the first place, the time lag wreaks havoc with the best analysis. Since no one seems disposed to consider this alternative seriously, I mention it merely in passing as a change that would fit in with what has been suggested.


23. When Charles Hitch was Controller of the Defense Department, the policy analysis unit reported directly to him, as did the budget unit. One reported result is that the policy unit was able to do its work without being drawn into the daily concerns of the budget men. When policy analysis (called systems analysis) was given separate status, with its own assistant secretary, there was apparently a much greater tendency for its members to insist upon control of immediate budgetary decisions. Hence the distinction between longer-run policy analysis and shorter-run budgeting tended to be obscured. It would be interesting to know whether the participants saw it in this way. Optimal placement of a policy analysis unit is bound to be a source of difficulty and a subject of controversy.


Administrative Decentralization and Political Power
Herbert Kaufman

Curiously as it may seem today, bureaucrats in the ’30s were regarded by many as heroes in the struggles for better social order. As late as 1945, Paul Appleby, a prominent New Deal official, felt impelled to dedicate a book to "Bill Bureaucrat," and much of the literature of professional and academic public administration had a confident, approving, consensus tone.

By mid-’50s it was possible to discern emerging conflicts of doctrine and practice among those who previously applauded and defended bureaucrats. A major shift of outlook and values in governmental design seemed to be taking place.

It was not the first such shift to occur in our history. On the contrary, the administrative history of our governmental machinery can be constructed as a succession of shifts of this kind, each brought about by a change in emphasis among three values: representativeness, political neutrality, and executive leadership. None of these values was never totally neglected in any of our past modifications of governmental design, but each enjoyed greater emphasis than the others in different periods.

Thus, for example, our earliest political institutions at all levels can be interpreted as reactions against executive dominance in the colonial era. Later, extreme reliance was placed on representative mechanisms, which made the post-Revolutionary years an interval of great power for legislators and elective officials and of comparative weakness for executives in most jurisdictions. By the middle of the 19th century, however, legislative supremacy, the long ballot, and the spoils system resulted in widespread disillusionment with our political institutions, which in turn gave impetus to efforts to take administration out of politics by lodging it in independent boards and commissions and by introducing the merit system to break the hold of parties on the bureaucracies. But the fragmentation of government reduced both efficiency and representativeness, and the search for unification led to the popularly elected chief executives; the 20th century was marked by a rapid growth in their powers.

This is not to say that the values are pursued abstractly, as ends in themselves, or that there is universal agreement on which should be emphasized at any given time. On the contrary, different segments of the population feel differentially disadvantaged by the governmental machinery in operation at any given moment, and agitate for structural changes to improve their position—i.e., to increase their influence—in the system. Discontent on the part of various groups is thus the dynamic force that motivates the quest for new forms. Some groups feel resentful because they consider themselves inadequately represented; some feel frustrated because, though they are influential in forming policy, the policy decisions seem to be dissipated by the political biases or the technical incompetence of the public bureaucrats; some feel thwarted by lack of leadership to weld the numerous parts of government into a coherent, unified team that can get things done. At different points in time, enough people (not necessarily a numerical majority) will be persuaded by one or another of these discontents to support remedial action—increased representativeness, better and politically neutral bureaucracies, or stronger chief executives as the case may be. But emphasis on one remedy over a prolonged period merely accommodates the other discontents until new remedies gain enough support to be put into effect, and no totally stable solu-
Opportunities for participation in political decisions are plentiful. Why, then, is there dissatisfaction with these arrangements? Fundamentally, because substantial (though minority) segments of the population apparently believe the political, economic, and social systems have not delivered to them—selves—minimally fair shares of the benefits and rewards, and because they think they cannot change the system. Those who have not secured the benefits and rewards through the political institutions around the country as these are now constituted. Those people are not mollified by assurances that the characteristics of the system thwart them also thwart selfish and extremist interests; it appears to them that only the powerful get attention, and that the already powerful are helped by the system to deny influence to those who lack it. Thus, the system itself, and not just evil men who abuse it, is discredited.

