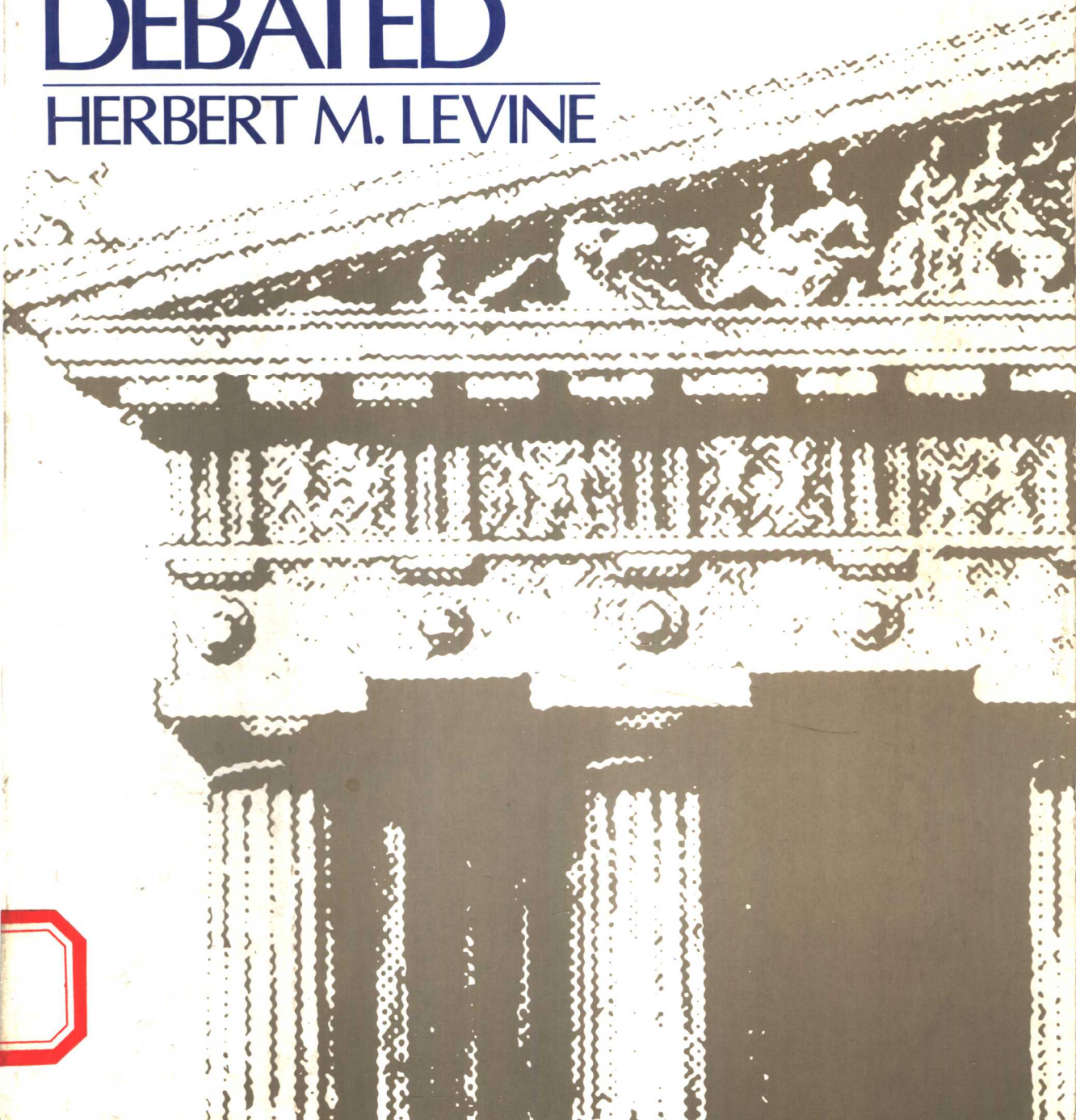


# PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION DEBATED

HERBERT M. LEVINE



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Herbert M. Levine



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# Preface

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Because government is so big and takes such a vast share of American national income, much controversy has centered on not only the policies that government pursues but also the way that government agencies carry out their tasks. What government does and how it acts affect the lives of people in many ways, such as economic well-being, health, personal security, housing, and transportation. It is no wonder, then, that the public arena is filled with conflicting opinions about the work of government.

This book is an effort to introduce students to controversies over some of the important issues of public administration. Although there is no single universally accepted definition of public administration, we will define it as the study of the organization, processes, and work of government. The book is divided into five chapters dealing with broad aspects of the discipline. Chapter 1 presents an introduction highlighting some overriding issues of public administration. Other chapters examine the political setting of public administration, the tools of administration, organizational theory, and implementation and public policy.

Although public administration is a subject of importance in all political systems, this book is, for the most part, limited to American public administration. Some of the issues chosen for debate are subjects of long-standing con-

troversy, such as the role of the bureaucracy in the American political process and the merits of decentralization. Other issues deal with more contemporary disputes, such as the fairness of affirmative action and the impact of airline deregulation.

