

## POLITICS &amp; GOVERNMENT

*Reborn at  
Gettysburg?*

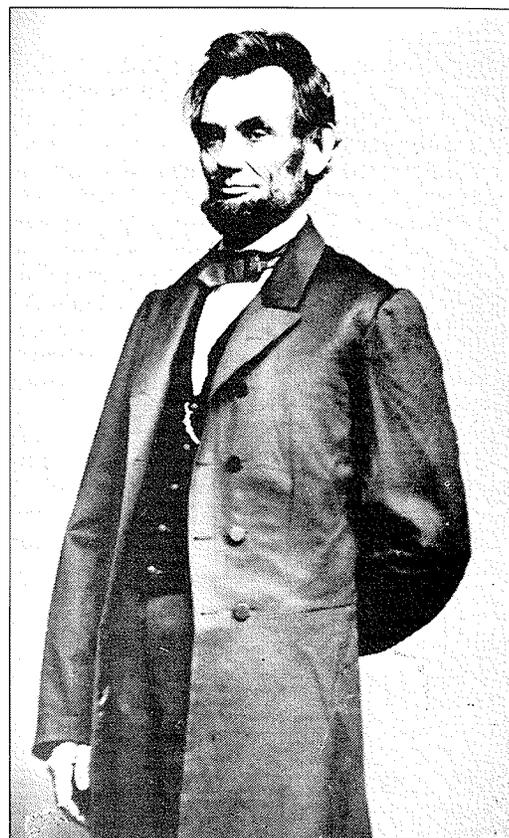
"The Words That Remade America" by Garry Wills, in *The Atlantic* (June 1992), 745 Boylston St., Boston, Mass. 02116.

The Gettysburg Address, Abraham Lincoln's immortal prose poem, has been faulted by some for a lack of intellectual content. Literary critic James Hurt, for example, saw in the speech only "the ordinary coin of funereal oratory." But Garry Wills, author of *Inventing America* (1978) and other iconoclastic works, sees much more. He contends that with the powerful oration's 272 words, President Lincoln on November 19, 1863, brought about "an intellectual revolution."

Lincoln went to Gettysburg, according to Wills, not just to deliver, as requested, "a few appropriate remarks" at the dedication of the new cemetery for the men who had died in battle there. Lincoln audaciously sought "to clear the infected atmosphere of American history itself, tainted with official sins and inherited guilt. He would cleanse the Constitution [by altering it] from within, by appeal from its 'etter to its spirit."

Lincoln reached back "four score and seven years ago" to the Declaration of Independence of 1776, when, he famously said, "our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal." He thus, by implication, treated the Declaration as founding law, and "put its central proposition, equality, in a newly favored position as a principle of the Constitution," Wills argues. This was done, despite the fact that the Constitution nowhere mentioned equality and, indeed, prior to the Civil War amendments, tolerated slavery. Lincoln's feat, Wills asserts, was "one of the most daring acts of open-air sleight of hand ever witnessed by the unsuspecting. Everyone in that vast throng of thousands was having his or her intellectual pocket picked. The crowd departed with a new thing in its ideological luggage, the new Constitution [that] Lincoln had substituted for the one they had brought there with them."

Some contemporaries realized what Lincoln was doing, Wills notes. The *Chicago Times*, quoting the Constitution, said that the president was betraying it: "It was to uphold this constitution, and the Union created by it, that our officers and soldiers gave their lives at Gettysburg. How dared he, then, standing on their graves,



*That Lincoln wrote his remarks on the back of an envelope is a "silly but persistent myth."*

misstate the cause for which they died, and libel the statesmen who founded the government? They were men possessing too much self-respect to declare that negroes were their equals, or were entitled to equal privileges."

