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CONTROL OF THE BUREAUCRACY: A MISMATCH OF
INCENTIVES AND CAPABILITIES

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PREFACE

The preparation of an invited paper imposes a cost on the academic: although normally in his general field of interest, the assigned topic seldom coincides exactly with the subject of his current thinking and writing. Thus, the assignment entails a temporary shifting of mental gears. At the same time, the preparation of an invited paper presents the academic with an opportunity: the question he is asked to address normally is a matter of concern among those who deal with the real world and its attendant problems. Thus, he is challenged to make his work relevant to those concerns. For me the expected benefits of the opportunity exceed the expected costs of the effort, so you have before you an attempt to distill something of redeeming social value from my recent research. The nature of this forum leads me to depart from the usual academic style in two respects, however. First, the paper which follows is a mixture of academic research and personal point of view, not a detached, dispassionate analysis. Second, in the interests of clarity, I have not burdened my argument with the numerous qualifications which customarily accompany academic discussions. I am sure that my fellow participants will suggest the needed qualifications.

I. INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

The assigned topic is "Control of the Bureaucracy." By itself the phrase is neutral, but presumably it would not have been selected unless many political observers considered it a problem. In the popular media of course one commonly finds allusions to out of control (runaway) bureaucracy. And certainly academics too remark that the bureaucracy is not well-controlled, perhaps that it can not be well-controlled. In a widely-read recent book on the Presidency, for example, Stephen Hess contends that it is a mistake for modern presidents even to attempt to manage the bureaucracy -- in the sense of overseeing day-to-day bureaucratic operations.¹ Instead Hess advocates a presidential role of agenda setting and policy (not managerial) decision-making. Peter Woll writes that the emergence of the federal bureaucracy adds a fourth dimension to the constitutional separation of powers.² His work attempts to come to grips with the bureaucracy's place in that system. Samuel Huntington writes gloomily of the future of democratic assemblies in a world of inevitably larger and more powerful bureaucratic establishments.³ Well-meaning reformers often construe such discussions as rationales for institutional panaceas -- sunset and sunshine laws, zero-based budgeting, executive branch reorganization, etc. But I doubt that the cited authors view their work as justifications for reform movements. For it is one thing to note that the bureaucracy is an

important branch of the federal government, that it can develop and use political resources, that its expertise gives it an advantage in dealing with other branches of the government, and quite another thing to claim that the bureaucracy is out of control. In one sense that claim is true, but in another sense it is simply false. Too often, observers confuse themselves and others by shifting too easily between the two.

The bureaucracy is not out of control. The Congress controls the bureaucracy, and the Congress gives us the kind of bureaucracy it wants. If some modern day Madison were to formulate a plan which would guarantee an efficient, effective, centrally directed bureaucracy, Congress would react with fear and loathing. To be sure, particular congressmen may wish to do away with particular agencies, but if the choice were between the existing bureaucratic world and the utopian bureaucratic world conjured up above, Congress would cast a near unanimous vote for the status quo. Despite its warts the parent loves the child.

Obviously I am playing on ambiguities in the concept of "control." In the first place many observers would distinguish between theoretical (i.e. formal or legal) control, and actual (i.e. politically feasible) control. As usual, the Constitution divides formal control over the bureaucracy between the president and Congress (and the Courts play a more important role than we often recognize). While nominally the head of a large part of the federal apparatus the president's actual authority is rather

modest. Civil Service and advice and consent requirements circumscribe his appointment powers. His personal agency, OMB, is indisputably powerful, but once matters escape its clutches and get into the congressional arena, the president may appear to be a pitiful, helpless giant when confronted by renegade agencies. Lacking the rifle of the item veto the president can only threaten the cannon of the general veto, and denizens of Washington can judge when he does not dare fire that cannon. Congress on the other hand has the formal power of life and death over the bureaucracy. Congress can abolish an agency or reorganize it, change its jurisdiction or allow its program authority to lapse entirely, cut its appropriations and conduct embarrassing investigations. A hostile Congress unconcerned about the consequences of its actions could decimate the federal establishment.

Of course, Congress seldom exercises its formal powers. Ideas such as sunset laws and zero-based budgeting are little more than attempts to insure that existing congressional powers are used more frequently, or at least that their use is contemplated more frequently. Procedural changes alone are insufficient to increase control over the bureaucracy; to achieve their purpose such changes must also provide incentives to exercise that control.⁴

There is a second, more important ambiguity in the concept of "control." What kind of control do we want? Control for what? Imagine a naval fleet in which each vessel is under the absolute control of a chief officer. But suppose that these captains themselves are responsible to no higher authority, and

moreover that they have no particular interest in communicating with each other. Well-meaning observers watching such a fleet maneuver might understandably judge the fleet to be out of control. They might even recommend various measures intended to enhance control of the fleet's operation. Yet each commanding officer would greet such recommendations with skepticism; looking about his ship he sees no evidence of lack of control.

