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## The Other Fellows' Ball Park

There is an old saying that when one goes to play ball in the other fellows' ball park, it is incumbent upon him to learn the others' ground rules. There is no use protesting about these rules or asking that they be altered. The reasonable course is to find out what they are and proceed accordingly.

In the same way, the scientist entering into the affairs of government, and into the political arena, has the duty—if he is to be fully effective—to find out how men in this arena actually function. It is not sufficient for him to criticize their methods, and it is fatal if he take the point of view that he is now in a section of society which is governed by rules less ethical or less advanced than his own. We live under a democratic system. An essential feature of this system is the means by which men acquire and maintain political position and authority. These means involve a thorough understanding of human nature and of mass reactions. Many men in political life are masters of this art. And in the large majority they are also devoted to the welfare of their country. As a result we have effective working of the democratic system as far as efficiency in government is possible. The democratic system creaks at its joints, it wastes time and money, it bases its decisions more on subtle influences than on rational logic, and it often irritates those who are accustomed to more orderly and systematized functioning. But it just happens that the democratic system with all its faults is the best system of government ever devised by the mind of man. Scientists today are privileged to participate in this whole affair to an extent never before true in this country, and it is certainly incumbent upon them to understand and indeed to sympathize with the local ground rules which govern the ball park in which they are now exercising important influence.

I have seen great damage done to the whole scientific community by the eminent scientist who, appearing before a congressional committee, made evident his general contempt for the individuals before whom he appeared, and who talked to them as he would to a group of school boys. Fortunately, in the years since the War, scientists have matured in this regard and this does not now occur.

We need now to go beyond this in our thinking. As scientists and engineers we nevertheless regard with admiration and respect the subtle functioning of a medical man in a difficult case, not relying upon the science which underlies his art, but relying upon the art itself, who rescues a patient from an obscure source of distress. We admire and respect also the artist who, knowing very little about the physics of color or of light reflections, produces a work of art that stirs emotions or revives long-forgotten memories. In the same way we need to learn to respect, in fact to admire, those individuals who are masters of the art of operating in the confused arena of the American political scene, especially when this subtle undefinable skill is joined with a broad altruism. In fact, if scientists are to have their full influence for the good of the country in the days to come, many of them will indeed need to learn to practice this difficult art.—VANNEVAR BUSH, *Massachusetts Institute of Technology*. (Excerpt from an address read at the 15th National Congress on the Administration of Research, San Juan, Puerto Rico, 10 Oct. 1961)