The issues have been selected in an effort to supplement comprehensive public administration textbooks. Used in this manner, the book can show the conflicting arguments underlying some important public administration issues. A debate format is a teaching device which is designed to stimulate critical thinking and class discussion. A debate format, however, is not without its limitations. It implies that there are only two sides to every issue, when in fact there are many. In reading these debates, students may find that one or another side is convincing, but they may also want to find the most impressive points in either side in order to reach their own conclusions.

Although the book is not a comprehensive text, the headnotes in each chapter provide some context for understanding the debates. Each debate is followed by Questions for Discussion. A list of Suggested Readings is supplied so that students may pursue further research on the debate topic.

The articles in this book are drawn from a variety of sources, including academic jour-

nals, congressional hearings, books, and magazines. The authors include government officials, scholars, and interest group representatives.

In studying each debate, students may want to first understand the viewpoint of each author. They may then ask whether the conflict

between the authors arises from differences over facts, over political ideology, over the institutional background of the authors, or over the perceived future consequences of this or that policy.

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In preparing this book, I had the professional help of people in both the academic and publishing worlds. Marvin Maurer at Monmouth College in New Jersey and Joseph Zentner at the University of Southwestern Louisiana read the manuscript and made suggestions for change. The editorial consultants were Professor Larry Elowitz, Georgia College; Professor Elinor

Hartshorn, Western New England College; and Professor Steven W. Hays, University of South Carolina. Elizabeth O'Brien and Karen Horton were my editors at Prentice Hall. Ann L. Mohan, of WordCrafters Editorial Services, was the production editor. I am grateful to all of them for their efforts on my behalf.

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\* \* \*

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# CHAPTER 1

## Introduction

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When Jimmy Carter campaigned for the presidency in 1976, he complained about the growth of government and promised that he would reduce the size of the bureaucracy. He failed. When Ronald Reagan campaigned for the presidency in 1980, he, too, promised that he would reduce the size of the bureaucracy. He failed, too. Carter finished his term as president with a government bureaucracy bigger in numbers and in expenditures than when he entered. Reagan completed his first term as president with the same results. He campaigned for reelection in 1984 repeating the same idea that government had become too big, moreover.

Both presidents made efforts not only to reduce government expenditures but also to make government run more efficiently. Observers are not in agreement about whether either president accomplished anything of substance in achieving either of these goals, although they generally concur that both made vigorous efforts in that direction.

Reagan, particularly, became associated with a condemnation of big government. His rise to power as governor of California and later as a presidential candidate was partly based on political rhetoric critical of bureaucracy and government spending. While President Reagan was successful in slowing the rate of growth of the welfare sector, he adamantly increased government expenditures in the defense sec-

tor. Even in the domestic sector he discovered that there was much about federal government expenditures that was "uncontrollable."

We can better understand the reasons for Reagan's failure to achieve his objectives of reducing the size and cost of government if we evaluate the sources of government growth. In the United States as in other countries around the world—whether they be socialist or capitalist, dictatorships or democracies, or rich or poor—the size of government has grown, and the scope of government activities has broadened. Students of public administration attribute the major impetus behind the growth of government to many factors, but primarily to war and the threat of war, demands for the regulation of the economy, welfare, and the bureaucracy itself.

Some students of public administration contend that war is the chief reason for government growth. In the United States, for example, American involvement in the two world wars made America a world power. In the post-World War II period, the United States became a major participant in world politics—a development which meant that the use of American military power in distant areas was now to be a continuing possibility for policymakers. The technological changes which have been marked most notably by unprecedented means of rapid destruction through the devel-

opment, production, and deployment of nuclear weapons and delivery systems have necessitated a military organization ready to take the most devastating military actions within a matter of minutes. Foreign-policy commitments of a big power status, moreover, have meant that America's military forces are deployed in many countries throughout the world ready to pursue the commands of central authorities in Washington, D.C. Since the 1960s, for example, American military power has been used most notably in Vietnam, the Dominican Republic, Cambodia, Iran, Lebanon, and Grenada. Even when not used in military combat, American military forces have been displayed as a symbol of national will in other places, such as off the coast of Libya and in the Persian Gulf.

War, then, has made its contribution to American bureaucratic growth. Had the United States not become involved in wars in this century, however, its government would have grown in part because of the clamor for regulation of the economy. And so, government sought to regulate the railroads to prevent what was regarded as unfair business practices. Antitrust legislation established government agencies committed to keeping business competitive in areas which were increasingly dominated by a single corporation. Government regulatory agencies were established to deal with such matters as assuring that food products were safe for human consumption, drug products were tested scientifically before being put on the market, construction of buildings was complying with fire and safety needs, antipollution devices were installed in factories so as not to contaminate air and water, and qualifying requirements were instituted to make certain that professionals in the fields of medicine and law had proper credentials to serve the public.

