Many people have quite consciously either hired reporters who have some legal background or economics background or medical background, or sent them off to study at the Nieman Foundation or other places, to study something about economics, or law, or medicine if they're going to talk about that. So it's quite common now to have lawyers who are reporters, or formally trained economists.

I once wrote a book called *Under God,* in which I said that the level of knowledge by the media on religion is abysmally low. And that means that reporters are kind of cowed and afraid to talk about religion. They misrepresent, for instance, the religious right in crude ways. I saw a lot of that while I was following some of these stories. And I can remember David Broder once saying that he didn't know how on earth to deal with George Romney because his Rolodex was full of all kinds of experts he could call on but he had never had to call on anybody to talk about Mormons. And he was afraid to ask questions because he didn't want to embarrass him, Romney, or himself with questions that would be considered, you know, things like are you still wearing your baptismal underwear?

. . . constitutional literacy should be present in the press.

(Laughter)

Mr. Wills: Well, I got a lot of response from various journalists. There was even a panel in Washington which Broder and others attended, and there was a deliberate effort, quite successful in some cases, to get religious expertise into reporting of religion. So it seems to me I'm making a very modest proposal, that a kind of fundamental constitutional literacy should be present in the press. It can't hurt to say that we really don't believe in co-equal branches, for instance, and that arguments that try to make that the basis of discussion are misguided. That seems to me, as I say, a very modest request.

Mr. Gergen: I want to make one brief point if I might, and that is about the question whether this is imbedded, this notion of anti-governmental feelings are so deeply imbedded that one can't do pragmatic things. It seems to me that certain values in our society are a given, and that the task of political leadership is to be wise enough to recognize those values and work with them as opposed to trying to overthrow them, as they attempt to use government to solve problems.

And let me just cite two examples. Take the Clinton health care plan versus Franklin Roosevelt's Social Security plan. The Clinton health care plan faltered because it was seen by many as a direct assault upon the values that people held in the country about individualism, retaining individual power and not giving things up to the government. It was an attempt seen by many to incorporate into the American system something which was foreign to our experience. It fell to this notion of socialized medicine that

we were going to move toward a big governmental system. And that had it been more cleverly designed, it could have worked with the values systems as opposed to against it.

As opposed to what Franklin Roosevelt was so masterful at doing when he proposed Social Security, which was, after all, a big government program. But he said instead of let's just tax people through the regular tax system and have the government run that, he set it up as an individual insurance program. He recognized that if you empowered individuals, the government could help to solve the problem.

The real task, the art that goes into effective leadership, is trying to use government to work with the American value system as opposed to saying, well, let's just chuck the value system, you know it's impossible, people won't go along with it. Roosevelt understood the values very, very well. But he was able to create governmental institutions which built on those values.

Mr. Wills: Can I make a comment on that?

Certainly Roosevelt was a master politician. And there was more anti-governmentalism in his day than in ours, because the government had not got even the kind of mandate it now has. On the other hand, of course, it was a lot easier for Roosevelt to do Social Security because there was a depression on and grasping for immediate remedies was urgent.

As I said last night, I think rather than the health care failing because it didn't work with prejudices against government, it failed because it tried to include a private component, because it didn't say that we can have a system like the Canadian single-payer system. That, working with the anti-governmentalism, crippled the whole effort. It seems to me, perhaps it couldn't have been passed if the approach had been entirely governmental, but of course it couldn't be passed either way, so it probably would have been better to fail with a sensible plan than a non-sensible one.

Mr. Edsall: I just had a real quick question. In the book you write about how, under Jefferson, there was an embargo and violations of individual rights that took place under it. I had not been familiar with them and they were quite strikingly extraordinary. What is the right of the citizen and of the state in a circumstance like that, where the federal government is doing things that truly appear to be violative of the Constitution and the whole notion of how we became a country?

Mr. Wills: Yeah, you know that's one of the most important things about our early history, the way Jefferson's embargo has been whitewashed. It was far more despotic than the alien and sedition laws, far more, and he's always the champion of freedom against the alien and sedition laws, and yet in the embargo, he took away people's freedoms over their property, over their lives. He said, submit to me the lists of people to be executed and I'll choose the ones that are most efficient, effective.

I think where you have a despotic government, resistance is called for. I have a whole chapter on Dr. King and others. Non-violent resistance is

called for; violent resistance is self-defeating. I tried to show that in case after case, after case. But non-violent resistance is the proper response to tyranny it seems to me.

Thank you.

Mr. Patterson: Marvin Kalb, please.

