POLITICAL STABILITY AND
POLITICAL BEHAVIOUR

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I do not think it very likely that anyone here tonight has had the fortitude, or has been so despairing of a nice night's entertainment elsewhere, to have attended all the inaugural lectures which have been delivered at the University this year. There have been a great many of them, and there are more to come. The process has been going on all over Australia, and a conspicuous element in the proliferation of new chairs and new departments has been a rapid growth in the number of those whose province has been variously called politics, or political science, or political theory and institutions, or government, by the bodies defining them. Six new professors have been appointed or taken up their appointments within the past twelvemonth, and two more are currently being sought. They should bring the total to seventeen, and leave only three universities unattended — all in New South Wales. Not surprisingly, half a dozen of them will be found in Canberra, which has more politics per head of population than other university cities.

Some further evidence of the rapidity of this population growth may be seen in the fact that one of the current advertisements seeks a successor for Macmahon Ball, the first full-time teacher of political science at an Australian University, now about to retire. Indeed only two Universities do not still have their foundation professors: Sydney where F. A. Bland retired some years ago and from which his successor, P. H. Partridge, has moved to another university, and the Institute of Advanced Studies of the Australian National University, which suffered the tragic and untimely loss of Leicester Webb. In one case, my own, the creation of the Department of Government has been by a process of amoebic fission, but in each of the others an entirely new department has appeared by spontaneous germination.
This is perhaps an appropriate point at which to record my gratitude to Gordon Greenwood, both for personal kindnesses in the past and for his efforts on behalf of the subject when it was embraced within the combined Department of History and Political Science, and to a trio who played Moses to us latter-day Aarons and kept us together in the wilderness — S. R. Davis of Monash, D. W. Rawson of the Australian National University, and B. B. Schaffer of Sussex. Any distinction which the Department may enjoy for many years to come will be attributable to the enthusiasm and professional competence of the four of them.

Despite this rapid growth of the last decade on both sides of the Tasman, Australasian political science still employs relatively small battalions. In only a handful of departments do staff yet number more than a dozen. In Australia the total number of lecturers or more senior staff engaged in the full-time teaching of political science is just nearing the one hundred mark. Inevitably so small a profession finds it hard to generate very many of its own ideas, much less its own controversies, and so tonight certain of the cudgels I propose taking up are imported, and the broad lines of the controversy to which this lecture is addressed have been drawn elsewhere.

One rough and ready, and avowedly unflattering, classification of many Australian academic disciplines is according to whether they look primarily to Great Britain or to the United States of America for leadership. Although political scientists born in Britain are still much more common in Australia than those of American origin, and although, at least until very recently, more Australians completed postgraduate studies in political science in Britain than in America, in the last few years I think our principal styles have come from the United States. On numbers alone it was probably inevitable that a system containing 700 universities teaching political science and a professional association of 10,000 members would draw a much smaller body into its orbit. It is perhaps also inevitable that as this happens some overly enthusiastic novice will cry: “All the way with Harold Lasswell!” Much of what I have to say this evening partakes of such a declaration.

Certainly the study of political institutions and political obligation has a long and distinguished history. Some of this antiquity is indicated by the contemporary fashion of referring to Aristotle as the great-grandfather of the subject — although a vociferous minority prefer to trace their antecedents to Plato and to keep bringing him into the
conversation all the time. But it is barely a century since the study of politics began to separate itself from philosophy, law, history, and the other social sciences. The first chair of political science was established at Columbia in 1857 for the refugee German scholar, Francis Leiber. For the remainder of the nineteenth century the infant subject remained much influenced by the historical school of jurisprudence founded in Germany, genetic in approach, preoccupied with the growth of the legal and political institutions of the countries grouped around the North Atlantic basin. Political theory too drew its dominant idealism from Hegel and his successors.

During this time two of the four main categories of what is now called “traditional” political science developed: the historical and the analytical, embracing constitutional law and political philosophy. Around the turn of the century a third strand was added, the prescriptive, which argued for particular reforms and institutions. It was much influenced by the Progressive movement in the United States, although obviously it represents a revival of what had always been an element in political writing from the time of the Greeks. About this time, in 1903, the American Political Science Association was established to provide a professional forum for practitioners. The fourth strand, which has been called the “descriptive-taxonomic” — “gathering the facts, classifying the facts, and describing political institutions and processes” — has undergone rather more evolution than the other three. Its early emphasis lay on formal, juridical structures; most West European political science remained frozen at this stage until well after the Second World War. However in the United States it gradually turned to a functional orientation which brought out the importance of non-governmental or para-governmental organizations such as pressure-groups and parties, and their interaction with state institutions. Lord Bryce is the exemplar of the stage. This emphasis on systems in action led to dissatisfaction with existing techniques and concepts and the need for new sets more suited to studying the dynamics of government.

The middle period is characterized by the school at the University of Chicago led by Charles Merriam. It drew many of its new techniques from psychology and sociology. Following the work of Stuart Rice it adopted techniques of quantification not previously employed in political studies. Merriam and an Englishman, George Catlin, then teaching at Cornell, sought the key to political understanding in power relationships. However the Chicago school had limited success in
converting their contemporaries, and most political scientists continued
to practise their trade within the confines of the four strands of
traditional political science just mentioned, even though some notable
figures began to work in a second field as well as political science —
R. M. MacIver for example.