At least three characteristics of the system contribute heavily to this impression on the part of the deprived: first, existing representative organs are capable of giving only quite general mandates to administrative agencies, yet it is in the day-to-day decisions and actions of officials and employees in the lower levels that individual citizens perceive the policies. There are often gross discrepancies between the promise of the program (as construed by the populace to be served) and performance—sometimes because the expectations of the populace are unrealistically optimistic, sometimes because programs are impeded by difficulties that could not be foreseen, and sometimes because bureaucracies are too bound by habit or timidity to alter their customary behavior in any but the most modest ways. Second, the pluralistic nature of the political system provides abundant opportunities for voters by opponents of change. Each proposed program must run a gauntlet of obstacles, and ends as a product of bargains and compromises. So change usually comes slowly, by small advances, in bits and pieces. Those who regard particular problems as requiring urgent, immediate action are prone to condemn a system that behaves so “stuckingly.”

Third, the scale of organization in our society has grown so large that only through large-scale organization does it seem possible to have a significant impact. This impression alone is enough to make individual people feel helplessly overwhelmed by huge, impersonal machines indifferent to their uniqueness and their humanity. In addition, however, some interests—naturally those of Negroes and of youth—have recently begun to develop the organizational skills to mobilize their political resources, and their effectiveness in building political access to political structures. The result has been that at least some of the most powerful structures—where, incidentally, they are likely to encounter larger, more experienced, well-entrenched organizations opposed to them—these groups, while continuing to strive for recognition in the older institutions, have adopted a strategy of devoting those institutions and seeking to build new ones in which they can have greater, perhaps dominant, influence.

Thus the plenitude of traditional modes of representation no longer suffices; the existing methods do not adequately accommodate any of the demands upon them. The function of governmental design during the past century has gravitated toward furnishing expertise and leadership, so it is now under pressure from several quarters to accord a greater role to representativeness.

More Representative Administrative Agencies

The quest for representativeness in this generation centers primarily on administrative agencies. Since administrative agencies have grown dramatically in size, function, and authority in the middle third of this century, this quest has been a matter of concern to nearly everyone, from Chief executives, legislators, and courts to the organized interests that attempt to influence their policies. Often, this means nothing more than filling vacancies on existing boards and commissions with appointees enjoying the confidence of, or perhaps even chosen by, those interests. In the case of the controversial police review boards, it involves injecting into administrative structures new bodies, dominated by ethnic minority groups or their friends, to survey and demand bureaucratic behavior. Architecturally, such plans do not require drastic modifications of existing organizations, and their objectives could probably be met by changes in personnel at high organizational levels.

More important, but still not generally accepted, is the concept of a centralized governmental complaint bureau, clothed with legal powers of investigation, to look into citizen complaints against administrative agencies and to correct inequities and abuses—the office of “ombudsman.” Once, it was chiefly through his representative in the appropriate legislative body, or through the local unit of his political party, that a citizen of modest status and means petitioned for a remedy of a grievance. But professionalization of administration and the insulation of bureaucrats from party politics have reduced the ability of the parties to be of real help, and the constituencies of legislators have grown so large that they rarely intervene on behalf of more individual constituencies. Today, some observers concede that only a specialized full-time official, wise in the ways of bureaucracy, having a vested interest in correcting its errors, and supported by adequate staff and authority, can perform this function effectively; apparently, it takes a bureaucrat to control a bureaucrat. Advocates of this proposed new agency defend it on the grounds that it would constitute a channel of representation for people who now have no satisfactory alternative.

The most sweeping expression of the unrest over lack of representativeness is the growing demand for “decentralization” of accountability, frequently coupled with insistence on local clientele domination of the decentralized organizations. Dramatic manifestations of this movement occurred in the anti-poll tax programs and in education. In the anti-poll tax program the original legislation included a provision that community action be “developed, conducted, and administered” with maximum feasible participation of residents of the areas and members of the groups.
served. Initially by interpretation of the Office of Economic Opportunity, and later by statute, the provision was construed to mean that community action boards should try to allot some of their claims to the poor, so that the poor would have a voice in the highest policy councils of the community programs. Whatever the original intent of the drafters of the phrase (about which there is some disagreement), it has come to mean the program is to be run in substantial degree by the poor, not merely for the poor.

In public education the new trend is exemplified by recent events in New York City. During 1967, demands for decentralization of the municipal school system gathered force swiftly; Leaders in the state legislature urged it. Three separate public reports recommended it in the strongest possible terms. The mayor endorsed the principle unequivocally. When concrete proposals were introduced into the legislature the following year, however, vehement opposition from the teachers' union, the school administrators' association, and the City Board of Education resulted in modifications of many of the provisions the providers found unacceptable. The measure ultimately enacted emerged weaker than the plans favored by the advocates of decentralization, but it was a major step in their direction; the thrust toward decentralization and neighborhood control of schools was slowed but not stopped, and resistance, however determined and forceful, seemed destined to give way over a broad front.