Mr. Kalb: I wanted to go back to Tom Patterson's second question relating to the press. We've heard a great deal about government and balances within government, and government being perceived as a necessary evil. And we've heard a great deal, and Jennie helped us understand some of that, particularly for those who have not yet had the privilege of reading the book, the raising of myths and then the destruction of myths.

Let's deal with the role of the press in the functioning of American democracy. Tick off for us, if it is not already in the book, but even if it is, share it. What are the myths about American journalism? Is Hildy Johnson the creature we all look to, is David Broder the one we all look to? What is the myth of American journalism with respect to what kind of individual one perceives to the functioning of that individual within government? And how do you see the reality?

Mr. Wills: Well, I don't treat this in the book, as you say it's not governmental. But first of all there is no such thing as the press. There are all these things on the Internet, on the radio, and what we often call the press, ignores the huge hidden press. For years, and years, and years the tremendous powerful organs like *Readers Digest* were never considered part of the press and yet they actually influenced people's thinking in a very important way. We should not think of the press as the elite press.

. . . the press is more accurate, more fair, more balanced, more informed, more informing now than it has ever been. One of the nice things about studying history is to see how really bad the good old days were. Newspapers in the 19th century were a disgrace.

My parents lived in Lansing, Michigan, when they were alive, and I would visit them often and I was astonished that here's the state capital where nobody read the *New York Times* or the *Washington Post* and that included the people who wrote for the local papers. It was a different world, it was a different America. And what they were interested in was quite different. Now that's been flattened somewhat by television, but even so, network television is losing out to local television and other things. So first of all, I'm against generalizing about the press.

Now having said that, I will generalize. I oppose the good-old-daysism in general, but the press is more accurate, more fair, more balanced, more informed, more informing now than it has ever been. One of the nice

things about studying history is to see how really bad the good old days were. Newspapers in the 19th century were a disgrace.

We don't have an accurate report of the Lincoln-Douglas debates because they were reported in papers that were outright partisan, they made no bones about it, so one side flatters Lincoln, one flatters Douglas. And the distortions are put together in such a way that we can't really know what happened in any detail. What Lincoln did is what most people have done, he took the pro-Lincoln press, and the pro-Douglas press and he put those together in a notebook and that's what's published today as the Lincoln-Douglas debates.

Harold Holzer has done an interesting thing, he's taken the anti-Lincoln and the anti-Douglas and put them together and published that as the alternative. And Douglas Wilson, a very brilliant Lincoln scholar, has suggested a way in which we might reconstruct the original by detailed textural work on these two things. But anyway, the level of inaccuracy and plain blatant lying and inability to correct anything was so great until very recently that I think the current press is something nobody in the past could have imagined, for its accuracy and fullness, and attempted balance anyway.

Then why does everybody hate the press? Well that brings up a big question which I was thinking about because Joseph Nye gave me the book that you people have done here. I was reading it this morning, showing that there's a tremendous distrust of all organs of authority, not only in America but around the world. And why should that be, that's a big subject that I have given some thought to and written about elsewhere. One of the things is the tremendous pace of change. Change is deeply disorienting to most people. If you take away predictability, then you take away almost, identity. If you don't know what's going to happen tomorrow it's almost like having amnesia and not knowing what happened yesterday, it's impossible to have an identity. That terrorizes people, and they react with resentment at the people who bring them the news of change. A lot of the discontent with the press grew up in the civil rights era, and the Vietnam era, when the evening news was showing dogs and hoses being turned on American citizens, and American soldiers apparently losing or conducting themselves not so well in Vietnam. They didn't want to hear that.

If you watch the television news, it's not like reading a newspaper. Studs Terkel has a story that he tells, he rides the bus to work every day, and he said he was always interested to watch how people read the newspaper. They would first turn to the funnies, to the sports, to everything else and then throw the paper away.

Well the trouble with the TV set is you can't turn the page. You know if you want to get to the sports, you've got to go through the earlier stuff, unless you just jump all over the place, and so they were hearing things that they had never read. Much of the population had never really had

exposure, even for seven minutes or whatever it was at the outset, to national news. And the news of change was so bad that the kill-the-messenger impulse was there.

It's also true with education. People didn't want to hear their kids were at school being trained to hate their government, to be radicals, to be restive, to be rebellious. It's true of medicine. Medicine has become tremendously expensive and tied in with pharmaceutical companies and treatments that go way beyond anybody's capacity to understand them. So all of that has led people to be very chary of the instruments of power over them. And I think that that's one of the reasons why the resentment of the press is so clearly registered all the time, even though the grounds for it are not nearly as good as they were in the past.