The dissatisfactions remained, reinforced by a growing concern with
the methodological deficiencies of the subject. Eventually a major
challenge to traditional political science emerged, based on a demand
for new units of analysis, new methods, new techniques, new data, and
the development of systematic theory. Refugee scholars in the 1930’s
gave an impetus to the growth of political sociology influenced by the
ideas of Weber, Durkheim, Marx, and those grouped by Burnham as
the Machiavellians — Mosca, Pareto, Michels. From my own expe-
rience as a student, Franz Neumann could be mentioned, but
Australia too drew some youthful reinforcements from continental
Europe at this time. Participation of social scientists in various adminis-
trative activities during the Second World War stimulated a practical
bias. The Social Science Research Council and the Humanities
Division of the Rockefeller Foundation interested themselves in
propaganda and communication. In 1945 the Social Science Research
Council decided to create a committee on Political Behavior and
thereby provided a name for the new movement.

The phrase, “political behaviour”, had been used before. In his
1925 presidential address to the American Political Science Association,
Charles Merriam had predicted:

Some day we may take another angle of approach than the
formal, as other sciences do, and begin to look at political
behavior as one of the essential objects of inquiry.

In 1928 an American journalist, Frank Kent, had used it for a title,
but by political behaviour he meant cynical realism. In 1937 the Swede,
Herbert Tingsten, had used the phrase again: to mean voting. It was
the 1945 S.S.R.C. definition which was to become accepted:

Focused upon the behavior of individuals in political situations,
this approach calls for examination of the political relationships of
men — as citizens, administrators, and legislators — by disciplines
which can throw light on the problems involved, with the object
of formulating and testing hypotheses, concerning uniformities
of behavior in different institutional settings.
Six years later David Truman provided what remains the best gloss:

Roughly defined, the term political behavior comprehends those actions and interactions of men and groups which are involved in the process of governing. . . . At the maximum this conception brings under the rubric of political behavior any human activities which can be said to be a part of governing. . . . The ultimate goal of the student of political behavior is the development of a science of the political process.

Lest the selection of the name to be inscribed on the banner of those discontented with traditional political science seem too inevitable, too purposive, I must retell a cautionary tale which bears on the point. At the time, a subcommittee of the United States Senate was considering the need for a national science foundation and the possible inclusion in its field of competence of the social sciences. As David Easton recounts it:

Whether through genuine error or design, there were some disapproving senators who, from the floor of the Senate, insisted upon talking of social science as socialist science. To abort the growth of further confusion, the phrase “behavioral sciences” is said to have been coined to refer to all living systems of behavior, biological as well as social, an underlying idea being that it would serve to identify those aspects of the social sciences that might come under the aegis of a foundation devoted to the support of hard science.

Unfortunately the tactic has led to some confusion. There had already been in the field the behavioristic school of psychologists, particularly associated with the name of J. B. Watson, and concerned to exclude from scientific psychological research “such subjective data as purposes, intentions, desires, or ideas”. In fact no political scientist since Bentley in 1908 has fallen under the sway of Watsonian behaviorism, but any stick will do to beat the dog, and political scientists who admit to being behaviouralists will even today find the sins of Watson laid at their door.

Time does not permit a proper cataloguing of the debate that raged around the development of behaviourism in the ten or fifteen years that followed 1945, about its essence, its application, its strengths and weaknesses, its sinister effects, or its promises of brighter tomorrows. But it is necessary to give some more elaborate explanation of what
is sought, and I shall adopt the list of its assumptions and objectives formulated by Easton in 1962. They are eight in number. It seeks regularities, “discoverable uniformities in political behavior . . . (which) can be expressed in generalizations or theories with explanatory and predictive value”. It seeks verification: the validity of these generalizations must in principle be testable. It emphasizes techniques for acquiring and interpreting data. In particular it emphasizes quantification. It takes the view that ethical evaluation and empirical explanation involve two different sorts of proposition and must be kept separate, although it does not hold (as is so often alleged against it) that the ethical evaluation is impossible or improper—merely that when either is stated separately or in combination there should be no confusion between them. It emphasizes systematization:

Theory and research are to be seen as closely intertwined parts of a coherent and orderly body of knowledge. Research untutored by theory may prove trivial, and theory unsupported by data, futile.

It regards political science as a pure science, in that understanding and explanation of political behaviour must precede efforts to utilize political knowledge to solve social problems. And, finally, it emphasizes integration of all the social sciences. This integration can take place at any one of three levels: problem solving, in programmes of research training, or in the training of a single individual. The key idea is

the conviction that there are certain fundamental units of analysis relating to human behavior out of which generalizations can be formed and that these generalizations might provide a common base on which the specialized sciences of man in society could be built.

So far a number of alternative fundamental units have been utilized: actions, decisions, input and output, functions, systems, roles, groups, cultures, and communications. None has been adopted by more than a limited number of researchers. There has been much greater agreement about techniques: the probability sample survey which is undoubtedly the most widely known innovation in the field of politics; the invention of new methods of measurement such as scalogram and factor analysis, applicable not only to material secured from surveys and aggregate voting data but to legislative and judicial voting records as well; the refinement of observational techniques applied to small
and medium-sized groups. Many outside the movement have been deeply suspicious of such techniques, but the more imaginative have conceded their utility even when they were reluctant to try them themselves. May I quote from Sir Keith Hancock’s presidential address to the History section of the 1965 ANZAAS congress. Apart from a lamentable preference for the anglicism nobbery, the counting of nobs, to the grecian psephology, the counting of pebbles, for what we poor students of elections try to do, he gracefully conceded that doing sums was not a sin and took issue with an American historian who had attacked “the bitch goddess Quantification” with the observation:

... Quantification is neither a goddess nor a bitch nor a mixture of the two; but an honest working woman. When historians choose to employ her, she will give them useful service, within the limitations of her capacity.