The outcry has not been limited to the war on poverty and education. It was taken up in public housing when the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development unveiled a program to modernize low-rent projects that included an augmented role for tenants in their operation. At a meeting of the American Institute of Planners, a dissenting group, calling itself Planners for Equal Opportunity, demanded a larger place for the poor in city planning, and exhorted its members to engage in "advocate planning," which is to say exert counsel for neighborhood associations urged by official plans for renewal in their areas. New York City recently began experimenting with a process of "affiliating" its public hospitals with voluntary hospitals that would be responsible for their administration, a plan that would presumably include lay boards representing the community served by each institution, and its Police Department is cooperating with experimental community security patrols of locally recruited young people. Similarly, a neighborhood council in Washington, D.C., "asked for more citizen police over police, either in the form of local police sides or resurrection of the auxiliary police force used here in World War II." The American Assembly, assessing the role of law in a changing society, called for development of "rapid procedures at the neighborhood level . . . to adjudicate disputes of simple transactions." In response to the Poor People's Campaign in Washington, "Five agencies—Health, Education and Welfare, Agriculture, Labor, Housing and Urban Development and the Office of Economic Opportunity—said they would review their plans to involve poor people themselves in local decisions affecting welfare, food, employment, housing and other antipoverty programs."

The movement is not confined to public agencies; it reaches into colleges and universities, where students, often by direct action, have been asserting a claim to participation in the policies of these institutions—one activist reportedly going so far as to predict that American universities will soon resemble Latin American institutions, in which students hire and fire professors and determine the curricula. A sociologist recently suggested establishment of closed-circuit television stations in which the neighborhood listeners might control programming. In the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of New York, a committee of priests presented a petition to the archbishop-designate requesting, among other things, a voice in the selection of auxiliary bishops and other high officials, and establishment of a Pastoral Council of priests, mass, and laymen to be consulted in advance of presented programs and budgets, a request to which he partially acceded on taking office. Later, priests formed a national organization, the National Federation of Priests Councils, to seek a stronger voice in church affairs. In Washington, D.C., classes at a high school were suspended in the face of a boycott by students demanding "a real say on what goes on inside the school."

But it is the government sphere that the tendency has been winning widest endorsement. Indeed, some of our general forms of government, as well as specific agencies, have come under attack. The president of the American Political Science Association, for example, in his 1967 presidential address, raised questions about the compatibility of large units of government—national, state, and urban—with the principles of democracy. Searching for a unit large enough to avoid triviality yet "small enough so that citizens can participate extensively," he suggested 50,000 to 200,000 as the optimum size range for democratic city governments. Moreover, he concluded that even in cities of this size, "participation is reduced for most people to nothing more than voting in elections," and that therefore one must contemplate decentralization and authority still further in order to discover viable "smaller units within which citizens can from time to time formulate and express their desires, consult with officials, and in some cases participate even more fully in decisions."

Similarly, the Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations in Washington, at almost the same time, was recommending that "neighborhood initiative and self-respect be fostered by authorizing counties and large cities to establish, and at their discretion to abolish, neighborhood subunits endowed with limited powers of location and local self-government." At Ithaca, N.Y., the Office of Regional Resources and Development concluded that larger metropolitan centers should be decentralized because they have reached a point at which "it is almost impossible to deal with urban problems on a human scale," and called for investigation of strategies for more effective use of cities with 50,000 to 500,000 residents—proposals made were the editorial planks of The Washington Post.

A meeting of Americans for Democratic Action was warned by Daniel P. Moynihan, an outspoken liberal, that "Liberals must devise new themes of the notion that, especially the cities of the nation, can be run from agencies in Washington." Senator Robert F. Kennedy, campaigning for the Democratic presidential nomination, suggested Los Angeles, promised a revolution in the distribution of political power that would, among other things, reduce the authority of the federal bureaucracy in Washington. "I want," he said, "the control over your destinies to be decided by the people in Watts, not by those of us who are in Washington."

Richard M. Nixon similarly urged the federal government to relinquish some of its powers to state and local governments, voluntary associations, and individuals, saying, "One reason people are shooting so loudly today is that it's far from where they are to where the police is and that power should be brought closer to them rather than exercised from remote centers. In important respects, the Heller-Bechman plan rests partly on the premise that federal surpluses should be shared with states, towns, and cities in time of peace because they can be more effectively spent by the smaller units of government than by Washington directly."