Before the Civil War, "the United States" was a plural noun; after the war, it was a singular one. When Lincoln, at the end of his address, spoke of "government of the people; by the people, for the people," he was saying, according to Wills, "that America was a people accepting as its great assignment what was addressed in the Declaration." Lincoln's vision won overwhelming acceptance, and the Gettysburg Address became "an authoritative expres-

sion of the American spirit . . . For most people now, the Declaration means what Lincoln told us it means," which he did in order "to

correct the Constitution without overthrowing it." Because of his speech at Gettysburg, Wills concludes, "we live in a different America."

### *Bureaucracy: Grow It Must*

"The Shrink-Proof Bureaucracy" by Jonathan Walters, in *Governing* (Mar. 1992), 2300 N St. N.W., Ste. 760, Washington, D.C. 20037.

Politicians with their eyes on the mayor's office or the governor's mansion often promise to cut overgrown governments down to size. For all such campaign talk, however, state and local government employment—which now stands at more than 15 million—has risen by about 20 percent over the last dozen years. [The ranks of the 3.1 million federal civilian employees, by contrast, increased by only 0.6 percent in 1980–89.] During the '80s, such state and local growth outstripped population gains by two-to-one; in fact, in some big cities, such as Washington, D.C., public employment increased even though population was *declining*.

It is easy to see why the public payroll is such a tempting target for budget-minded politicians, observes *Governing* staff writer Jonathan Walters. According to an analysis by the Tax-Free Municipal Bond division of Dean Witter Reynolds, states would have saved \$12 billion had their personnel growth in 1980–89 only kept pace with population growth. New York State alone would have saved \$2.7 billion—more than three times its current projected deficit. Municipal finance specialist Phil Dearborn, executive director of the Washington Research Center, estimates that the state and local "bloat," nationwide, averages 5–10 percent of total payroll. So what makes it so difficult for mayors and governors to eliminate it?

To begin with, Walters points out, there are often political complications. "A huge proportion of middle managers in any city government have politically influential allies willing to go to bat for them; that is one reason they got to be managers."

Then there are the civil-service complications. When New Jersey Governor Jim Florio took office in early 1990, he thought it would

be possible, in a state work force of more than 100,000, to find 1,000 people who would not be missed. "But it turned out not to be that simple," Walters writes. "Eliminating any position, even a superfluous one, can trigger an intricate chain of civil service 'bumping,' the process by which more senior staff move down to force out less senior staff as positions are eliminated. In order to fire 1,000 people, Florio learned, he would have to send notices to 20,000 people that their jobs might be affected." Legislatures could change such rules, of course, but somehow they are never eager to do so.

Supposing the would-be bloat-buster surmounts the political and civil-service hurdles, there is still another obstacle: sheer resistance from the affected public servants. In New Jersey, for example, Walters says, some agencies "have simply ignored" Florio's latest request to identify jobs that can be eliminated. Often, the officials out to get rid of the bloat antagonize the very people they need to help them do it. "The more talk from mayors and governors of cleaning out the deadweight with shovels, the fiercer the [bureaucracy's] resistance to change," Walters notes.

Yet, despite all the obstacles, some governments do manage to trim the payroll. In New Orleans, for example, municipal employment has plummeted in the last 10 years from 12,000 to 6,000. Mayor Sidney J. Barthelemy, elected in 1986, simply had no choice: He faced a \$30 million budget deficit. Such "truly horrendous fiscal problems," Walters says, are apparently the only force strong enough "to restrain or bust bloated bureaucracy . . . Only when budgets have to be cut drastically do bureaucracies feel the bite." Otherwise, he concludes, "bloat is inevitable."

### *Ike's Hidden Hand On Civil Rights*

"Shattering the Myth About President Eisenhower's Supreme Court Appointments" by Michael A. Kahn, in *Presidential Studies Quarterly* (Winter 1992), 208 East 75th St., New York, N.Y. 10021.

President Dwight D. Eisenhower is often portrayed as having been unsympathetic to civil

rights and disappointed by the rulings of his Supreme Court appointees, particularly Chief Jus-