But, as I have just said, although behaviouralists have agreed on the techniques of measurement, they have not agreed on the basic unit of behaviour to be quantified.

Nor has there been any clear sign of the emergence of a general theoretical framework to contain all empirical research. The one “discernible suggestion” of such a theory has been equilibrium theory, and it is to this that we must now turn if the requirement of systematization is to be met. While the concept of equilibrium was popularized by seventeenth century astronomy, it had been used in political writings long before: Lord Shang in China, Kautilya in India, and Machiavelli in Renaissance Europe had each noted the tendency of states to combine against their more powerful neighbours. Balance of power between states and checks and balances among organs of constitutional governments have been the two most persuasive, and prevalent, uses of an equilibrium model, but it has been employed elsewhere, as in swing of the electoral pendulum which we shall consider in a few minutes. We can take our definition of equilibrium from the writing of a student of international relations, Quincy Wright:

An equilibrium is a relationship among forces operating upon or within an entity or group of entities so that the whole manifests in some degree some form of stability. The whole lacks the logical structure of a plan or the functional structure of an organization,
and its stability is explained not by its principles but by the
properties of its parts, the relations among them, and the forces
influencing them.

The concept has been used in two different ways: as a mode of
analysis (Easton suggests we should call this “general equilibrium”),
which implies that all the elements or variables within a political
system are functionally interdependent and that they will tend to act
and react upon each other to a point where a state of stability will
exist, even if only momentarily; and more narrowly as a description
of mutual restraint among various power groups, normally within a
constitutional system (Easton proposes “constitutional equilibrium” for
this). The balanced constitution has had its champions in Polybius,
Montesquieu, and the authors of *The Federalist Papers*.

The difficulty of employing equilibrium theory lies in the uncertainty
of the elements of the model. What are the entities whose opposition
maintains the equilibrium? How is the power of each to be measured?
There is the further difficulty of whether equilibrium refers to a
condition of stability which changes only gradually, or whether it can
permit oscillations of very large duration and scope. Various sorts of
equilibrium have been given names to cover this: stable and unstable,
dynamic, oscillating and adaptive. Two useful qualifications have been
provided: one, employed by the economists since Schumpeter, is the
recognition that empirical economic systems are in a constant state
of disequilibrium, moving towards or away from equilibrium through
“neighbourhoods of equilibrium” but never arriving; the other,
formulated by Merriam, utilizes the idea of a “moving equilibrium”.

In a great many political situations one can identify the entities
fairly easily: individual citizens, or groups, or organs of government.
Bentley, the founder of group theory, made much use of equilibrium
analysis; indeed for him the task of political science was to ascertain
how the equilibrating tendency came into existence, how it took its
form, and how it changed over time. It is the problem of measurement
which is much more difficult. Despite the flowering of group studies
I know of only one attempt to compare the effectiveness of two
pressure-groups, and Kristianson’s recent book on the Returned
Servicemen’s League shows how difficult it is to establish the effective-
ness of even a single body. Easton warned that in quantification
we would be seeking to trace the way in which the various
groups possessing power use it to shape policy: the way in which
the power of one group influences the position of all other power
groups, the reciprocal effects of the latter’s power, and the ensuing
authoritative allocation of values. We would be identifying all the
power elements in a situation, showing how they interact with
one another to produce a particular policy.

This would be the equilibrium policy; no group in the political
system would seek to change it because at this point the group would
have maximized the returns from its exercise of power. As in
economics, we could compare the real situation and attribute its
departures to the influencing elements. But can we ever construct an
adequate index of the political power held by each competing group?
Easton in 1953 concluded that we could not at that time and that
employment of equilibrium theory as the conceptual basis for political
research would involve excessive preoccupation with problems of
quantification, a danger so great that he advised the temporary
abandonment of equilibrium theory, even though he conceded that it
was very useful in conveying certain very important ideas: that the
parts of the political process were mutually dependent, so that change
in one part would affect the whole, thereby emphasizing plural
causation and that the interrelated parts tended to cohere; while
through its employment of a moving equilibrium it properly em-
phasized problems of political change.

I think that the time has come to look again at Easton’s warning;
thirteen years is a long time in the history of political science as a
discipline of study. In the first place no other “discernible suggestion”
of general theory has come forward to take the place of the equilibrium,
and it continues to be widely employed in popular discourse. If
political science is to seek the systematization of a science, then general
theory must be pursued vigorously. Of course there are many who
deny the possibility of general theory, who in Michael Oakeshott’s
words from that most influential of inaugural lectures believe that the
most we can hope to do is “to keep afloat on an even keel” because we
“sail a boundless and bottomless sea; there is neither harbour for
shelter nor floor for anchorage, neither starting place nor appointed
destination”. I certainly do not want to suggest that general theory,
once discovered, will draw the vessel steadily forward, like the cable
on the Moggill ferry, but rather that, once it is located, like the Pole
Star on a cloudy night it will provide some fitful guidance to even the
shortest voyages. Equilibrium theory remains the closest that we have
come so far to identifying such a guide.

Secondly, the dangers of excessive emphasis on quantification no longer appear so serious. Certainly much technique has been used to establish the obvious at great trouble and expense, but there will always be sorcerers’ apprentices who will misuse or waste the powerful tools given them. The better articles and books by the abler political scientists can contain figures, and graphs, and formulae, and still be about politics and tell the reader something that he did not know before and be important to an understanding of how the political process works, why states and leaders rise and fall.