It's like saying you hate Congress but you love your congressman—people hate the press but love Rush Limbaugh or Matt Drudge, or whoever they're listening to. They listen to that, and they say oh, everybody else is lying, there's a vast conspiracy out there, a liberal conspiracy to lie to us because we have the one access to truth, which is of course a medium, one of the media.

So they choose the one that they like, and condemn everybody else and what that does is give them a control over their lives, a predictability, a world view that's comfortable to them and they don't have to confront change. They know very well what Rush Limbaugh is going to think of those feminists, and you don't have to really consider them in any open-minded way because they're just femi-nazis.

Mr. Patterson: Richard Parker, please.

Mr. Parker: I'd like to say I'm a great admirer of Professor Wills and assigned his books in my course, so I hope we're both producing some income substantiation for you. And I also admire the approach you've taken toward this issue of distrust in government, by stepping back to look at foundational documents and a foundational period.

But as someone trained in economics, I'm surprised by the framing of this panel, and by the framing of the discussion. There's no real clear discussion of what other large institutions Americans distrust. It seems to me that polling evidence is that they distrust large corporations, they distrust the wealthy, that the distrust that Americans display is about power and concentrated power which is by no means confined to government.

That then leads me to a second point, which I'd like you to comment on, which is the idea that we distrust government does in fact seem to me to be different at different periods of time. The polling data that says 25 percent of Americans trust government in the 1980s and 1990s, said 75 percent of Americans trusted government in the 1950s and 1960s. And so to speak of distrust of government as imbedded across the culture seems to me to be wrong from an historical point of view.

And I'd like you to elaborate on how you feel both the Tim McVeigh episode and the impeachment episode may in fact be creating a new era in

which this distrust of government may in fact shift, and shift public discussion on to the role of government in its relationship to other large institutions, particularly in the economy.

Mr. Wills: I'm not talking about distrust of government as a constant measurable poll matter, something everybody distrusts 70 percent of the time. I'm saying that in the fluctuations of distrust that come and go during war, of course, we trust too much—there is this latent resource that it's respectable when you want it, when you want to use it, to use the founding fathers, what's more revered in our country to bolster your position against government.

And it's true that we resent concentrations of power. We don't resent corporations nearly enough, business heroes are really folk heroes in America and always have been.

Our health plan was defeated because it would take away the freedom of doctors and patients to get their relationship ordered the way they want. And it would limit the amount of treatments you could get. All those things that Betsy McCaughy Ross said in the *New Republic* all came true, by the way, under HMOs, but of course that's okay because that's free market. To say free market means that it's not government and therefore it is better. Now people are getting a little distrustful of that too, but it started out with a tremendous advantage that it was not government.

Or take the matter of campaign finance reform. That's handled very well in other countries. We can't handle it well here because the free donation of money to any candidate you want is guaranteed by the Buckley decision, among other things. If it is in the free market it's okay. Even though that means that George Bush can blanket out all of the other candidates in the Republican party because the corporations are giving him so much money that they don't get access to TV.

. . . there's a lot more trust in the free market than in government.

Or another good example of that is Nick Lemann's recent book, *The Big Test.* We don't want the government involved in education, but here's a private company in Princeton which can tell people who goes to college and who doesn't. They set up the SAT, we can't send delegates to vote on who is drawing up this test, who is going to administer it, and so in the name of freedom we have this kind of private dictation of terms to us. But that's okay because it's free market, it's not coercive government. So I think that there's a lot more trust in the free market than in government.

Mr. Patterson: We're going to turn to Tom Edsall's colleague, and our fellow at the Center this Fall, Rich Morin, please.

Mr. Morin: I have two very quick questions. I'd like you to comment on two trends. First of all building off of Richard Parker's question, which do

you think historically was the anomalous period, this period of distrust in the 1990s or the period of trust in the late 50s, early 60s.

And secondly, I'd very much like your comments about a trend of voter turnout. Do you see declining turnout? What do you see to be the sources and the consequences, if any, of declining turnout?

Mr. Wills: Well, distrust took a different form in the 1950s and it was a very venomous form. It was that our government is riddled with communists who are plotting against us, after all you're talking about the McCarthy era. And in the 60s the radical distrust of government arose. So they were not golden ages of trust, it seems to me, there were different kinds of distrust.

