

**Remarks at the Breakfast Meeting of Republican State Chairmen, Denver, Colorado,**  
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Dwight D. Eisenhower

THANK YOU very much, gentlemen.

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What strikes me is this: governmental service is the temporary privilege of some people. But what you are doing is exercising the inherent right and performing the basic duties of citizenship. Every citizen owes it to himself and his country to participate individually, or of course through a political organization, in making certain that our country goes in the direction that conforms to his ideals and hopes for that government—for that country.

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Lincoln concluded his Gettysburg address: "...that government of the people, by the people and for the people shall not perish from the earth."

The first thing I want to bring out is that he recognized that the possibility of this type of government perishing is always with us, and it is still with us.

The experiment in free government that was started by our Founding Fathers is still going on, and it will go on to the end of time, because the law of change is the law of life. No established philosophy or doctrine set up in 1737 could possibly apply in its detail today as it did then. It will be the same a hundred years hence.

"Of the people." Just exactly what do you think of when you say "government of the people?"

I think, in a simple sort of way, we could say, "of the people" doesn't mean a government of farmers, of labor bosses, of smart politicians, of businessmen, or of anybody else. It means a government of all types and classes of people, regardless of race or color or religion or everything else that tends to separate us in our social and ordinary lives. It means a government which, in its whole constitution, its whole concept and its aims, takes in the thoughts, the purposes, the ideals, the aspirations and the problems of today and 165 years ago.

And "by the people." "By the people" really means that every individual is participating in that government. Remember, Lincoln defined this government in three ways: of, by and for, implying that if people did not exercise their right to govern, it shall perish from the earth.

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If we are going to have government by the people, then the man who is trying to exercise his rights and duties as a citizen makes certain that others are voting—not only in order to promote the fortunes of his own political life, but to make sure that this type of government shall not perish from the earth.

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If we are for the people, which means for the individual as such, we go first to the ten first amendments of the Constitution—to the Bill of Rights. That was written for the people. That Bill of Rights does not guarantee to each of us a profitable living. It guarantees to each of us an equal opportunity with all others to earn our living for ourselves and for our families, and to protect our future.

We could discuss further what we mean by “for the people,” but I refer to another quotation of Lincoln’s which was generally to this effect: the function of government is to do for the people what the individual cannot do at all, or do so well for himself, and in all those things which the individual can do for himself the government ought not to interfere.