In short, "decentralization" of administration is in the air everywhere. While it is sometimes defended on grounds of efficiency, it is more frequently justified in terms of effective popular participation in government. Reformers of earlier generations succeeded in changing the level of expertise and professionalism in the bureaucracies, and to a lesser extent, in improving capacity of chief executives to control the administrative arms of government. Now, people are once again turning their attention to representativeness, and are trying to elevate it to a more prominent place in the governmental scheme of things.

The Continuing Search for Leadership

Public bureaucracies are under fire not only from critics outside the machinery of government, but also from inside. Chief executives who once championed measures to translate the bureaucracies' power over the public toward enlarging their own control over administrative agencies discovered that these measures did not make the agencies more responsive to executive direction; rather, they increased agency independence. This independence, in turn, makes it difficult for the executives to secure enthusiastic adoption of new approaches to social problems; money pumped into new programs administered by established agencies tends to be used more for intensification of traditional ways of operating than for inventive departures from familiar patterns. Furthermore, it results in massive problems of coordination of effort, and even in dissipation of energies.
in interbureau rivalries. Consequently, just as segments of the public are upset by the alleged unresponsiveness of administration to their demands, so chief executives have been increasingly concerned about the unresponsiveness of agencies to their leadership. We may therefore look forward to new waves of administrative reorganization proposals. One principal thrust of the government will, as in the past, be toward rationalizing, enlarging, and strengthening the executive-office staffs of the heads of governmental units at all levels, and toward building up the staffs of the administrators who report directly to the heads. More and more, chief executives will reach out for new devices to coordinate policy decisions, to work up front proposals to deal with emergent problems, and to maintain the momentum of innovations adopted. Executive offices will be redesigned; the U.S. Bureau of the Budget, for example, has only recently undergone a major reorganization. New vigor will be applied to the exploration of "superdepartments," with the Department of Defense as a prototype; Major Lindsay, for instance, has expended much political capital on introducing this concept into the government of New York City. Programming-planning-budgeting systems, in many variants, will continue to spread. There will be a new burst of literature calling attention to the relative powerlessness of our highest public executives.

Another stream of recommendations will urge strengthening executive leadership through what its advocates will call "decentralization," but which, in fact, is better characterized as organization by area as opposed to the present almost exclusive organization by functional departments. The justification for it will be couched in terms of efficiency—the need to speed decisions in the field without referral to headquarters and without loss of coordination among field personnel in different bureaus. The consequences will extend further, however, because area officers in the field would give top executives lines of communication and control alternative to existing functional channels; thus, actually strengthening central authority. At the federal level, this will mean renewed attempts to set up much stronger regional representatives of the heads of cabinet departments than any we have had in the past. It will also mean intensified efforts to establish regional presidential representatives in the field. Similarly, we should view governors and their department heads will follow the same strategies with respect to regions within the state. At the local level, Major Lindsay has already sought—with very limited success—to win approval for "little city halls" throughout New York. Distinctively American versions of the European prefect may yet make an appearance. In short, dissatisfaction with public bureaucracies will furnish ammunition for the defenders of executive leadership as well as for the proponents of increased representation of the consumers of public services. The bureaucracies will be pressed from both above and below.

Conflict and Coalition

Sources of Conflict It has long been recognized that much public policy is shaped largely by clusters of bureaus, their organized clientele, and legislative committees and legislators specializing in each public function—health, education, welfare, etc. The arguments for strengthening chief executives and their department heads vitiate the clusters are based chiefly on the need to offset the resulting fragmentation of government by introducing sufficient central direction to unify the policies and administration of these separate centers of power. The arguments for new modes of participation by the public in these centers rest on the conviction that hitherto excluded and uninformed interests have little to say about decisions that affect them profoundly. But it is most unlikely that the arguments of either kind will be warmly received by those already in key positions in each decision center.