Now the whole business of voter turnout is a very complex one that I've spent a lot of time on and flipped around on. First of all, the first thing we have to realize is that absolutely more people vote now than in the past. In the 1880s you had 85 percent of the people voting. But who was voting? A small part of the population, no women, that's the majority, no transients, blacks and, in most cases, poor people who could be eliminated by poll taxes and by literacy requirements and all that.

We've had a tremendous explosion in this century of the electorate, first women and then lowering the voting age for the young, and eliminating things like literacy and poll tax and other residence requirements. So that a smaller percentage of the electorate votes, though it's a much huger electorate.

I think a good deal of our response comes from the two-party system. You have a high turn-out in all these other parliamentary countries, which are compared with us, but it is a comparison of apples and oranges. There's always a stake to vote for your person in a parliamentary system, because even if you get only three percent into the parliament, that three percent can be the crucial negotiating three percent to form a coalition. So that you give this tremendous outsized amount of power for instance to the religious party in Israel, it can just dictate terms for a long time, even though it was a minor part of the coalition.

In America, for various historical reasons, we have the winner-takes-all system, which takes away that kind of incentive for a minority. And we also have a two-party system that begins with parties setting up compromise candidates, trying to draw together their two wings and choose somebody in the middle. And then the two coming together and trying to compete for the middle and even for the fringes of the other party.

There is a necessary process of compromise and fudging of issues and muting of things which had an important role to play in America. The size of America, one of the things that Linda brought up, I wish I had time to talk about it, that's always a tremendous factor in America. You know, it began that we couldn't have republican government because we were too big, and then Jefferson said we can't have a government west of the Mississippi, that's too big.

With the huge size and the heterogeneity of our government, people coming from all backgrounds, from different religious, ethnic, et cetera, backgrounds, holding the whole thing together was one of the principal imperatives and the two-party system has been wonderful at that. It's not been very good at sharpening issues and having meaningful debates during campaigns. You know George McGovern said, "I think that I could have convinced people the war was wrong if there wasn't an election going on." You can't really talk about issues in a two party system campaign.

So given that, there is no sense of urgency often, and there's no incentive to get your opinion across because all the opinions are going to be muted during this period. So I lament less the low turnout in America than other people, though I don't think it is a good thing. I think citizenship does depend on getting people to vote.

Jesse Ventura, about half the time, says very sensible things, and half the time very crazy things. But he's very good at taking on people who complain about government and he says to them, I've heard him, I've seen him, "did you vote last time," and they say, no, and he says, "if you don't vote, don't bitch." Good for him.

Mr. Patterson: Nolan Bowie, please?

Mr. Bowie: Why do you suppose we have In God We Trust on our money but not imbedded in other government documents?

You offered that the media is more fair now than at other times, if so, does that imply we should not worry about growing concentrations of ownership and control of the media, in that there is a viable marketplace of ideas that supplies all the viewpoints?

And lastly, some scholars and observers have suggested that the global information infrastructure, the Web and the Internet, the emergence of global markets, e-commerce and other forces of globalization are all conniving to undermine the effectiveness of government, the role of government and the legitimacy of government in that where it can't tax, say commerce for example, or it can't generate revenues or jobs in the local communities. It can no longer provide for welfare benefits or other expectations of citizens who are treated more as consumers. Government relies on deregulation, privatization, market reliance, and reliance more and more on NGOs to provide police functions. Is there any reason to think that people in the near term will have a reason to trust government to protect them?

Mr. Wills: Okay, three quick things. In God We Trust, why is that there, cultural lag.

Should we fear the concentration of power? Yes, definitely. Gilbert Chesterton once said about the press lords in England, so it's not a new problem, that the free press means that any rich man is free to buy any amount of press to be the conduit of his opinion. We certainly do have that danger here and have to take care of it. On the other hand, there is a diversification, as I say, through the Internet, through all kinds of expanded cable television and radio and other things, so that it's very hard to have

real control of what people think when you have so many conduits.

Globalization is a threat to government and on the other hand I think it, in the long run, is going to make us realize the need for government more than ever. Interdependence across borders will have to have some vehicle for negotiation and control, and the federal government is so obviously the one that's better suited than the states.

I said last night that we've been terrible on international cooperation with treaties and things like the Land Mine Treaty, but multi-country corporations, the tremendous problems of population and food and pollution and control of the seas and other things, are reaching a stage where we're going to realize we have to cooperate with other people and we will have no organ for doing that but government. So I think in the long run, that will be a force that makes government come into its own more.