There is one other caveat of Easton’s against employment of equilibrium theory in its constitutional equilibrium variety which I should mention. There is, he said, a danger that a normative quality which stems from ethical propositions about the mean and equilibria dating from Aristotle may attach itself to research in this field. One suspects that Americans, drawing in checks and balances with their mothers’ milk, are more liable to this danger than those who come on the idea later in life and see it purely as a bit of eighteenth century machinery. But is there a danger that people will study the equilibrium because it is a good thing? Well, if so, is this a wholly bad thing? Behaviouralists should guard against accepting their critics’ charges that value-free research is amoral; we know enough of the sociology of knowledge to know how the ethical and psychological predispositions of the researcher will determine his field and style of work. Again, cannot research bear some relation to the values of the society promoting it? Are not the dangers of political instability so magnified that deliberate cultivation of factors promoting stability is advisable? To adopt one of the ablutionary similes so popular with local controversialists recently, are we likely never to wash the baby lest we throw it out with the bath water? Can we not study the equilibrium as a central political concept and utilize the behaviouralists’ weaponry to do so?

Although Dahl said in 1961 that the battle of behaviouralism had largely been won in the United States, and was able to subtitle his article “Epitaph for a monument to a successful protest”, the battle in other countries is still being fought. In March of this year, for example, the new Professor of Political Theory and Institutions at the University of Liverpool, F. F. Ridley, was still prepared to challenge behaviouralism on a number of grounds: that it tended to collect information from those with the least power, and those with a great
deal of power would be unamenable to its techniques; that it advocated
integration of the social sciences, when being a good psychologist or
a good sociologist was a full-time profession in its own right, and he
who tried to be a master of all would only produce trivial results; that
emphasis on political activity rather than the state abandoned the great
themes of political thought. He went on to argue from this that the
study of the state was best carried on through the study of constitutions
and constitution-making. I do not think that I do Professor Ridley
a disservice when I say that I suspect that a number of Australian
political scientists would be of this persuasion, nor that I am delivering
a particularly underhanded blow by adding that I would once have
agreed with him myself. Arthur Macmahon used to quote to us a
dictum that improvised autobiography is the lowest form of instruc­
tion; he attributed it to Sidney Hook, and such is the respect of his
former students for Macmahon’s learning that I at least have never
presumed to check the reference. It does have considerable force, and
so I hope a properly apologetic note enters my voice when I say that
in some years of working that traditionalist side of the street I found
too many doors remained closed.

Rather than tax you with these personal details I propose a brief
look at two subjects well within the province of traditional political
science, and certainly of great practical and political significance in our
world today. The first concerns the spread of parliamentary institutions
within the Commonwealth of Nations in the period since the Second
World War. Although the responsibility for this process has been
mainly Great Britain’s, the successful grafting of a parliamentary
system onto the body politic of Papua-New Guinea is one of the most
challenging problems to confront the Australian government, and
many of us would feel it quite proper as political scientists to add that
it places a weighty moral responsibility on the whole Australian
community. The second is that hardy perennial, the health or decay
of the Australian party system, a matter that reaches a certain promi­
ence in a few weeks’ time but is rarely off the front page or out of the
editorial columns for more than a week or two. I hope that I will be
able to convince you that behavioural studies enable us to understand
both matters better, and indeed that some aspects of each are incompre­
hensible without the sort of information and interpretation which only
behaviouralism can provide.

If we look at the Commonwealth of Nations at the end of the
Second World War we find that apart from the old Dominions
settled from Britain and Europe, and the Indian Empire with which can be grouped Ceylon even though it came under the responsibility of the Colonial Office, fewer than a dozen territories had representative legislatures, that is to say local parliaments in which there were a majority of elected representatives. These were colonies with predominantly African populations but long histories of representative government in the Caribbean and North Atlantic, and with European populations in the Mediterranean. The process of constitutional development had already begun with Jamaica in 1944, but this was more a case of restoring lost institutions than complete innovation. The story really begins in 1946 when new constitutions were inaugurated for Ceylon, Malaya, and Singapore in Asia, and the Gold Coast and Nigeria in Africa. Within ten years the Gold Coast and Malaya became independent; Cyprus and Nigeria followed in 1960, Sierra Leone and Tanganyika in 1961, and today the only British colonies still non-independent (for hardly any are still non-self-governing within the meaning of that cumbersome word) are those which are very small, or have plural societies which delayed constitutional progress, or are very peculiar cases — like Hong Kong and Gibraltar.

One part of this story is a history of constitition-making: in one busy year from 15 June 1959 to 23 June 1960 the Colonial Office produced 92 separate constitutional instruments totalling 500 printed pages. It is history that has been well written by authorities like Sir Kenneth Roberts-Wray and Professor Stanley De Smith. It begins with the devising of complex legislatures and fancy franchises, and forms of executive government designed to train new rulers and transfer power, and then turns into the provision of safeguards to maintain constitutional equilibrium in the final stages of self-government before independence and after. In that stage it is concerned with procedures for constitutional amendment, the division of responsibility between central and regional governments, the retention of the authority of the chiefs, the protection of fundamental rights, and the insulation of the public service, the judiciary, and the prosecuting function from party politics. It is a tale told by and for the lawyers and constitutional historians.