They will resist not simply out of abstract jealousy of their own power or stubborn unwillingness to share it with anyone else, though these motives will doubtless not be absent. They will oppose because, in addition, the proposed reforms threaten those values which present arrangements protect. Bureau chiefs and the organized bureaucracies perceive intervention by political executives as the intrusion of partisan politics into fields from which doctrine has for many years held that politics should be excluded; they see jealousy for the competence nurtured so carefully and painfully against political distortion or extinction. Similarly, opening the system to lay members of local communities looks like a negation of the expertise built up by the specialist. Legislators regard strong regional officials responsive to chief executives and their cabinets as executive attempts to invade legislative districts and usurp the representative function of legislative bodies. In like fashion, local control of administrative programs could conceivably weaken the representative basis of legislative institutions, a development that many of goodwill may fear for quite public-spirited reasons.

So the champions of executive leadership and the evangelists of expanded representativeness have many obstacles to overcome before they have their respective ways. For example, Congress has been cautious about presidential recommendations of added funds and personnel for the heads of cabinet departments, and has always looked with suspicion on any relatively innocuous an innovation as field offices for the Bureau of the Budget. The Office of Economic Opportunity in the Executive Office of the President always operated chiefly through established bureaus and engaged in independent administration only in limited ways; gradually, through delegations, it has been relinquishing its control over programs to the bureaus and the future of even those few programs is uncertain. Moreover, its community-action program aroused resentment among both congressmen and local executives, and may account for the actions of the agencies appeared as springboards for political rivalries; consequently, legislation in 1967 authorized greater central control of the agencies by local governments in New York City, the mayor's "little city halls," which he presented as a device for bringing the people and their government closer together, were soundly defeated by a City Council (dominated by the opposite party) denouncing the plan as a strategy for establishing political clubhouses throughout the city at public expense. And, when the plan for school decentralization appeared, the largest teachers' unions and the Board of Education—which not long before had been at each other's throats in labor disputes—each took a similar firm stand against it. In Board-sponsored experiments with community control of schools in Harlem and in Brooklyn, the community leaders and the head of the same teachers' union engaged in acrimonious battles with each other. The reformers are not having an easy time of it.

A Coalition of Executives To advance their cause, troubled chief executives at all levels, all suffering similar frustrations, could conceivably make common cause with one another. Thus, the President may well find it strategically advantageous to build closer ties with governors and big-city mayors than was ever the case before. Congress would find it more uncomfortable to resist presidential demands for creation of strong field representatives with jurisdiction over bureau field personnel if state and local officials in their own home areas support the demands than if the President alone advances them. And these state and local officials may be receptive to such an association because the fragmentation of the system is as vexing to them as it is to the President himself.

Gubernatorial and big city mayoral vexations spring from these sources. First, procedures in many intergovernmental programs are irritatingly slow; it often takes months—sometimes more than a year, in fact—to get decisions on projects and financing from federal agencies, partly because so much business is referred to Washington for approval. To be sure, state and municipal executives have no wish to speed negative decisions on their requests, but hanging decisions are even worse; they can neither plan programs nor try to get the decisions reversed. They can only wait while disastrous pressures build up in their jurisdictions, and whole networks of interconnected programs are slowed or brought to a halt.

Second, procedures are often labyrinthine and uncoordinated, so that it takes specialists to keep track of terminal dates, filing of applications for renewal of grants, compliance with accounting requirements, meshing of separate grants in individual projects, and explanations of variations in allowances (such as differences in relocation allowances for businesses and individual tenants moved for highway construction) on the one hand and urban renewal on the
other), that bewilder and annoy the public. These intrusions almost paralyze action at the grassroots, and divert needed manpower from substantive program operations to administrative routine.

Third, federal grants for very specific purposes encourage a tendency toward what the 1955 Commission on Intergovernmental Relations referred to as "a more or less independent government of their own" on the part of functional specialists at all levels of government who are only nominally under the control of their respective chief executives.29 In point of fact, the chief executives are apparently reduced in many instances to virtually ceremonial ratification of the intergovernmental arrangements worked out by such specialists, and to the most superficial oversight of the administration of the arrangements.