Although often appeals for regulation were resisted by the groups who were to be regulated, this was not always the case. Sometimes, as the experience of airline regulation attests, some carriers sought to establish government regulation in order to prevent competition and, consequently, to assure profits—a topic which we shall consider in Chapter 5.

Military expenditures and economic regulation, then, contributed to bigger government. So, too, did the welfare state, which was for the most part a creation of the twentieth century. In the America of the nineteenth century, a prevailing creed asserted the view that government is best which governs least. A society based on the principle of *laissez-faire* (literally, to leave alone) would, it was argued, lead to greater prosperity in which the standard of living for the masses of people would improve. Although *laissez-faire* (or a market economy, as it is sometimes called) is still highly regarded in the United States, so, too, is the notion that every American citizen—regardless of his or her economic condition—should be entitled to at least basic minimums in education, health, housing, and income. And so, government—not only at the national level, but at state and local levels, as well—has increasingly provided funds for such purposes as building public schools and universities, subsidizing medical care for the indigent, constructing public housing for the economically disadvantaged, and extending unemployment benefits for people out of work and financial assistance to the elderly. So much have welfare benefits been accepted by Americans that many welfare programs are regarded as “entitlements,” benefits accorded to people because of their status as young or poor or sick or elderly. It is these entitlements which are generally regarded as contributing to spiraling government expenditures. This is not to say that entitlements cannot be diminished in any way. Political leaders have determined, however, that when they try to deal with reducing the level of expenditures on entitlements, they run into sharp criticism by the groups who would be adversely affected by the cuts. They fear punishment at the ballot box.

Although national security concerns, regulation of the economy, and the welfare state are principal factors in the growth of government, some people attribute a crucial reason for government growth to the government itself. Specifically, they target the bureaucracy—that is, government employees—for bringing on government growth not because of some legitimate social need but rather for their own



purposes—a theme which is discussed in a debate below.

Government, then, is big. It plays a role in most aspects of our lives—from cradle to grave. A government agency issues a birth certificate. Most people are educated in government-supported public schools—or sometimes even in private schools that receive direct or indirect government assistance. People are often hired by government agencies or engage in commercial ventures which are financed by government. The food we eat, the medicine we take, the health care we receive, the air we breathe, the cars we drive, the buildings we occupy, the money we earn, the television programs we view, the financial institutions in which we place our money, and the products we sell are all in some way regulated by government.

Because government is big and intrusive in our lives, it has become a source of considerable concern and dispute. Two fundamental areas of concern involve the activity of the bureaucracy and the relationship between government management and business management. It is these two subjects which will begin our debates in this public administration book.

## IS BUREAUCRACY THE ENEMY OF THE PEOPLE?

For most people in American society, government is not regarded as an abstraction like truth and justice. Government behaves in specific ways which annoy some people and please others. Many modern liberals, for example, generally favor big government when that big government is used to provide greater support for education, health care, programs for minorities, environmental protection, and worker safety. They condemn government spending when that spending is applied to foreign aid to dictatorships, government assistance to parochial schools, or the purchase of computer equipment allowing police authorities to gather information about the private lives of citizens. For their part, many modern conservatives oppose government spending on welfare programs but favor it in national security, police

protection, and some social concerns, such as, say, antipornography campaigns. Often, then, many liberals and conservatives focus on the particular programs which the government is undertaking rather than the principle of government involvement in society itself.

Some critics of government attack the principle of government involvement itself and regard government in general and the bureaucracy in particular as a central political evil of our times. In this regard, the debate below considers whether government is the enemy of the people. George Roche provides a severe criticism of bureaucracy. He portrays American bureaucracy as “power hungry, inflexible, indifferent to human needs, servile, and draped in red tape.” Roche denounces bureaucratic rules, the “bureaucratic mind,” and bureaucratic waste. He contends that bureaucrats have a vested interest in making social problems worse and are, consequently, indifferent to human needs. He sees the bureaucracy as graft-riddled. Bureaucracy, according to Roche, is inefficient and destructive of freedom. Readers may note that for all the criticism that Roche heaps upon the bureaucracy, he attributes the growth of government to the desires of the American people to solve their problems.

A view which regards the bureaucracy in a more benevolent manner is asserted by H. Brinton Milward and Hal G. Rainey. They argue that the bureaucracy in the United States has been unfairly criticized. Agreeing that problems of excesses, waste, and other shortcomings of bureaucracy exist, they contend that these problems are exaggerated. The authors view excessive criticism of bureaucrats as leading to a faulty diagnosis of social problems. Such criticism, moreover, may make improvements in the bureaucracy even more difficult by lowering morale in many agencies and by a consequent departure from public service of many of the best people in the bureaucracy. The authors point to a number of factors that must be understood in order to evaluate government performance. They challenge the usual criticisms often leveled at government that it should be run like a business (a subject which will be debated more fully below by Michael A. Murray and Dwight Ink). They also contend