

Ford Aide's Plea to the '5th Branch'

By George Murphy

President Ford wants the "fifth branch of government" to start talking to itself.

This message was brought to the Commonwealth Club here yesterday by William J. Baroody Jr., assistant to the President for public liaison.

At a luncheon address at the St. Francis Hotel, Baroody defined the "fifth branch" as "voluntary organizations, families, churches, fraternal societies, unions, Granges."

Baroody said "the President is not only concerned with encouraging communication between the administration and private organizations. He also wants to encourage private sector groups to increase communications among themselves.

"All too often," Baroody said, "meetings are made up of businessmen talking to businessmen, union members to union members, educators to educators, and so on.

"The President believes that a process of interaction among diverse groups can lead to a restoration of confidence in all of the institutions of our society."

Mr. Ford's concern with this interaction, Baroody said, led to his establishing the Office of Public Liaison within 30 days after taking office.

Through this and other actions, he said, "the President has made clear his desire to bring the people more closely than ever before into public policy deliberations."

The reason, Baroody said, is that "the President has placed the restoration of confidence (in government and other institutions) as a top priority item for his agenda for America."

Democracies, he said, "depend on a sense of participation, on community of values, and, quite simply, on trust."



WILLIAM BAROODY
Commonwealth talk

Baroody especially emphasized the importance of churches in the "fifth branch," and had harsh words for those who oppose organized religion.

"The current drives by atheists and militant secularists to eliminate every form of religious symbolism from public life and to threaten the tax exempt privileges of religious institutions are, in the opinion of many thoughtful scholars, distinctly contrary to the public interest," he said.

The government, he said, can take steps to "prevent the further decline of religious education institutions or religious welfare agencies.

"For example, we have a New Hampshire voucher experiment in education which will allow for a test of public aid to nonpublic education, which I think will be vital in this area."

("Voucher" systems give every parent in a school district a voucher which can be used to help pay the cost of educating their children at any school of their choice.)

Finally, Baroody said, Mr. Ford's approach of "giving government back to the people" is what the President sees as "the most hopeful path to a true 're-birth of freedom' for all the people—the fifth branch."