So governors and big-city mayors have reason to applaud the introduction of federal regional officers with authority to rationalize the actions of federal field personnel in the bureaus. For reasons of their own, they may well find the "prefectoral" pattern of organization, which, as we have seen, will suggest itself even more insistently to the President, coincides with their own preferences. The concomitance of presidential, gubernatorial, and mayoral interests is not entirely speculative: indications of it have already appeared. Late in 1966, for example, President Johnson sent a letter to a number of his top officials a memorandum directing federal assistance programs "be worked out and planned in a cooperative spirit with those chief officials of State and local governments who are accountable to the citizens. To the fullest practical extent, I want you to take steps to afford representatives of the State Executives of State and local governments the opportunity to advise on the development and execution of programs which directly affect the conduct of State and local affairs." A few months later, to implement the President's memorandum, the Bureau of the Budget issued a circula\r\nspelling out procedures for consultation, and identifying as one of its central policies the requirement that "The central coordinating role of heads of State and local governments, including their role of initiating and developing State and local programs, will be supported and strengthened." Meanwhile, former Florida Governor Farris Bryant, director of the Office of Emergency Planning in the Executive Office of the President, was leading teams of federal officials to 40 state capitals for discussions with governors and other state administrations;30 Vice President Humphrey was conducting a program of visits and discussions with mayors, county officers, and other local executives;31 and the President was formulating and announcing a plan to assign each member of his cabinet responsibility for liaison with four or five states, "with instructions to maintain personal contact between the Governors and the White House."32 And in early 1968, the Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations recommended that:

1. Coordination of Federal grant programs being administered by a variety of Federal departments and agencies be strengthened through the Executive Office of the President;

2. The authority to review and approve plans developed as a condition of Federal formula-type grants to State and local governments be decentralized to Federal regional offices and wide variations in boundaries of Federal administrative regions be reduced.36

An alliance of public chief executives is already taking shape.

Confluence of Leadership and Representativeness At the same time, groups clamoring for local control of administrative programs, confronted with the suspicion and resentment of bureaucracies and their legislative and interest-group allies, will probably discover that they get their most sympathetic hearings from chief executives, especially from big-city mayors. For such groups can provide the executive with the counterweights to bureaucracies; they constitute an alternative channel of information about administrative performance, reducing executive dependence on the bureaucracies on the one hand and on the mass media (with their bias toward the sensation) on the other. The groups are a constituency that can be mobilized to help exact leverage on bureaucracies resistant to executive leadership; they furnish a direct conduit to localities from the executive mansions. They can serve as the nuclei of discrete, executive-oriented campaign organizations. Chief executives probably could not create the groups if they set out deliberately to do so, but it would be surprising if they did not eventually perceive the advantages of collaborating with them now that a variety of complaints has brought the groups spontaneously into being.

They will be an uneasy, mutually wary relationship. To neighborhood and community associations, the paradox of turning to remote chief executives in a quest for local control will be disturbing. To chief executives, the risk of opening a Pandora's box and releasing uncontrollable disintegrative forces will give pause. Yet each can gain so much from an alliance with the other that it is hard to avoid the feeling that the attractions will overcome the anxieties. I do not mean to imply the alliance will be formal or structured. I mean only to suggest each side will turn to the other as appropriate occasions arise, and that the occasions will arise with increasing frequency in the years ahead. In this way, the new voices of representatives and the more familiar voices of executive leadership will be joined in a common challenge to those who speak for neutral competence and for older institutions of representation.

The Subsequent Phase of the Cycle

So it seems reasonable to anticipate that "decentralization" of two types will indeed occur: concessions will be made to the demands for greater local influence on public programs, and there will be some headway toward establishing territorial officers with at least limited authority over field personnel of the functional agencies. It will not take long for the price of these changes to make itself felt. Decentralization will soon be followed by disparities in practice among the numerous small units, brought on by differences in human and financial resources, that will engender demands for central intervention to restore equality and balance and concerted action; the factors underlying the movement toward metropolitan units of government and toward conditional federal grants-in-aid will, in other words, reassert themselves. Decentralization will stand in the way of other goals, such as school integration (as did "states' rights" doctrines in other times). It will give rise to competition among the units that will be disastrous for many of them, which will find it more difficult to attract talent and money than others that start from a more advantageous position. In some units, strong factionalism may well succeed in reviving a new spoils system, thus lowering the quality of some vital services. Decentralization of public administration will not necessarily be accompanied by decentralization of the other institutions with which public units deal, such as unions of public employees, so that the local units may find themselves at a serious disadvantage in negotiations and unable to resist the pressures of special interests. Economies of scale, which are admittedly overstated very frequently, nevertheless do exist, and the multiplication of overhead costs in local units will divert some resources from substantive programs to administrative housekeeping.

