

CHAPTER 13

The Bureaucracy

PARALLEL LECTURE 13.1

- I. The development of the bureaucratic state
 - A. **Bureaucracies** are large, complex organizations in which employees have very specific job responsibilities and work within a hierarchy of authority.
 - 1. The government bureaucracy consists of the departments, agencies, bureaus, offices and other units that administer the nation's laws and policies.
 - 2. The employees of these units are known as **bureaucrats**.
 - 3. The manner in which a bureaucracy is organized affects how well it is able to accomplish its tasks.
 - 4. The purpose of studying the bureaucracy therefore centers around finding solutions to the many kinds of problems faced by large government organizations.
 - B. Government at all levels grew enormously during the 20th century. Although there are a number of explanations for this growth, all of them point to the fact that society has become increasingly complex.
 - 1. **Science and technology:** Advances in science and technology have led to new roles for government. The creation of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) is an example.
 - 2. **Business regulation:** When it became clear that a pure free-market philosophy had to give way to some government role, regulatory agencies were created to police various business markets.
 - 3. **Social welfare:** As far back as the nineteenth century, the government provided pensions to Civil War veterans. With the onset of the Great Depression, the government began to take major steps to provide income security and social services to Americans in need.
 - 4. **Ambitious administrators:** Top agency officials look for new ways to serve clients, which in turn leads to new programs, larger staffs, and larger budgets.
 - C. Recent years have witnessed a movement toward reducing the size of the bureaucracy.
 - 1. This is difficult to do because different segments of the population work hard to protect the programs that serve them.
 - 2. In recent years, the national government seems to have reduced the number of bureaucrats it employs without reducing government programs. This has been accomplished by contracting these functions out to private employers—who then pay their employees to do the same jobs.
 - 3. Efforts at budget cutting reflect the tension between majoritarianism and pluralism. The broader public wants to reduce the size of government, but those who benefit from specific government programs organize into interest groups and mobilize their resources to protect programs and agencies that they value.
- II. Bureaus and bureaucrats
 - A. By examining the basic types of government organizations, we can better understand how the executive branch operates.

1. **Departments** are the largest units of the executive branch. The secretaries of these departments, such as the secretaries of defense and health and human services, form the President's cabinet.
 2. **Independent agencies** are not part of a cabinet department.
 - a) Some (e.g., the CIA) are controlled by the White House.
 - b) Some independent agencies are structured as **regulatory commissions** (e.g., the FCC) and were formed to guard against unfair business practices. The President influences them through the appointment of new commissioners.
 3. **Government corporations** perform services that theoretically could be handled by the private sector (e.g., the postal service), but Congress believes the public will be better served if these corporations have some link to the federal government.
- B. Most of the bureaucrats who work for the federal government are hired under the requirements of the **civil service**.
1. The civil service was created to reduce patronage in the awarding of federal jobs. Jobs are filled on the basis of merit, and workers cannot be fired for political reasons.
 2. The quality of civil servants has not declined over time though criticism of federal bureaucracy has led to certain difficulties for agencies in finding superior candidates for job openings.
- C. Presidents can appoint fewer than 1 percent of all executive branch employees, though the ones they appoint fill the top policymaking positions.
1. Presidents feel that they have insufficient control over the executive branch as there are few of their own appointees in departments and agencies..
 2. Presidents find that the bureaucracy is not always as responsive as they might like.
 - a) Pluralism can pull agencies in different directions. For example, the Department of Transportation may favor mass transit, but it cannot afford to ignore the policy preferences of highway builders.
 - b) Presidents still have considerable influence over agency policymaking (they appoint administrators sympathetic to their policy goals; presidential aides ensure that agency policymaking is in line with their preferences)..
 3. Agencies have the authority to set policy under the laws passed by Congress authorizing an agency to administer a program.
 - a) The issue of new regulations replacing "New Source Review" regulations in 2002
 - b) The White House and agency administrators have an incentive to consult with committee chairs. A committee can punish an agency (by cutting its budget, altering a key program, etc.)

III. Administrative policymaking: formal processes

- A. The latitude that Congress gives agencies to make policy in the spirit of their legislative mandate is called **administrative discretion**.
1. Critics of bureaucracy frequently complain that agencies are granted too much discretion.
 2. Some critics say that agencies are granted too much discretion
 - a) Congress is often vague about its intent when setting up a new agency
 - b) The broadest discretion granted by Congress is to those agencies involved in domestic and global security.

