

**PASSAGE VI**

This passage deals with the issues involved in policymaking.

Because some resources must be allocated at the national level, we have created policies that reflect the aggregated attributes of our society. The federal budget determines the proportion of federal resources to be invested in social welfare programs and how these resources are distributed among competing programs.

5 This budget is arrived at through a reiterative, aggregative political process which mediates the claims of groups interested in health, education, welfare, and so on, thus socializing the continuing conflict generated by their separate aspirations. The test of whether a policy is “good” under this system is whether it can marshal sufficient legitimacy and consent to provide a basis for cohesion and action. Technical criteria may play a role in the process, but the ultimate criteria are political and social.

10 Whether a policy that is “good” in the aggregate sense is also “good” for a particular person, however, is a different matter. If everyone had identical attributes, these criteria of goodness would produce identical outcomes. With any degree of complexity or change, however, these criteria will always produce different outcomes. Any policy negotiated to attain an aggregate correctness will be wrong for every individual to whom the policy applies. The less a person conforms to the aggregate, the more wrong it will be.

15 When a policy is not working, we normally assume that the policy is right in form but wrong in content. It has failed because insufficient intelligence has informed its construction or insufficient energy its implementation. We proceed to replace the old policy with a new one of the same form. This buys time, since some time must elapse before the new policy can fully display the same set of symptoms of failure as the old. We thus continue to invest our time, energy, and other resources as if every new discovery of a nonworking policy is a surprise, and a surprise that can be corrected with some reorganized model. But if policies based
20 on complex, aggregated information are always wrong with respect to the preferences of every person to whom they apply, we should concentrate on limiting such policies to minima or “floors.” Rather than trying for better policies, we should try for fewer policies or more limited aggregated ones. Such limitations could be designed to produce policies as spare and minimal as possible, for the resources not consumed in their operation would then be usable in non-aggregative, person-specific ways—that is, in a disaggregated fashion.
25 This will require more than just strengthened “local” capacity; it will require the development of new procedures, institutions, roles, and expectations.