From the floor: I have a question about candidates and the adversarial press, indeed for the entire panel. I'd like to talk about the interaction of the adversarial press with another myth and that of the citizen legislator. Especially in terms of campaign seasons, Pitchfork Pat was mentioned, what about genuine outsiders and distrusters of government? Is there any opening up of an opportunity structure for these kinds of candidates by an adversarial press? Or is this the kind of case of the members of Congress decrying corruption and then not being able to find anyone? Is a real outsider actually capable of making it through the so-called killing fields of a campaign season at the hands of the press, and how does this end the myth of the seasoned legislature?

Mr. Wills: Are you assuming that we should want an outsider?

From the floor: Well, I guess I'm curious about this myth of the citizen legislator and whether you're willing to debunk that as well?

Mr. Wills: Well I do in my book, that they found out that it was a bad idea. The idea of the citizen legislator did exist under the Articles of Confederation. Even then it was of course of limited play because there were no candidates who were not part of the established deferential order of the 18th century. Nonetheless, they did think that there should be rotation, short terms and all that kind of thing.

And it turned out to be a disaster. They found you can't run a revolution when the governor has to go out of office every year, and you can't have a Congress with one-year terms, including the time of travel to and fro, across war torn areas where people didn't want to leave home, so that they couldn't even get a quorum in Congress. Jefferson began with very short terms for the governor in Virginia and expanded it after experience that that was a bad idea.

Some kind of expertise in government is probably a good idea. We like to think that some Jimmy Stewart character will ride in and be able to handle everything, it seems unlikely. And we like to think that to be a professional politician is somehow dirty, Jefferson thought that, even though he was one.

So I'm not terribly yearning for an outsider. On the other hand I don't think that the idea, the situation in which only the person who can commandeer huge amounts of money from the outset should be heard. So that's a problem we'll just have to work out.

Ms. Wertheimer: I think I've actually met a citizen legislator at the national level once, and his name was Canister Hodges. (ph)

Mr. Wills: Oh, of course, good old Canister.

Ms. Wertheimer: He was from Arkansas, he was there very briefly, and he was a farmer, and he came in and did the best he could and said that he wasn't going to stay and didn't. It was a surprise to everybody that he didn't, I think people in Arkansas would have liked it if he had.

But they really are unusual. What we think of is the now exploded myth of the Jeffersonian politician. But I do think that there is a place where the outsider is about to get a platform that they have not had before. There's a substantial number of very interesting websites that are opening up for this coming election. Doug Bailey, who practically invented the astonishingly effective television campaign, if his candidate hadn't been Jerry Ford, I mean he ran one of the most amazing campaigns for Jerry Ford that I've ever seen. If it hadn't been for all the baggage, you know, I think it would have been a completely dazzling thing.

He started something which is called the Freedom Channel. All you have to do if you're a candidate is show up and the Freedom Channel will film you, candidate to camera, saying whatever you want, and you can search the site according to issue or according to candidate. It solves the problem that people like us have when we hold a debate and we don't want fifty thousand minority candidates cluttering up the space, when we know they really have not got a hope in hell of ever doing anything but being on that debate. But it does give them a place.

. . . new media is going to change the outsider quotient in some way that we don't yet understand.

There are several others, the Democracy Net, which is expanding, the League of Women Voters and a group in California put together a site which is searchable many ways and available, audio visual or text and goes all the way down to city level, up all the way up to president, which will be completely up around the first of the year.

So I expect that that kind of exposure will create its own pressures, which will change things a little bit in terms of the way they, the regular press operates. It may be that it will take the pressure off to spend any time paying attention to these characters. Or it may be that if one of them comes up with a good idea, that it can catch and then the regular press can follow the voters to that person. So I think that that new media is going to change the outsider quotient in some way that we don't yet understand.

Mr. Patterson: Dan Schorr, please.

Mr. Schorr: This wasn't what I raised my hand to say, but just let me mention in passing on the subject of the outsiders. It seems to me that as the world of entertainment has pretty much engulfed journalism, so the world of entertainment is on its way to engulfing our political process as well.

What I wanted to say was this. I may be, with Walter Shorenstein and a couple of others, one of the very few people in this room who actually lived through the era of Franklin Roosevelt. And I have very vivid memories of how he took the New York State welfare system and he created a federal welfare system.

What he was really doing as a President of the United States was taking power which had gravitated to the federal government because of a vacuum of effective government at state and local levels during the Depression. I came back from Europe in 1966 to become re-Americanized, and was very much struck by the fact that while state and local governments were almost prostrate, the federal government stepped in and filled that vacuum of power. With a result that you began, the federal government established under Kennedy, more under President Johnson, established direct connections with communities and with states, it created community action programs, housing programs, and a series of programs which emanated from the federal government while the states were not doing very much.

