

INTERDEPENDENCE, MUTUAL RESPONSIBILTIY, AND POWER

NOTES FOR AN INFORMAL TALK
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1. Jesus's parable of the laborers in the vineyard, found in the 20th Chapter of Matthew. A vineyard owner hired harvest laborers, agreeing to pay "what is just." Hired them at various times of day, but paid all a whole day's wages. Those who had worked the whole day were furious, saying, "These last have worked a single hour, and thou hast put them on a level with us, who have borne the burden of the day's heat." The owner: I paid you what is just -- do you object to my generosity to others?

2. A difficult lesson, showing Jesus was concerned not only with our personal salvation, but with the hard issues of having to live in the world with our fellowmen. Lesson: being satisfied with simple justice, even though others are more fortunate.

3. The problem of governmental power is just such a problem, of getting people to live together in society, and to accept simple justice. Where great power is granted to some, they must not use that power illegally, even if they think the object is worthwhile. They have to settle for simple justice.

4. My service on the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence-Gathering Activities has shown me how difficult it is to control power it is necessary to give certain people -- in the FBI, CIA, IRS, and the armed services, for example.

5. The writers of the Constitution attempted something remarkable -- to look ahead hundreds of years, and to design a system which would grant power to a number of individuals, yet keep that power in check.

6. The system of checks and balances can work. As a participant in the use of Congress's investigative power to check the power of the Executive Branch, I have seen first hand what sort of genius our forefathers had.

7. But I have also seen that the system itself depends on something far more basic. No arrangement of checks and balances can be of any use if too many people in government lack the moral gumption to refrain from misusing their police or military powers. There is a voluntary element in all this.

8. It boils down to a moral question -- whether the parents, teachers, and religious educators have inculcated in the young the idea that we must settle for simple justice of the sort Jesus was talking about in his parable.

9. The reason that our military forces have not taken over the government, as they have everywhere else in the world at one time or another, is that its members have the

ingrained idea that the end cannot justify the means.

Otherwise, no system of checks and balances could stop them.

10. There are not enough policemen in the world to see to it that all the other policemen use only legal means to fight illegality. It has to be that each man entrusted with such power knows instinctively where to stop. In the final analysis, America depends on a mutual agreement to live within the law, even when there is very little to actually keep us from doing otherwise.

11. As a society, we take a silent pledge of mutual responsibility, agreeing to take only what is just. Those who take more than is just, or who use unjust means, wreck the system.