Initially, all these costs will be regarded by those concerned with representativeness as well worth paying, but the accumulation of such grievances over time will inspire a clamor for unification and consolidation.37 Similarly, area officials reporting directly to chief executives will soon develop autonomous bases of political power in the regions to which they are assigned. Rapid rotation from area to area will help to reduce their independence, but the rate of rotation will decline because each new assignment will necessitate a period of familiarization with the new territory during which actions and decisions are held in abeyance, and because of local interests, having established comparatively stable relationships with their regional officials, will resist frequent transfers. As these regional officials get more and more involved in regional complexes, they will become more and more ambassadors from the regions to the chief executives instead of the executives in the regions.38 Regional differences and competition will become sources of irritation and controversy. Moreover, regional posts may become convenient and effective springboards to elective office.

At first these dangers will seem remote and...
therefore less important than the immediate gains, but time is likely to reverse the balance. The wave of reforms after the one now in progress will rally under a banner of earlier days: Take administration out of politics and politics out of administration. Disappointed participants in the current movement on behalf of representationalism, having won some of their points, will acquiesce in the efforts of a new generation of idealists to elevate the quality, the consistency, the impartiality, the morale, and the devotion to duty of bureaucrats by strengthening and broadening central control and supervision. Chief executives anxious to regain command of the administrative field forces in each of their regions will rediscover the virtues of strong central directions of those forces by functional administrative agencies whose chiefs identify with the executives,9 and whose standards can be applied everywhere. From above and below, to escape the distortions of purpose inflicted by the vigorous factional politics of localities and regions (as they once sought to free themselves from the toils of self-seeking factions in state and congressional district politics), the apostles of good government will turn back to insulating the bureaucracies against such political heat. The neutrality and independence of the civil service will again be extolled.

It should not be inferred that the process is fruitless because the succession of values is repetitive. Wheels turning on their own axes do not advance. Each time the balance among the values is redressed, only to require redress again, some new accommodation among the myriad interests in the society is reached.

In the course of the subsequent resurrection of neutral competence will take in the years beyond, it is impossible to prophesy now. But if the hypothesized cycle of values is at all valid, then strength as it may seem to this generation of reformers, innovators of tomorrow will defend many of the very institutions (as transformed in the course of current controversies) under attack today. And many a forgotten tome and obscure article on public administration, long gathering dust on unanonymous shelves and in unopened files, will be resurrected and praised for its prescience, only to subside again into temporary limbo when another turn of the wheel ends its brief moment of revived relevance.

Notes

1. Paul H. Appleby, Big Democracy (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1946). Actually, the dedication was "To John Citizen and Bill Businessman."


5. See, for instance, the criticism of professional bureaucracy and the demand for "public participation" in resource management decisions by Yale Law School Professor Charles A. Reich in his Bureaucracy and the Forests (Santa Barbara, Calif.: Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions, 1962).

6. For example, The New York Times reported on November 29, 1967, that "A (New York City) citizen group demanded yesterday that a Negro and a Puerto Rican be named to the city's nine-man Community Mental Health Board." And a high-ranking city antipoverty administrator (suspected for failing to file tax returns) went on a hunger strike to dramatize his demand that Puerto Ricans be named to the Board of Education, the State Board of Regents, the citywide Model Cities Advisory Committee, the Civil Service Commission, and the City Housing Authority (The New York Times, June 29, 1968).


16. The Washington Post, March 26, 1968. See also the arguments of a former foreign service officer for "dismantling the present overgrown bureaucratic apparatus" in Washington, Gordon Tullock, The Politics of Bureaucracy (Washington, D.C.: Public Affairs Press, 1965), chap. 25. That liberals have thus adopted a position taken by conservatives in New Deal days is an irony to which attention has been drawn by James Q. Wilson, "The Bureaucracy Problem," The Public Interest (winter 1967), pp. 3-4. Note the similarities between the new liberal language and the position of former Governor George C. Wallace of Alabama: "I would," he said, "bring all those briefcase-bearing bureaucrats in the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare to Washington and throw their briefcases in the Potomac River . . ." (The New York Times, February 9, 1968). His attack on bureaucrats is, of course, based on their zeal in defense of civil rights; the liberals' indictment is constructed on a diametrically opposite appraisal. The impulse toward decentralization thus comes from both the political right and the political left for entirely different reasons—but with combined force.


18. Like all slogans, it means different things to different people, however. It is a much more complex and ambiguous concept than it seems; see note 24, below.

19. The Executive Office of the President was created in 1939, when the federal budget was under $9 billion. It has grown since, but not nearly as much as the budget, now 15 times larger and many hundreds of times more complex. Some reordering seems almost inevitable.