What we really need from our media today is to recognize what's going on here and let us hear more of what's happening in Albany and Sacramento, because the federal government is almost flat on its back.

Why, in part, because it was considered that the state government was too weak to stand up against powerful lobbies. And therefore you needed the majesty of the federal government, don't laugh, to stand up against these powerful lobbies.

What has happened now is that there's been another swing of the pendulum. The federal government today stands almost paralyzed by its political disputes. You want to do something about tobacco, the federal government can't get itself together to get a bill passed. States pass bills, states file suits. In one place after another today, you are finding the state and local governments moving in to what is really a vacuum in federal power unable to take itself off the floor and get anything done.

Now when it comes to the media, they haven't caught up yet. There is not enough coverage of what's happening on state and local levels. There are creative things happening. My wife, who works in this field, spends more of her time today in state capitols than she spends in Washington

advising people about things that work and things that can't work. What we really need from our media today is to recognize what's going on here and let us hear more of what's happening in Albany and Sacramento, because the federal government is almost flat on its back.

Mr. Patterson: Walter Shorenstein, please.

Mr. Shorenstein: We haven't touched on the impact of the third branch of government, the judicial system, and the distrust of the judicial system as indicated in the OJ Simpson case.

And the other thing of curing a cold and killing the patient built around busing that had a detrimental impact on the education system. Would you comment on that?

Mr. Wills: The extension of federal efforts to help or to invite access of the disadvantaged has led to resentment of the courts that have to adjudicate these matters on many grounds, as you say, busing. But I think in one sense the deepest anti-judicial feeling now is that which Linda touched on somewhat, the religious right in America. Much of the governmental distrust in its recent manifestation came from the tremendous resentment of the religious right at the prayer in school decision, the abortion decision.

That's what mobilized people who had become comparatively apathetic, who thought that they really had no role in politics, that they were kind of other worldly. But there it was coming and challenging them in their churches, they felt. And other issues too like pornography and production of what they see as pornography or the protection of insults to the flag, all of those things have led to the belief, deeply held by some, that the Court is diabolic, that it's protecting immoral people, gays and pornographers, and aborters and all of those people.

So I think that that is the strongest anti-judicial feeling, but it's joined by other people who have objections with the court. Courts are always vulnerable because they're not elected at the federal level, and there's a fear, quite right, that people who are permanently in power are going to be untouchable. That's why of course, Congress was given the right to impeach them, which it rarely exercises.

We've been seeing a lot of good signs in this panel and last night. There are good signs that the power of the religious right is fading too. It overreached itself at the same time that its allies did in the Contract with America movement. And you'll find people like George W. Bush now very uncomfortable with the religious right, as his father had been by the way, and getting a little wiggle room to get free of it.

I think it's quite comforting to see that Steve Forbes, who on the other hand is genuflecting to it daily, doesn't seem to be getting much traction out of that endless exercise. So perhaps some of the really visceral hatred of the court will begin to fade as well.

Mr. Edsall: Not to disagree, but I think one of the reasons why you see the distrust of government and the judiciary is that you had policies being adopted in the 60s and 70s, as Garry points out, expanding the rights and

citizenship rights of the marginalized, the poor, the black, women and now gays.

The problem was, to some extent, is that those policies were then implemented by the courts and then supported by the media, often in a fashion that put the burden or the costs of these policies on working class people and middle class people living in cities not on suburbanites. Here in Boston, the busing program was entirely limited to Boston. It was put into place by Judge Garrity, who I believe lived in the suburbs, and the racial balance program was enacted largely by legislators from towns like Weston and Concord, and Andover, none of whom were engaged in the busing program.

And you have that kind of pattern taking place almost everywhere. The same is true of affirmative action, where the person who pays the cost of affirmative action is not the government that was discriminatory or the corporation, but some fellow worker who does not get a promotion. You have an elitist situation being applied and I think that's one of the reasons why you had the significant turn away from the federal government and also to the media, which has become to some extent an ally of this process here in Boston. The *Boston Globe* was a very aggressive ally of the, I mean to the point of losing objectivity, on the whole busing question. At any rate I just throw that out.

. . .the one big and obvious cause of the lapse of bipartisanship is the end of the Cold War

Mr. Patterson: We have time for one or two more questions.

Kay Fanning, please.

Ms. Fanning: I wasn't able to be there last night, so stop me if this is something you already talked about. But it seems to me that the distrust of government is based an awful lot on the abandonment of the spirit of bipartisanship in the Congress. And I wondered, there seems to have been a lack of leadership in that direction. I wonder if you could comment on the loss of bipartisanship and what hope you see, if any, of a resurrection of it?

