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Federal, State and Local Relationships

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Almost two centuries ago Thomas Jefferson surveyed America's political system and judged: "With all the imperfections of our present government, it is without comparison the best existing, or that ever did exist."

Jefferson's evaluation is still applicable. We are still a nation pulsing with life — a nation of enormous potential. Anyone who feels qualms about the vitality of this constitutional republic should sometime be privileged to sit in an executive session at a Governors' conference. He would have his faith restored in short order could he but observe the vigor, thrust, and determination of the Governors as they dissect the perplexing problems of the day with the candor that only a closed session allows.

But, while we can still agree with Jefferson's observation, there is evidence that we can and must achieve a more perfect union.

We have come a long way from the agrarian society of the Founding Fathers. Today's challenge is to make adjustments within the American political system — "the best existing or that ever did exist" — so as to preserve, or create where necessary, a sense of purpose and identity for the individual. In a world that has become increasingly industrialized, computerized and dehumanized, lack of identity and despair most often result in anti-social acts. Involvement in the system releases energy and talent in productive undertakings.

Even now, too many of our citizens are failing to relate to their government and, in a democracy, this can prove a fatal flaw. But that is a wide subject for another speech at another time.

The first step is bringing the people back in touch with their government and this involves bringing the government back to the people.

Over the past decades, national leadership, in its attempt to keep pace with America's rapid growth, has sought the easiest and most expedient method — expanding the Federal government. The result has been a creeping paternalism that has violated our Federal system, sacrificed the integrity and capacity of state governments, and reduced citizen participation in the political process.