But there is another part of the story which must be traced in the biographies of charismatic leaders, in the histories of mass parties and modernizing elites, in the communication of vapid ideologies, in the rise of new socio-economic classes, which escapes the lawyers’ tech-
niques. It has been told by two different groups of writers. One, almost entirely American, has relied on brief acquaintance with the territory or territories studied, and probably been overly dependent on secondary sources. Its preoccupations have been those of the behaviouralists listed by Easton which I quoted a few minutes ago; in particular they have sought regularities and systematization, and they have employed material drawn from other social sciences. At times stylistic lapses have clouded the merit of what they had to say. The other group of writers, mainly British, have worked from longer knowledge of their territories. They have sought "to tell the tale" of what actually happened; in the main they have avoided generalizing from one territory to a pattern for all emergent states. A juxtaposition of two first-class works from each group can be made with David Apter's *The Gold Coast in Transition* and Dennis Austin's *Politics in Ghana, 1946-1960*, and we might well take the Gold Coast-Ghana as the test case for our argument. The broad outline of events is known to most people; the promise of the years from 1946 to 1957 had a meaning for many liberals (with a small "I") reminiscent almost of the events of 1917 which the tragic years that followed have not quite dispelled; Kwame Nkrumah's career between his return to Accra in December 1947 and his exile in February of this year comes close to the classic requirements of tragedy, even though he falls short of the proportions of the tragic hero.

The question that we must ask is what went wrong with the promise that the institutions of parliamentary democracy could be transplanted to the fertile soil of the Gold Coast. In its level of education, its degree of urbanization, the steady growth of communications, its healthy trade, rising government revenues, weak tribalism, able traditional and modernized indigenous leaders, the Gold Coast looked the best bet the Colonial Office had in Africa. The colonial administration appeared to have done the right things: the first Africans were appointed to Executive Council and as Assistant District Commissioners as early as 1942; adult suffrage was introduced in municipal elections in 1943; local government was reformed in 1944; in 1946 Sir Alan Burns merged Ashanti and the Gold Coast Colony under a single legislature with an unofficial majority. Yet in 1948 the Accra riots produced 29 dead and 200 injured. So effectively had British rule imposed law and order that this sudden outburst of violence was seen as evidence of an extreme pathological situation, and the pace of change was accelerated — as it had been in the Caribbean in the 1930's. The
Convention People’s Party combined a nationalist struggle of the whole people against colonial rule with an internal struggle of the common people against the chiefs, and won both. Probably the key to our question lies in the period between 1946 and 1951; it is a period dominated by three remarkable men, the reforming Governor who succeeded Burns, Sir Charles Arden-Clarke, the nationalist lawyer-intellectual Dr. Danquah, and the revolutionary politician organizer Dr. Nkrumah. The model colony evolved a national parliamentary system, and political stagnation turned to reform and then revolution. Following the riots the nationalist movement split between Danquah and the intellectuals and Nkrumah and the verandah boys; the intellectuals rejoined the chiefs with whom they had been in conflict since the 1920’s, but the chiefs had swung behind the colonial administration. Africanization went on apace; in 1949 only 14 per cent of senior posts were held by Africans, in 1954 the proportion was 38 per cent; in 1950 an African, A. L. Adu, was appointed Commissioner for Africanisation and six Africans were appointed principal assistant secretaries to understudy the permanent heads they would soon succeed. In 1952 the creation of a new type of local authority, two-thirds elected, gave rank-and-file politicians their chance at office. The C.P.P. mushroomed: within 18 months of taking office in 1951 it had 700,000 members in 500 branches. Nevertheless an effective opposition seemed secure: at the last election before independence the C.P.P. could muster only 57 per cent of the vote even though it won 71 of the 104 seats; with majorities of voters and seats in Ashanti and the Northern Territories respectively, the National Liberation Movement and the Northern People’s Party, if they could maintain an alliance, seemed solidly based to carry on the duties of an opposition.

At the time of independence the Ghanaian constitution provided a number of checks on the basic institutions of parliamentary government taken over from Great Britain. The second chambers for chiefs established in each region were certainly something more than a House of Lords returned to the Heptarchy; regional assemblies were created and given responsibilities which, if well short of federalism, were certainly more substantial than local government authorities enjoyed in the United Kingdom; constitutional amendment required a two-thirds majority of the Legislative Assembly, and certain essential clauses required the consent of two-thirds of the Regional Assemblies as well; public and judicial service commissions were created to advise the Governor-General, retained as head of state, on appointments.
Compared with the later models of constitution to come out of Great Smith Street this was simplicity indeed — contrast it, for example, with the elaborate rigidities of the Cyprus constitution. Nevertheless, it was a deliberate attempt to create a constitutional equilibrium unknown to the British constitution, based on the principle of parliamentary supremacy; to a limited extent, unsuccessful as we shall see, it sought to go beyond “parchment barriers against the encroaching spirit of power” (the phrase is Madison’s) by ensuring that the more feeble departments had adequate defences against the more powerful.

One of the quite remarkable developments in this history of constitution-making was the conversion of the Whitehall and Westminster law-givers from parliamentary supremacy and the civil rights provided by the common law to checks and balances and bills of rights, both of the older bourgeois variety and the newer welfare state sort. Look at the innate hostility of the Englishmen considering an Indian constitution in the Simon Commission and the Joint Select Committee on the Government of India Bill to the idea of legislating for liberty: the most effective way of subverting human rights, they said, thinking of central Europe between the wars, was to embody them in a constitution. Then look at the bills of rights, some enforced and some not, in the constitutions of about a dozen of the new full members of the Commonwealth of Nations. They are an attempt to maintain a sort of constitutional equilibrium between state and citizen, and between para-governmental organizations within society so that, for example, one party may not destroy its rivals.