Mr. Wills: Well, I think the one big and obvious cause of the lapse of bipartisanship is the end of the Cold War. That was the one thing that was a kind of a common orthodoxy that both parties adhered to. They could kind of one up each other even and bid to make it even more a tight orthodoxy that was anti-communism, and fear of the Soviet Union. And I think that once that was removed, then the kind of fissiparous pressures had no constraints holding them in.

Mr. Patterson: Thank you.

Blair Clark.

Mr. Clark: I have a very brief crotchet, really. And I'll start out by asking the question of Garry and anybody else. What chance is there ever to

change election day? I'll tell you why I ask that. I've been on the board of the National Committee for an Effective Congress for decades, and every now and then I raise the question, why can't we go to something more like the other industrial nations, election day weekends, or two days and so on.

And Garry brought up the question of turn out. In my opinion, not based on vast scholarship, if there were weekend voting in this country, the percentage would go up from 50 to 65 or 70. I mean the history of the European countries shows that that probably would happen. In the two working family society, how the hell can they be mobilized to vote? The question is, do you see any chance of that kind of a reform?

Mr. Wills: Yeah, well we need a Democratic Congress. The people who are fighting the easier registration, drive-by registration, same day registration, are the Republicans, because it's the blacks and the poor who are under registered and have the lowest turnout and they don't want to encourage that. So there's a very partisan reason for blocking that reform you're talking about, which is a very sensible reform. As you say, other countries have shown that. But if you want to get it, you better get a Democratic Congress in.

Mr. Patterson: Thank you. Last question, please.

From the floor: Last night you were talking about the fact that constitutionally the Congress is supposed to be the superior power, but I was wondering whether the argument has been made that there's a one-to-one correlation between the increasing popularity of the executive branch and the development of the mass media through technological advances, through radio, that makes it easier for the president to be the stronger group, because it's easier to ask him his opinion than a hundred Senators, 435 members of Congress?

And given the equation between these, the press and the executive, do you actually see the press being used in the way that you've advocated as an organ that's going to point out the fact that constitutionally Congress is supposed to be the stronger branch?

Mr. Wills: That's a very good point. The press for a long time, as Schlesinger who was part of the process realized and wrote about in his book *The Imperial Presidency,* the press glamorized the presidency and focused on it.

I think though that there's not so much a causal relationship here, what obviously has promoted the power of the president is war, I mean that's been the case throughout. One of the great points of George Washington was to say, "a republic can not form its original ethos at a time of war, therefore we must have a neutrality policy in the early ages of this republic." And he stuck to it against many, many pressures from all sides. It's one of the great heritages that he left us.

And it's quite true that we often can't afford a republic during a war. We take away rights, we sacrifice rights, and we do need a symbolic leader and that becomes the president, whether it's Lincoln or FDR, and what

we've had was a warfare state for the last half century. During the Cold War a war-time discipline was observed, a discipline of secrecy, of security clearances, of all kinds of short cuts against the Constitution through the CIA and other things. So that between the emergency leadership of the Depression, World War II and then the Cold War, that has thrown the presidency into such a high profile position, this is what the press celebrates, not because it caused it but because it probably helps to perpetuate it.

Now I hope that some kinds of withdrawal from that war-time atmosphere will take place, although the CIA and the Pentagon and others are all busy always trying to invent new threats that will make us spend even more. You know Daniel Patrick Moynihan's book on secrecy, a very important book, said that you would think with the lapse of the Cold War that secrecy would be less urgent and the number of secrets would go down, it's gone up, both in absolute numbers and in proportion and in rates of increase. This is a process that's wildly out of control. And trying to bring it back into control is very important.

. . . there's a distinction between justified distrust and unjustified distrust.

And that's all part of this celebration of the president, not only as our commander-in-chief, but as the personal leader of the free world and all those other things that accrued to the president during the Cold War.

Mr. Patterson: Thank you. Let me ask the panelists whether they have a brief statement.

Ms. Mansbridge: I just want to put on my philosopher's hat for a second and say that there's a distinction between justified distrust and unjustified distrust. We've been talking about distrust in a great clump. And we can distrust our citizenry for justifiable reasons, we can distrust ourselves, in other words for justifiable reasons, because we know that as human beings in certain kinds of circumstances we do things that from a distance, we disapprove.

