

**GOVERNMENT FOR
THE
PEOPLE; PP. 6-265**

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Government for the People; pp. 6-265 by Thomas H. Reed

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BY

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PREFACE

This book is an effort to state in a thoroughly clear way, for that growing portion of the general public who are interested in the mechanism of government, some of the obvious truths with regard to it. It makes no claim to erudite profundity, which is always stupid and generally misleading. It is not markedly original. Originality in the interpretation of the phenomena of government is usually purchased at the expense of sound reasoning. This book is merely a sane criticism of our institutions. It does not murder truth in the name of cleverness.

The material embodied in the succeeding chapters is the result of a long process of reflection and modification. In the fall of 1910, the writer delivered, under the auspices of the Extension Department of the University of California, a series of lectures on contemporary political questions. These lectures, frequently repeated, were finally crystallized into this book. During this long period of gestation, what were originally separate essays have

grown into a single constructive criticism of our government.

The bibliographies appended to each chapter are not intended to be exhaustive, but merely to suggest some of the more available works and articles for use by those who wish to pursue the subject further.

I wish to make acknowledgment of the constant encouragement which has been afforded me throughout the various stages of my work by Professor David P. Barrows, Head of the Political Science Department and Dean of the Faculties of the University of California. Although differing with me materially in some of my conclusions, he has always urged me to a sincere expression of my own views. Mr. J. H. Quire has assisted me in the correction of proofs, and Mr. J. R. Douglas, Teaching Fellow in Political Science, has given untiring service in the preparation of the book for the press. My greatest helper has been my wife, who at every stage has been ready with pointed criticism.

BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA,
January 11, 1915.

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Samuel Adams, a Jefferson Davis and an Abraham Lincoln for every attempted revolution. In the long run, government must conform to the social will, itself a product of the economic conditions of the country. It may be accident or prescience, but some read the writing on the wall and become heroes. Others fail to read it and suffer the hard penalties of failure.

Before entering upon the discussion of the nature of the obligation due from the state to its people, let us be clear as to the nature of the obligor. To use the legal phrase, every citizen in a democracy is severally liable upon the obligations of the state. We frequently speak of the duty of the citizen to participate with his whole heart and mind in the determination of public questions, as a duty he owes to the state. It is in fact a duty that he owes because he is the state. It is a duty owed not to a cold abstraction but to his fellow-men. Too little emphasis is placed upon this obligation side of citizenship. We hear a great deal about the sovereignty of the people, but it is the powers rather than the duties of sovereignty that are held prominently in mind. Every loud-mouthed fellow on the hustings crowds upon his hearers the fact of their power. The completeness of their control

over government is made an issue at elections. There are few to remind them that power carries with it responsibility, in this case responsibility for the lives, health, morality, and happiness of a nation.

This failure of the popular sense of responsibility is by no means unaccountable. When Louis XIV cried out "*L'état, c'est moi*," it was obvious that he assumed the obligations as well as the privileges of power. Since his time we have diffused sovereign power among the people without the state suffering the least diminution of its authority. Indeed, the state is stronger now than then, and the government infinitely more secure on this broader basis than on the narrow support of personal power. Power is divisible. Separate it into millions of parts and they readily combine to make a whole. Its determinations thus reached are no less authentic than when they originate in the brain and purpose of a single man. Responsibility, on the other hand, is indivisible. Half a sense of responsibility is as good as worthless. Divide it by a million and no reassembling of parts will ever give the whole again. Man must be wholly responsible or he will not be responsible at all. It should be an inspiration to that end that he is not responsible to a mere abstraction, but to a living, moving, suffering humanity. If this

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is an age of philanthropy—and we see evidences of a growing love of man for man on every side—it would seem to be easy to carry the eagerness of that love into political life. It should be the most potent motive for intelligent and honest activity in performing the functions of the state. When by our vote a bad mayor steps into office we should be red with the shame of it. Of his every act of maladministration we should say, “We did it and we did it to our fellow-men!” This is our only hope of good government.

Here we meet another difficulty that besets the establishment of a true sense of responsibility among individual members of the body politic. The evil results of maladministration, while inevitable enough, are by no means obvious. In simpler times the consequences of misgovernment were open and palpable injustice, robbery and oppression. In these intricate days, sins governmental are of a more mediate character. Newly elected Mayor Smith appoints ex-Divekeeper Jones as Chief of Police. No one is thrown into a bastille, or banished, or bastinadoed. There is simply less efficiency in the police department. The city's money is wasted; but that fact comes home in no perceptible form to the non-taxpaying voter, and only in a slight measure to the taxpayers