

**FEDERAL GOVERNMENT:
ITS FUNCTIONS AND
METHOD; PP. 51-115**

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Federal Government

Its Function and Method

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FEDERAL GOVERNMENT: ITS FUNCTION AND METHOD

OURS is an age of great empires, autocratic or democratic. As the world has grown small through the tendency of modern invention to annihilate space and time, the area embraced in a single political government has tended to grow larger. The small state has steadily lost international significance. A few great states have already parceled out the earth between them or are reaching out with conscious ambition to found great empires by fastening their control upon such lesser territories as are still unabsorbed. In one fateful case the world has been thrown into war because a nation of immense military strength came to the serious conclusion that unless it could build up a great dominion for itself there could be nothing before it in the history of the future but a provincial existence.

But the great empire presents a problem in government which most small states have

never had to face. Given the actual physical geography of the earth and the way it has been occupied by the tribes of men, it is not possible to construct a great empire which is homogeneous either in physical conditions or in population. On the one hand great size means varying conditions of climate, productivity, natural resources, accessibility, and all those conditions which go to make the widely divergent, economic interests of separate groups of men. On these grounds they are often seemingly opposed even when there is no racial or national opposition between them. On the other hand great size means the inclusion of racial differences and all the incitements of strife which racial difference promotes: hereditary fears, hatreds, and hostilities, and remembrance of oppression or injustice real or fancied. It means cherished elements of civilization which are not alike, language and national literature, religion or ecclesiastical relationship, law and custom, things often most tenaciously held, especially if they are survivals of a former independence. The stage of civilization itself indeed often puts one race above another, in its own esteem at least, or perhaps one portion of

the empire above another, and leads in one to contempt and in the other to bitter feelings of humiliation. The whole long list of barriers which hold peoples apart can hardly be catalogued here, and it is not necessary. Familiar history is full of instances of the desperate struggle of the small group, once independent, against absorption in the larger which has overcome it. This is the inevitable problem of the great empire, the problem of absorption, of unifying its population and making it homogeneous. Unless it can be solved no nation corresponding to its territory can be created, under any of the older systems of government, and no safe permanence secured. The same problem is of course possible in a state which is comparatively speaking of small area, if it has been formed by the union of different racial groups under one more powerful than the others. Defeat and subjection may be as difficult to forget as in a great empire, and methods by which revolt is suppressed or law administered may keep hostility alive. Even if union with a stronger nationality has occurred without conquest, there may be interests that seem discordant or more artificial discriminations

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which prevent the growth of a new and homogeneous nation.

The autocracy is tempted to solve this problem by sharp and speedy methods. It seems easy to believe that force thoroughly applied and for a long enough time will break down the most obstinate resistance and cause a subject group to disappear in the body of its conquerors. Foreign language, law, customs, and religion even, have been imposed upon a subject population in the effort to absorb them, and sometimes whole tribes have been violently removed from their original homes and settled among others for the same purpose. In a somewhat milder form of the same plan, colonies of the conquerors have been established on lands that once belonged to the conquered to serve as an absorbing force. Almost every one of these means, for example, was employed by Charlemagne in the course of a generation in his effort to force the Franco-Roman civilization upon the Saxons of North Germany and so to make them contented subjects of his empire. It has taken the world many centuries to find out that methods of this kind usually defeat themselves and that they are

rarely successful unless they are ruthlessly carried out to actual slavery or virtual extermination. Modern autocracies have hesitated to go so far and have settled down, like Austria and Russia, to get along as well as possible with an unsolved, or only half solved, problem, or like Prussia in Poland and Alsace-Lorraine to half-hearted attempts at old oppressions which are sure to fail and only serve to keep exasperation alive.

It has been reserved to the Anglo-Saxon race to be the first to demonstrate the possibility of a great empire, embracing wide varieties of condition and interest, but maintaining a single, firm, and everywhere efficient government while leaving all distinct divisions independent but absorbed in the national whole, in which they have their proper voice and share. This is the democratic solution of the problem, and this is federal government.

Federal government then is a form of organization for the state intended as its chief object to overcome a rather wide range of difficulties standing in the way of national union. In a single word, its distinguishing characteristic is that out of a mass of differing, perhaps conflicting, local units, it forms