Although both India and Malaya had adopted bills of rights before Ghana became independent, they had done so of their own volition or on the recommendation of a predominantly non-British constitutional commission. Nigeria in 1959 was the first erstwhile colony to have its bill of rights supplied by Great Smith Street. The Gold Coast had had a constitutional provision prohibiting racial discrimination as early as 1950, and the independence constitution guaranteed religious freedom and adequate compensation for the compulsory acquisition of land, but the Nkrumah government met the demands of the opposition for more elaborate provisions with a plea of lack of time to prepare them. And so the implementation of the 1957 constitution was the last act of faith in a long series of acts of faith. The regional assemblies, a critical ingredient in the system of checks and balances, the equilibrium system which was to prevent any one group from becoming too powerful, were left for the attention of the post-
independence regime. Although the commission to define their powers recommended a wide list, when the regional assemblies were set up by the Nkrumah government in September 1958 they had advisory powers only. In protest, the opposition boycotted the elections; the C.P.P. won all the places, then used its control of the National Assembly and the regional assemblies to amend the provision of the constitution relating to constitutional amendment so that thereafter only a simple majority of the national parliament would be required to amend the constitution in December 1958; in March 1959 the regional assemblies were wound up, their usefulness gone. This was the attack on the principal system of checks and balances, but it was reinforced by the destruction of alternative power groups: tribal or regional parties were prohibited in December 1957; anti-C.P.P. chiefs were destooled and replaced with party supporters; regional commissioners were appointed, and proved to be party officers rather than public servants — as Dennis Austin described it:

The fusion of party and government power was thus demonstrated as clearly as it could be at local and regional level: the party boss sat in the former colonial commissioner’s office, and presided over an administrative hierarchy arranged much as in colonial times, which he now placed at the service of the party; a series of repressive acts was introduced, and, following claims of various plots, members of the opposition were dealt with; the government won some by-elections and a number of opposition parliamentarians defected to the government. By 1960, of the thirty-two opposition members elected in 1956, three were in preventive detention, one in exile, and twelve sat on the government benches. In that year a plebiscite endorsed a new republican constitution and elected Dr. Nkrumah president: the vote for the constitution was 88.5 per cent and for Nkrumah 89.1 per cent. The other candidate for the presidency was Dr. Danquah who polled only 10.9 per cent; a year later Danquah and a number of the opposition were detained — Danquah eventually died in custody. The regime continued to strike against rival centres of power — the trade unions, the cooperatives, in 1963 the judiciary, in 1964 the army and police. All the hallmarks of totalitarianism appeared. Yet, in February the regime fell with a loss of life one-quarter that of the Accra riots of 1948.

We have two different questions then — why did Nkrumah and the C.P.P. advance so steadily on the road to totalitarianism, and why
did the regime crumble so swiftly? One immediate answer to the second question comes from economics: the regime was squeezed out between falling cocoa prices and the inefficiencies of galloping socialism. But it is an answer which has to be translated into politics: the intellectuals of Ghana, that is to say, those with completed secondary or tertiary education, defeated by Nkrumah at the polls, saw his regime as an attack on their standards of living through shortages and high taxes as well as an attack on their prestige; an abortive compulsory savings scheme (one had caused riots in British Guiana) and a steep incidence of income taxation worsened their position still further. The attack on their economic position was compounded with the attack on the status of the civil service: victimization for errors of judgment by political superiors; subordination to inefficient party hacks; politicization of the public service through compulsory ideological lectures; nepotism; widespread corruption and violation of the service’s ethical code. It might be that, paradoxically, when the constitutional checks and balances introduced belatedly by Britain in the last moment of doubt before independence were swept away, the real protection of parliamentary institutions in Ghana came from the same factors that operate in Britain, the belief of most men of power and influence that they should be preserved and made to work. It is too early to say whether the National Liberation Council led by General Ankrah will in fact restore parliamentary government; one interested bystander, Mr. Geoffrey Bing, Dr. Nkrumah’s English attorney-general, has warned against comparisons between General Ankrah and General Monk, and the few vague statements about the constitution to be introduced, perhaps two years from now, suggest that it will return to checks and balances rather than parliamentary supremacy. Most commentators agree that the return of the intellectuals to their pre-1948 power could again be reversed by a new popular or populist movement, perhaps even the C.P.P. under a new leader or Nkrumah back from exile.

But an understanding of the ideology of the civil service-military-professional-intellectual elite of Ghana involves their position as a privileged socio-economic class, just as an understanding of the populist ideology of the verandah boys must be seen in terms of their derivation from a rapid expansion of primary education; the alternative is to accept Nkrumahism and consciencism on its own waffly terms. An understanding of the three great men of the period is more likely to come from their biographies than from their published papers;
Dennis Austin has already offered one tentative epitaph for Nkrumah:

I do not mean that he was evil or even vicious: the main impression that he leaves behind is one of silliness, of a rather weak man in a very powerful position, whose capacity for self-deception and misjudgement was on the grand scale. He was also vain, although I suspect that his vanity was partly a cloak for a lack of self-assurance (stemming possibly from his early years at a not very good negro college in the United States). It made him an easy prey to those who found it profitable to flatter.

Interpretative biographies of Nkrumah, Danquah, and Arden-Clarke must draw on the techniques of psychology. We need to know much more about the impact of Africanization on the civil service, about the ebb and flow of power within local government between the chiefs and the educated commoners, about the effect of the mass party on village society, of the extent to which tribalism operated in the latter days of the Nkrumah regime and operates, apparently with reverse effects, under the National Liberation Council. We need to utilize an equilibrium model of the Ghanaian political system and to feed into it the elements which only elaborate behaviouralist studies of Ghanaian society and history and economics and politics can provide. Only thereby can we understand why the constitutional equilibrium of 1957 failed, and what are the prospects of establishing a new one; only thereby can we comprehend the seamless web of government.