21. The origins of PPBS are many and varied; see Allen Schick, "The Road to PPBS," Pub. Adm. Rev. 26 (December 1966), 243-258. But it was the system's utility to the Secretary of Defense from 1961 on in gaining control of his own department that gave widespread currency to the idea and induced the President to make it governmentwide in 1965; see Senate Committee on Government Operations, Subcommittee on National Security and International Operations, Program-Planning-Budgeting: Official Documents, pp. 1-6, and Program-Planning-Budgeting: Hearings, Part 1 (August 23, 1967), 98th Congress, 1st sess. (1967). This new power十月will doubtless lead to adaptive imitation in other governments.

22. Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., A Thousand Days (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1965), pp. 679-680, reports, "The [President Kennedy] had to get the government moving. He came to the White House at a time when the ability of the President to do this had suffered steady constricted. The clichés about the "most powerful office on earth" had concealed the extent to which the mid-century Presidents had much less freedom of action than, say, Jackson or
Lincoln or even Franklin Roosevelt. No doubt the mid-century President could blow up the world, but at the same time they were increasingly hamstrung in by the growing power of the bureaucracy and of Congress. The President understood this. Similarly, President Johnson's assistant for domestic programs Joseph A. Califano, Jr., recently complained publicly of the limitations of presidential power, observing that the powers of the office have not kept pace with its growing responsibilities (The Washington Post, May 6, 1968).


24. Foster, Area and Administration, pp. 88–89. Foster's writing on this subject anticipated long in advance the problems that were to engender a more general awareness when programs of the New Frontier and the Great Society overwhelmed the administrative machinery.


26. Bureau of the Budget field offices were set up in mid-1943 but were eliminated in the early years of the Eisenhower Administration. Recent efforts to revive them, even on a limited basis, ran into stiff opposition; see Senate Committee on Appropriations, Subcommittee, Hearings on H.R. 7301: Treasury, Post Office and Executive Office Appropriations for Fiscal Year 1968. 90th Congress, 1st sess. (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1967), pp. 973–990. Note especially the comments of Senator Monroney at p. 981. "The reason the committee cut your request for additional personnel last year was because it did not wish to have field offices established.... My impression was that we were afraid they would grow into a 50-state bureaucracy with state and regional offices."

27. The mayor proposed 35 local mayor's offices soon after his inauguration; encountering opposition in the Board of Estimate, he tried to set up five by executive order, but the City Council refused to support him, and the comptroller refused to approve payment of their bills. The mayor tried again in May 1967, but was again rebuffed by the Council and the Board of Estimate. Eventually, four local offices were opened, but they were much weaker than was originally anticipated. For the time being, at least, the plan seems encapsulated.


29. Ibid.


34. Ibid., pp. 12–13.

35. The plan grew out of "Mr. Johnson's continuing determination to build domestic as well as foreign bridges by working to sort out the tangled Federal-State relations that have been increasingly complicated by the administration of the Great Society Programs" (The New York Times, June 8, 1967). See also Terry Sanford, Storm over the States (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967), pp. 164–166; here a former governor calls on the White House to help state and local governments and quotes James Rosen's comment that "He [the President] is reaching out to the governors and mayors of America for a new political, social, and economic partnership."


37. Some anxieties about the costs of decentralization have already been voiced in Irving Kristol, "Decentralization for What?" The Public Interest 11 (spring 1968): 17, and echoed by Daniel P. Moynihan in his assisted school decentralization as likely to lead to segregated bureaucracies, The New York Times, June 5, 1968. Note also the disquiet expressed by Governors Rhodes and Rockefeller from a hearty endorsement of neighborhood units with limited powers of taxation and local self-government, Commission on Intergovernmental Relations, Ninth Annual Report, p. 21.


39. A hint of what lies ahead is suggested by the experience with regional development commissions. Encouraged by the federal government, their establishment was hailed as a step toward decentralization. But their plans began to conflict and compete with each other, and with the work of other federal and state agencies; moreover, powerful political blocs began to aggregate around them. The President had to direct the Secretary of Commerce to coordinate them, giving strong powers of review over their proposals and the aid of a council of assistant secretaries from ten federal agencies, a measure greeted as a partial decentralization (The Washington Post, December 30, 1967). This dilemma was explicitly foreseen by James W. Foster, Area and Administration, especially pp. 100–102.