RESPONSE

Let me begin by expressing my great appreciation for this event and for the things that have been said by the panelists. I owe a debt of gratitude especially to Guy Alchon for organizing the panel and then springing it on me after everything was in place. And it's always gratifying, of course, to hear that some people have been reading your work and have found it useful in their own scholarship. It is also nice to learn that one has been on the "cutting edge" of something, especially when one's departmental colleagues tend to think that recent historiographical trends have passed me by. And to be compared with Thomas Kuhn is an ego booster, even though I doubt that the comparison will stand much scrutiny.

I wanted to say also that I feel all the more honored because the remarks have come from people whose work has been a major part of my own education. Barry Karl's work on administrative reform and the "uneasy state" has had a strong influence on my thinking about state-building in the interwar period; and his essay on "Mr. Hoover's Experts," published back in 1969, was one that I read, along with Williams, Rothbard, and Grant McConnell, when I was in the process of rethinking Hoover's activities as Secretary of Commerce. Marty Sklar and I, as his remarks indicated, go back a long way, and much that he has written about corporate reconstruction and economic government has become part of my own thinking. Judith Seelander's work on business progressivism and philanthropic foundations has added new dimensions to the conceptions that I had earlier. And Louis Galambos' work on trade associations, business corporations, and state building is something that I have followed with great interest and profit ever since the 1960s. If I remember correctly, he was one of the readers on my first published article dealing with Hoover.

I could go on with this. But I did want to respond, just briefly, to some of the remarks and questions in the presentations. And after doing that, I wanted to say just a bit about the concept of an associational capitalism and how my thinking on it has evolved.

On Herbert Hoover, I agree with much that Barry Karl had to say, especially in regard to his historical and symbolic importance, his efforts to bring the approach of a philanthropist manager into government, and his being an intellectual giant in comparison with his predecessors and successor. I also think that his reading of the Hoover revival in the 1960s is perceptive and on the mark. It was related not just to the availability of new materials but also to new political needs and efforts to write a new kind of political history. But as to why we do not want to rediscover Herbert Hoover, my only answer, I guess, is that the project for a new political history has not advanced far enough to show what we can learn from him or to have more than marginal effects on political culture and folk history. It might also say that I don't think the facts will allow us to rediscover him as one of our greatest presidents, at least in the sense of being the nation's one of its greatest services and providing a model for the future. He may have been right about certain aspects of the New Deal. But he was unwilling in his thinking to push beyond what he had worked out in the 1920s and try to develop a viable alternative to the New Deal. There were strands in Hooverism, for example, that seemed to foreshadow both a Keynesian approach and what is now called an "industrial policy," things that some historians have felt that the New Deal should have embraced more quickly and fully than it did; but Hoover did not see them as ways of rescuing and stabilizing the political economy that he had helped to develop. He stuck doggedly to earlier prescriptions and watched while their failure paved the way for the things that he would later denounce as threats to liberty and obstacles to recovery.

On redefining the public sphere, I think that Judith Seelander has raised a series of interesting questions; and my answer to most of them would be "yes." We do need to consider parallel developments abroad, to look at what was happening at the state and local levels, to bring political and organizational history together, and to be careful of unreasonable devotion to theory. I would also agree that the search for order can be overstressed and that we need to find ways of reincorporating the searches for justice, civic virtue, and integrative values. But above all, I think, I would stress the need to think in terms of an associative sector between the public and private spheres and examine what went on in it, both in terms of its efforts to remake the government and the market and in terms of the effort to coax from it an American substitute for the regulatory and welfare states that were developing elsewhere.
Too often, redefining the public sphere is taken to mean a shift in boundaries, so that what was once private becomes public. But in reality, this country has had a broad area inhabited by quasi-public and quasi-private agencies with which power and governance have been shared, and we need to understand what has gone on in this area if we are to understand the course of state-building and public policy in twentieth-century America.

As for corporate liberalism and associationalism, Marty and I have our disagreements. But some of them, I think, are more semantic than real. In an article that I wrote for a special issue of the Business History Review back in 1978, I tried to borrow his term "corporate liberalism" and use it to describe something somewhat different from his conception of it. I had in mind not a liberalism that embraced and sought to use corporate hierarchies, but rather one that envisioned a liberal regulatory apparatus arising out of the associative sector and making use of functional representation, information management, and expert-guidance to achieve its regulatory ends. I argued that this vision had been very much a part of the American scene and represented a distinctive kind of managerial or corporate liberalism. But as one critic of the piece later pointed out, what I was describing was a kind of liberal corporatism and that I was muddying the waters semantically by giving it a name that meant something else to other interpreters. I think he was probably right. And I also think that Marty's later work shows that we probably agree on what seems to me to be the central proposition, that much of the American structure for stabilizing and regulating capitalist development was established in the private or quasi-private sectors, with the "rule of reason" finally facilitating this kind of action. Where we really disagree, I think, is concerning the role of the new middle class in this as opposed to some kind of ruling class model.

Turning next to what Lou Galambos had to say about the state and its prospects for becoming a hot subject, my immediate reaction is, yes, I wish it were so. I agree with him that it is a subject that historians ought to be working on and that the people he mentions are doing some interesting work in taking studies of the state and its operations in new directions. But the element between the kind of political history they are doing and what is being done by the new social and cultural historians still seems to me to be a huge one. And my skepticism is such that I am inclined to agree with Hugh Graham in his recent article in The Public Historian (Spring 1993), when he says that the new American state is still going one way and historians and historical training another. I hope this can be changed, but I don't think it will be an easy task.

Finally, I wanted to say just a few words about the continuing utility of the idea of an associational society and how my thinking about it has evolved. I think, first of all, that there is still much to complete on the research agenda that I set out in the 1978 Business History Review article. Progressivism still needs to be restudied, with particular emphasis on those formulations that looked not to an expanded state or a free market place but to private associations, economic councils, policy research institutes and professionalized private orders as the tools really capable of maintaining both progress and liberty. And we still need to know more about how these formulations persisted and kept reappearing in variant forms in the interwar period, in the 1950s and 1960s, and more recently in the debates over reindustrialization and industrial policy. The American state, American society, and the American political economy, I am convinced, have all developed differently than they would have without these formulations and efforts to apply them, and we still don't know enough about them and the differences they have made.

I do think, however, more than I once did, that the creation of an organizational society in twentieth century America has been done over contested terrain and that the outcome has been shaped to some degree by forces other than those usually stressed in organizational history. The struggles for justice, democracy, and republicanism have continued to affect both the state and the associative sector, and there has been a persisting pluralism grounded in earlier traditions and arrangements that has made the work of the rationalizers and corporatizers a difficult kind of work and undermined much that they have tried to do. My reading of books like Alan Dawley's Struggles for Justice, on one side, and Morton Keller's Regulating a New Economy, on the other, has forced some changes.
in my thinking. And I am currently reading a manuscript by David Horowitz on the persistence of anti-corporatism in America that is probably going to change it some more. We do, I think, need to find ways to explain these persistencies and the differences they have made, and I am still hopeful that they can become part of a larger organizational synthesis.

Well, let me stop there and save some time for questions, comments, and discussion. And my thanks again to the organizers and panelists to you all for being here. It's a great memory to take into retirement, where I hope to do some more work on associational capitalism and the associative state.