Turn now to our second area of attention this evening, the Australian party system. By party system here I mean that combination of several parties and the electorate whereby, in Talcott Parsons' terms, the parties offer to the electorate effective leadership and binding decisions (binding because one party or a combination of two or more will take control of state machinery by reason of electoral success), and the electorate offer to the parties generalized support and advocacy of policies. I shall not digress on the usefulness of a party system, how it permits changes of power-holders without upsetting the balance, but it should be noted at once that the maintenance of a genuine party system depends on definite institutional conditions: the losing party accepts the result without its loyalty to the system being impaired, and the winner is restrained in using its power to suppress the opposition. Among various party systems the two-party model has certain virtues; it centralizes power and mobilizes support from divergent sources while continuing to offer voters a genuine alternative.
As K. B. Smellie put it:

There is a peculiar paradox about this. Each party feels that it could convert the whole community. Each party claims to represent the whole community. This is the essential advantage of the two-party system as compared with a system of groups. For though in theory a group system will reach unity by the arbitrament of reason between them, in practice reason will give way to barter. In a two-party system it is possible for a community to adapt itself by trial and error to a changing world.

By and large Australia has a two-party system. Events between 1890 and 1910 suggested that a three-party system could operate for brief periods, but since Fusion there have been basically only two parties, the Australian Labor Party and the principal anti-Labor or non-Labor party under a succession of names. The Country Party, for purposes of party system analysis at least, is not an independent actor—though the Country and Liberal parties, like George and Martha, sometimes have their little private games which fill spectators with terror and appear to take a lot out of them too. And, so far at least, the Democratic Labor Party, whatever its long-term aspirations, can best be regarded as a potential element of the Liberal-Country coalition.

This two-party system has been maintained for 55 years. In the United States a two-party system comprising the same two parties has lasted a century. In Britain, apart from a transitional period in which the Labour Party was replacing the Liberal Party, a two-party system is equally old—indeed the more imaginative political historians are ready to trace it back through various manifestations to the Civil War. A number of spasmodic and fairly casual efforts have been made to explain this remarkable stability, and in popular discourse the phenomenon is usually described as the swing of the pendulum. Rather more attention has been given to the subject in Britain and the United States than in Australia, and so the explanations I have to report come from those countries rather than locally—but as this is the case with so much theorizing about Australian politics it need not disturb us.

One set of explanations comes from Sir Ivor Jennings in his little book, *The British Constitution*. (In the later editions of the work he even provided a graphic illustration of the pendulum at work, suspended from the hands of Big Ben.) Some of the difficulties of coming to grips
with an explanation of the phenomenon are suggested by the fact that Sir Ivor in successive editions accumulated a number of explanations, each of which he says is the real one. Originally, and most unrealistically, he employed the rational and informed voter of classic democratic theory:

With us, the majority is not permanent. It is based upon differing views of personal and national interest, views which are susceptible of change and, in a sufficient number of persons, do change from time to time. Not only do persons fluctuate, but they fluctuate sometimes violently, and the “swing of the pendulum” is a familiar feature of British politics. Consequently, parties can and do appeal to reason.

To this he added the argument of inevitability:

All Governments become unpopular in the end: it is to this fact that we owe the changes of Government which we call the “swing of the pendulum”.

Next he returned to rational persuasion:

What the Opposition says may be so persuasive that the “floating vote” may “swing the pendulum”. Ministers must answer argument by argument; they must meet a half-truth by a whole truth (or a more attractive half-truth) lest it go round the country. In this way the appeal to the people is not an occasional ceremony, but a process which goes on daily and hourly in the parliamentary session.

And finally, responding a little to the studies of voting behaviour which had appeared since the first edition, he concluded:

... The phenomenon of the “swing of the pendulum” is very largely due to the continual process by which young electors are substituted for those who die. Having no party loyalties as yet, and accepting the view of the young that the “old gang” is behaving stupidly, the young voters tend to vote against that party and so to determine their own political affiliations for a generation.

Another set of seven explanations drawn from a number of writers about American politics, is provided by Stokes and Iversen. There is a tendency, it is claimed, for interest groups to remember the favours
a government has dispensed less well than those which it has not
given. The party out of power can make extravagant promises, while
the party in power is limited by what it can deliver. There is a greater
motivational response to a government’s mistakes than to its successes.
The party in power is liable to disastrous splits as its majority grows
and electoral pressure on it lessens. The political cycle responds to the
business cycle, generating support for the opposition in periods of
economic decline (evidenced in Australian politics by the proposition
that every government in power at the start of the depression was
promptly turned out — though this needs a bit of qualification for
Tasmania). The population has alternating moods of conservatism and
radicalism. There is a popular belief in rotation in office — noted by
Sir Robert Menzies in his 1963 policy speech when he warned the
voters under thirty-five who had never known a socialist government
against “the old cry ‘it’s time for a change!’ ” and explained that
change was a good thing only when it was a change for the better.

Stokes and Iversen point out that in a hundred years neither American
party has succeeded in winning more than 65 per cent of the vote,
ev even though there has been an average fluctuation of almost 6 per cent
in every four-year inter-presidential-election period, and calculate
that there is a chance less than five in a hundred of this having occurred
randomly if the system was totally free of equilibrium forces (“factors
tending to return the party division to 50 per cent in the long run”).

