



Inventing the People: The Rise of Popular Sovereignty in England and America

By Edmund S. Morgan

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"The best explanation that I have seen for our distinctive combination of faith, hope and naiveté concerning the governmental process." ?Michael Kamman, *Washington Post*

This book makes the provocative case here that America has remained politically stable because the Founding Fathers invented the idea of the American people and used it to impose a government on the new nation. His landmark analysis shows how the notion of popular sovereignty?the unexpected offspring of an older, equally fictional notion, the "divine right of kings"?has worked in our history and remains a political force today.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

For Morgan, popular sovereignty government of, by and for the people is a myth. Professor emeritus of history at Yale, he argues, in effect, that representative democracy is a tool to bolster rule by the powerful few over the many; the majority are thus led to believe they control their own destiny. In this quietly subversive rereading of our history, American colonists perfected the fiction of popular rule by involving voters in extravagant electoral campaigns and by insisting that elected representatives derived their power from their constituents. Meanwhile, elitist colonial rulers who owned considerable property pulled strings to get their way. Earlier, in England, members of the House of Commons and reformers challenged another governing fiction—the divine right of kings—and in so doing paved the way for popular sovereignty. Morgan offers a thought-provoking look at how the founding fathers assumed power.

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Review

“Edmund S. Morgan . . . [is] a man with a rare gift for telling the story of the past simply and elegantly without sacrificing its abundant complexity. . . . The story he tells is of enormous interest and importance.” (Pauline Meier - New York Times Book Review)

“[A] provocative new study. . . . In a series of brilliant chapters, [Morgan] probes the myths that sustained eighteenth-century American notions of liberty.” (Keith Thomas - New York Review of Books)

About the Author

Edmund S. Morgan (1916–2013) was the Sterling Professor Emeritus at Yale University and the recipient of the National Humanities Medal, the Pulitzer Prize, and the American Academy’s Gold Medal. The author of *The Genuine Article*; *American Slavery, American Freedom*; *Benjamin Franklin*; and *American Heroes*, among many others.

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