

- I. Untitled introduction: **bureaucracy**
- A. **Definition:**
1. In the *private sector*: the hierarchical structure of people and the standardized procedures responsible for carrying out the goals of large and small organizations [Shively fails to emphasize enough that bureaucracy is not limited to government]
    - a. For example, until recently General Motors Corporation had 49 layers of bureaucracy between the assembly-line worker and the corporate CEO. It is that administrative bloat that contributed to the inability of the U.S. domestic automobile manufacturers to respond to rapid changes in the auto-buying marketplace.
    - b. Non-profit organizations also rely on bureaucracies to implement policies adopted by their leadership
  2. In the *public sector*: the *permanent government* – those unelected/appointed officials (primarily in the executive branch) who are responsible for the implementation (enforcement, execution, administration) of the laws (most of whom continue in office irrespective of changes in elected leaders). Examples from the legislative branch are Congressional staffers; from the judicial branch, legal clerks for judges.
- B. Although their **primary responsibility** is to *carry out* policies, *how (and whether)* they choose to do so, in many instances, also amounts to *making* policy (this is known as **discretionary authority**).
1. This is equally true of both private- and public-sector bureaucracies.
  2. In the military, a common distinction is made between *line & staff officers*:
    - a. In combat, *staff officers* work behind the battle line advising the commander on what orders to issue.
    - b. In combat, *line officers* are responsible for carrying out those orders. However, *how & whether* line officers implement those orders can vary a great deal from the intentions of the distant commander and staff.
- C. **Growth in public-sector bureaucracy in the U.S.**
1. Most has occurred at the state & local rather than the federal level Figure 16.1
  2. Currently, about 15% of the U.S. labor force is employed by some level of government
  3. Government operations have grown more rapidly than government employment – due to outsourcing contracts to the private sector.
- II. Public administration as a political problem (and potential benefit) – the discretionary authority of bureaucrats in any state is not under the immediate control of government leaders
- A. This can be good: if this discretionary authority is exercised in a professional & objective fashion
- B. This can be bad: if this discretionary authority is exercised in an arbitrary or prejudicial fashion
- III. **Characteristics of good public administration**
- A. *Desirable traits*:
1. *Accurate* translation of broad policies into specific applications
  2. *Flexible* implementation of policy at point of delivery
  3. *Fair* decisions & *standardized* procedures – not arbitrary, capricious, or prejudicial
  4. *Expert advice/feedback* to political leaders (e.g., *Challenger* disaster was a failure of appointed leaders to follow expert advice not to launch)
  5. *Timely & cost-efficient* implementation of policy
- B. *Dilemma*: these desirable traits are somewhat mutually contradictory, not all of them can be fully met simultaneously

#### IV. 19<sup>th</sup> & 20<sup>th</sup> c. reforms

- A. *Pendleton Act* (1883): **civil-service system** (triggered by Garfield assassination) replaced a portion of federal **political patronage** with a merit-based system of hiring, promotion, & tenure
- B. *Sunshine laws*: provide a right of access to *open meetings* & governmental proceedings – applies to any gathering of two or more members of the same governmental board, commission, council, etc. to discuss some matter which might later come before that board for action
- C. *Sunset laws*: require renewal or they expire after a fixed period of time
- D. *Competitive bidding*: to counter political favoritism in the awarding of government contracts

#### V. Bureaucracy versus flexibility

- A. There is no ideal way to organize a bureaucracy
- B. Public-sector bureaucracy is actually sometimes more cost-efficient than private-sector (e.g., the overhead cost for processing health-insurance claims is much cheaper in a single-payer system)
- C. Almost universally,
  - 1. The *armed forces* are the most hierarchically organized agencies in any state's public administration; however, inflexibility in the military has been costly
    - a. The tendency to fight the current war with outdated strategy & tactics (e.g., massed infantry attacks against machine guns in WWI; the Maginot Line in WWII).
    - b. Large-unit tactics against guerrilla warfare (Vietnam)
  - 2. The *public universities* are the least hierarchically organized – however, there is a growing tendency to impose the corporate model there as well, with its administrative bloat
- D. Human nature's emphasis on safety and security encourages standardization – this protects both clients & bureaucrats

#### VI. The problem of protected incompetence (the “Peter Principle” in practice – in every hierarchy employees tend to rise to their level of incompetence)

- A. Contributing factors:
  - 1. Lack of a standard yardstick for performance evaluation (typically profits in the private sector)
  - 2. Need for insulating bureaucrats from improper political pressures
- B. Shively ignores the fact that the Peter Principle is alive and well in the private sector, consider the many failed CEOs who are rewarded with “golden parachutes”

#### VII. Adjustments to bureaucracy

- A. Ombudsmen (complaint department)
- B. Freedom of information (FOI) laws
- C. Political oversight (congressional **watchdog** & **casework** functions) – the latter is defined as:

The term for constituent services performed by legislators (or their staff) for the people that they represent. Such services typically involve intervening with government bureaucrats to resolve some constituent's complaint.

- D. Client pressures (immigration agencies are the most insulated – their clients have the fewest legal rights)

#### VIII. Social representativeness of public administration Table 16.1

- A. Representativeness v. competence (training & experience)
- B. Examples:
  - 1. France: the “higher” civil service is exceptionally selective, well trained, and pragmatic
  - 2. Third-world nations: civil service is typically much more rigid, inflexible, and resistant to change – based on cultures that emphasize collective v. individual rights and responsibilities Table 16.2