In Australia no party has ever got beyond the 60 per cent mark.
How can we explain this remarkable occurrence?

The first thing is to recognize that there are two main influences
operating upon electoral decision — long-term dispositions and more
recent transitory influences. Behaviouralist voting studies of the past
twenty years tell us a great deal about each. As to the long-term
dispositions, we know that individuals tend to vote as members of
social groups; political attitudes are stabilized in terms of association
with other members of the principal basic social groups in which the
voter is involved; as Talcott Parsons put it, it is not for what he is
voting but with whom he is voting — and Rawson’s study of Parkes
voters supports the application of this view to Australia — “a person
should feel most secure in associating himself with persons who, by
virtue of their real solidary relationship to him, are the ones he feels
most naturally can be trusted”. It is as a structure of groups that
society is most stable and integrated, and changes most slowly. The
individual voter is socialized into his political attitudes, not, as Sir Ivor
Jennings suggested, on casting his first vote, nor at the moment of birth, as Private Willis of the Guards believed in *Iolanthe*, but in his mid and late teens; one consequence is the remarkably high positive correlation between the voter’s political allegiance and that of his parents, ranging from .8 to .9.

These long-term dispositions affect the transitory influences; they are both an inertia component which determines voting unless overcome by short-term forces in the immediate situation and they also colour the information about these new issues. New elements of politics are mistaken for old, or bent until they resemble them; the voter’s very motivation to attend to political communications directed at him is affected. Admittedly some elements of political reality do make their way through this perceptive screen; the more substantial and simple to comprehend they are, the more easily they do so — war, depression, and the like. And at times other identifications, with religious or ethnic groups or class, may cause the voter to perceive political objects in a way that clashes with his basic partisanship. Overlying and containing both influences are the ingredients of consensus, the elements of what Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba have dubbed “the civic culture”, concerning, for example, the characteristics of candidates, the relevant criteria on which to judge them, expectations of the voting tendencies of blocs of voters, and perhaps agreements on what the major issues of the campaign are or expectations of the future.

I think that I have said enough to show that, as the result of behavioural studies, we have a pretty fair idea of what slows down the swings of the pendulum. Demographic changes in the electorate can contribute their share to setting it going, but studies of voters under thirty years of age certainly indicate no more than the slightest bias in their behaviour compared with the rest of the voting population. Rational persuasion may set it going, but the rational policy-oriented element is far smaller than traditional political scientists had ever conceded.

The evidence of what arrests the swing and sends it moving back in the opposite direction is rather less satisfactory. In so far as no empirical study has yet discovered any widely held belief in the virtues of alternation in office, there is some reason for doubting whether this is an element in the civic cultures of two-party system populations. Nor, given the armoury of economic weapons available to contemporary administrations, is there any particular reason why a
government need blunder out of office, though the prevalence of stop-go policies in many countries suggests that these skills are not completely mastered. Unfortunately behavioural studies in Australia have yet had no opportunity to consider a change in government, nor, because of their expense, have a sufficient number been undertaken to catch such temporary reversals as 1961. In Britain the behavioural studies of 1964 have yet to be published. Only from the United States do we have reports of what happens when a pendulum swings an administration out of office — in 1952 and 1960. Both occasions were complicated by the juxtaposition of the personal popularity of General Eisenhower against what can be seen as a normal Democratic majority and its subsequent withdrawal.

If I may hazard a guess as to what will eventually be proven, I suspect the answer will be found in behavioural studies not so much of the electorate as of the parties. The first work in this field has shown that the scarcity of information and the prevalence of inaccurate information extends from the voters into at least the bottom and middle tiers of party management. Party leaders too wear perceptual spectacles which are tinted and distorting, and they derive them from long-term dispositions of the sort which affect voters. The organizational structures of parties, their political sociology in the widest sense of that phrase, prevent them from being the office-seeking rational bodies which earlier models demanded, and in some parties these rigidities are more restrictive than in others. We need to establish the elements of the Australian civic culture, partly to see how correct were the estimates of the operative concepts of the state in Australia provided by Hancock and Encel. We need to ascertain how far those who qualify or seek to qualify for political leadership differ in these respects from the bulk of the population. In 1908 Graham Wallas called attention to the irrational element in politics, but we have still to draw accurate boundaries of the extent of its intervention.

I have tried to suggest in these two instances that the emphasis of traditional political science on formal structures and historical or genetic processes fails to account for the phenomena we have examined: the rapid changes of politics in the Gold Coast-Ghana and the slow ebb and flow of Australian politics. I should perhaps add that the selection of the Gold Coast-Ghana to illustrate our general point about the spread of parliamentary institutions has not unduly biased the argument; this particular territory has compressed rather more changes into twenty years than most, but there are few features in which
it is in any way unique: one could have taken British Guiana, or Cyprus, or Nigeria, or Tanzania, and much of the story would have been the same. Without rendering the argument too explicit, I hope that the advantages of using an equilibrium model to understand each, the Ghanaian political system and the Australian party system, have emerged. The parts of each system are mutually interdependent and what affects one affects all; the parts tend to cohere; yet change can and does take place within each system. To identify and understand each part, to seek to trace the interrelationships between them, even to try to measure the force which each applies to the other parts, to seek regularities to be expressed as generalizations and to seek to verify these by comparison with other modernizing societies and other Western party systems, is to wed the equilibrium model to the behavioural approach. I think that it is the most profitable way in which to conduct research in political science at the present time.