- B. The policymaking discretion that Congress gives to agencies is usually exercised through **rule making**. These administrative procedures result in the issuance of **regulations**.
1. Since they are authorized by congressional statutes, regulations have the force of law.
 2. When agencies issue regulations, they are first published as proposals so that all interested parties have an opportunity to comment on them.
 3. Regulations are controversial, because they force people and businesses to act in certain prescribed ways, often against their own self-interest.
- IV. Administrative policymaking: informal politics
- A. In his classic article “The Science of Muddling Through,” Charles Lindblom compared policymaking in the real world and in the ideal world, and he highlighted the difficulties bureaucracies have in trying to reach rational decisions.
1. The ideal, rational-comprehensive model holds that administrators can rank values, clarify objectives, explore all possible solutions, and choose the most effective means to the desired goal.
 2. Real-world decision-making does not meet these criteria.
- B. Agency policymakers encounter a number of constraints.
1. It is often difficult to precisely define values and goals.
 2. They cannot always select the most effective means to the desired ends.
 3. Problems are often too pressing to wait for a complete study.
 4. Policymaking tends to be characterized by **incrementalism**, with policies and programs changing bit by bit, rather than dramatically.
- C. The behavior of bureaucrats is frequently a source of irritation. They often act “bureaucratically,” go “by the book”, or lack the authority to get things done
1. Bureaucrats are affected by the **norms** and rules of their agencies.
 2. Though bureaucrats are often criticized for “going by the book,” “the book” is actually the laws they administer and are required to enforce.
 3. Though rule-following does not always make sense in every case, it might be distressing if bureaucrats were highly independent and interpreted rules as they pleased.
- V. Problems in policy implementation
- A. **Implementation** is the process of putting specific policies into operation. Ultimately, bureaucrats must convert policies from words on paper into action.
- B. Many factors can influence the implementation of programs and policies out in the field.
1. Vague directives to bureaucrats in the field are one source of difficulty.
 2. The complexity of some endeavors is also problematic. Faulty coordination can occur when programs cut across the jurisdiction of a number of agencies or lack coordination between national and state or local officials.
- C. Implementation is an incremental process in which trial and error eventually lead to policies that work.
- VI. Reforming the bureaucracy
- A. Presidents and agency administrators always seek to improve the performance of the bureaucracy. In recent years four basic approaches to reforming the bureaucracy have attracted the most attention.
1. Deregulation
 2. Competition and outsourcing
 3. Total quality management
 4. Performance standards

- B. Deregulation. Through deregulation the government reduces its role and lets the natural market forces of supply and demand take over
 - 1. Considerable deregulation took place in the 1970-s and 1980-s in several industries, including airline, trucking, financial services, and telecommunication systems.
 - a) Deregulation of the long-distance telephone industry has led to a competitive market for long-distance service. Consumers are also seeing the effects of deregulation of local telephone service.
 - 2. Deciding on an appropriate level of deregulation is particularly difficult for health and safety issues (thalidomide case)
 - 3. The conflict over how far to take deregulation reflects the traditional dilemma of choosing between freedom and order.
- C. Competition and outsourcing
 - 1. Competition will make government more dynamic and more responsive to changing environments. It will weaken the ability of labor unions to raise wages beyond those of nonunion employees.
 - 2. Competitive bidding in the area of social services. State and local governments have found it efficient to outsource programs to non-profit organizations.
 - 3. The Bush administration has mounted the most extensive effort to bring competition and outsourcing to national government.
- D. Total Quality Management
 - 1. TQM – a management philosophy emphasizing listening closely to customers, breaking down barriers between parts of an organization, and continually improving quality.
 - 2. TQM philosophy was adopted by the Clinton administration and by many state and local governments around the nation.
 - 3. Assessment of the progress made by this initiative has been quite good.
 - 4. Although it's desirable for government to think imaginatively about how to treat its customers better, there is a limit to analogizing government performance to that of firms in the marketplace.
- E. Performance Standards
 - 1. The effort to improve the bureaucracy goes on: the **Government Performance and Results Act** requires each agency to create plans that detail their goals and objectives and to measure their performance.
 - 2. Performance management still has its problems. Performance –based management runs the risk of perverting an agencies incentives toward what it can achieve rather than what would be most valuable to achieve.
- F. Each approach to improving the bureaucracy has its shortcomings. The commitment of the government to solve a problem is far more important than management techniques.