So those are some of the circumstances that we want to put in rights, so those are some of the circumstances that we want to ensure good deliberation. And we know for example as human beings that we try to pass the costs onto the powerless, the cost of anything we want to do, it's just a temptation we have.

What we need is a kind of template to put down and say when as citizens are we going to be tempted to do wrong, that's the place that we should distrust the most. And similarly, with governments, there are built-in incentives in organizations again to pass the costs to the powerless, that's where we should be looking. So I think we want to not just talk about distrust or not distrust but about justified distrust.

Mr. Wills: Hear, hear.

Mr. Patterson: David.

Mr. Gergen: Just two quick points. I want to put in a word on behalf of the presidency as an institution. It's quite clear that the Congress was set up as the dominant, and supposed to be the leading power under the Constitution. But the fact was long before war, serious wars, came along the Congress proved unable to govern effectively. From 1880 to the 1890s, the Congress was completely unable to deal with the industrial revolution. And you went from a Woodrow Wilson writing a thesis about the importance of Congress 25 years later or so, revising his view and saying it's the presidency that has to provide the leadership, and indeed we've had that through progressive periods.

Even though the Constitution set it up one way, the branches have become more co-equal over time, because the Congress has proved unequal to the task. And that's been true in a number of other fronts as well.

And I just want to echo something that Garry said, and then Dan Schorr, I thought picked up so well on, about the local vitality today. Even though we all are discouraged about what we see happening in Washington, there are some very encouraging things going on at the state and local level. There are good people going into government who are doing good things that ought to make us feel, in fact, while one level of government is not working very well right now, at other levels of government, extraordinary things are happening that ought to be very, very encouraging about what government can accomplish in the future.

Ms. Wertheimer: I am working on a story on the politics on the Internet and so I'll trust you all not to repeat any of what I'm about to say, since that would scoop me.

But I know now we think of the Internet as something that is accessible to the elites, but that used to be true of the telephone, the radio, the television. I'm sure it will eventually work its way down as other innovations have.

But when it does, and as it does, there are all kinds of opportunities for people, which might help to ameliorate the kind of distrust that's expressing itself in rank partisanship and foolish behavior on the part of our leaders. And I think it might encourage citizens to take more responsibility as they know more about what their folks are up to.

There are all kinds of possibilities including the possibility of voting on the Internet, which I think is in our future. I think that's going to come and come very quickly. At the very least, we'll go wheeling up to polling places which could be spread everywhere, every public library, every public school, every place that has a connection to the Internet could become a voting site. Every business, you might be able to vote in your own office.

All those kinds of things are going to change the way we regard our government. I did have one really frightening possibility suggested to me, and that was that politics has moved us all into a sort of national living

room in which we all simultaneously perceive our leaders and see them in action and reach some kind of common opinion of them. That the Internet can take us back to tailor-made politics.

Because so much is known about every customer of the Internet, you could have a special little e-mail or even a video that comes and says, hello, I know you're interested in whatever, and talks about your issues.

. . . every place that has a connection to the Internet could become a voting site.

One of the things that was suggested to me was that the possibility of a holographic candidate standing in the middle of your living room, addressing you and your family members by name and speaking to you on the issues about which you care, which would be a very modern, weird equivalent of Harry Truman talking about farming in Sheraton, Iowa and hydroelectric power in Sacramento, as he did.

Mr. Wills: Or a Brave New World.

Ms. Wertheimer: Yes, and I think it is very weird, and I think to affect and remake the myths with which we regard our government.

. . . the possibility of a holographic candidate standing in the middle of your living room, addressing you and your family members by name and speaking to you on the issues about which you care, . . .

Mr. Schorr: Like a virus?

Ms. Wertheimer: Well, there is that too, crashing.

Mr. Edsall: I would just say that the distrust of government a lot of times is dealt with in institutional framework. I think a lot of this distrust grows out of real policy conflicts, ranging from the civil rights revolution, the sexual revolution, the women's rights revolution. There are real issues and people have real views, and people's distrust comes out of their feeling that their views are not being represented one way or the other.

And I'd like to close by saying that if you do want something to trust, you ought to trust the *Washington Post* over the *New York Times.*

(Laughter)

Mr. Patterson: Well I think one test of a seminar like this is whether one walks away with ideas that you didn't have when you came. And for me this seminar is very much on the high end by that standard. Not only by what's been said up here in front, but the comments from other voices,

such as Dan Schorr's insight about the significance of having the national press look more closely and tell us more about what's happening at the state and local levels.

So I can't thank Garry Wills enough, the panelists enough. And this concludes the Theodore H. White two day lecture and seminar event.