Like the individual ships in the preceding analogy the parts of the federal bureaucracy typically are well-behaved in the sense that they are responsive to the captains in the congressional committees and subcommittees which determine their fates. But the whole of the bureaucracy is out of control, as is Congress.⁵

Thus, the second distinction is that between coordinated and uncoordinated control, or less pejoratively, centralized and decentralized control. When I state that the Congress controls the bureaucracy I use the term in the second sense. Congress controls the parts, but there is little coordination in such control. Particular congressional committees control the agencies they want to in the manner they want to. Those who view "control of the bureaucracy" as a problem, however, have centralized or coordinated control in mind: how can the disparate parts of the bureaucracy be integrated, how can they be made to work in harness to achieve major policy goals?

This question I take it is the concern of this afternoon's session. In the body of this paper I will discuss at greater

length the current situation -- to what degree is the bureaucracy out of control and what can be done about it? Central to this discussion is a consideration of the incentives of the interested parties: the Congress, the president, the bureaucrats, and the electorate. Who can exert influence? To what end do they wish to do so? What kind of control will result? Answers to these questions provide a basis for speculating about the value of various suggested "reforms." In a nutshell I will argue that the Congress has the power but not the incentive for coordinated control of the bureaucracy, while the president has the incentive but not the power. This mismatch between the incentives and capabilities of the relevant political actors is at least as important as informational overload, imbalance in expertise, and the internal processes of bureaucracies in explaining the absence of coordinated control of the federal bureaucracy.

II. CONTROL OF THE FEDERAL BUREAUCRACY IN THE LAST QUARTER OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Where Coordinated Control Breaks Down

As indicated in the overview I am skeptical about the necessity of new procedures for achieving coordinated control over the bureaucracy. All necessary powers presently exist. Among academics this claim is not terribly original, but for the benefit of nonacademics and academics holding alternative positions I will briefly review the basis for the claim. Simple models or idealizations of our political order will serve as the vehicle.

Assume that a new president were to take office with a large and reliable congressional majority, a majority which he could depend upon to rubber stamp his legislative program and budget. This president would first appoint his people to every political executive post not covered by Civil Service. With few exceptions agencies must clear proposed legislation with OMB. There, the president's people could make sure that all new proposals were consistent with the administration's grand design. With these steps the future operation of the bureaucracy is brought under some control. Meanwhile, in formulating the budget, OMB could bring existing programs under presidential control by starving those found to be inconsistent with his program, or in extreme cases by having Congress abolish agencies and/or programs. By assumption the Congress approves all such requests as well as the budget and proposed legislation.⁶

In this simple world the bureaucracy could be out of control only because mistakes are made, mistakes of program conception, or mistakes in administration. Perhaps there is simply too much proposed new legislation, or too little time to review existing programs. Still, such mistakes would be unlikely to persist for very long; rather, old mistakes would be remedied and new ones would become apparent. There would be no chronic cases of out of control programs or agencies. For in such a world any outright opposition could be broken. Programs could be abolished, agencies reorganized, executives fired, civil servants transferred, etc. All this from the assumption of a cooperative, compliant Congress.

Ah, you may say, Congress is not a rubber stamp. Congress makes more than marginal adjustments in the president's program and budget. So, let us assume a more active legislative body. Rather than rubber stamp the president's requests, we now presume that the president's budget is submitted to a powerful Appropriations Committee, and that his program is submitted to powerful legislative committees. Let us assume moreover that the authorizing committees have jurisdiction over all aspects of a policy question (other than appropriations), that such committees are representative of the membership of the whole chamber, and that the individuals who serve on such committees have as their primary goal the formulation of efficiently-administered, effective national policy. For good measure let us also presume that a powerful party leadership consciously coordinates the work of the authorizing, revenue-raising and revenue-expending committees, and the individual members heed the party position because they believe in it and because their fortunes are tied to it.

In this more complicated world I submit that again there would be little or no problem with out of control bureaucracy. The president and the Congress would each formulate coherent programs. Undoubtedly, these would differ in some respects, and in compromising the two, some incoherence might result. But the assumption of common party affiliation should exert a reasonably tight constraint on the amount of irrationality which creeps into the process.

By this point my readers may be giggling. Ah, they say, that's just not the U.S. Congress you're describing. Committee

jurisdictions are a "crazy quilt" -- Congress is no place for the compulsively neat person. The recently passed energy policy, for example, was worked over by five different House standing committees, then run through an unprecedented ad hoc committee. Moreover, congressional committees are anything but representative. The Westerners head for Interior, farm district representatives for Agriculture, urban Representatives for Education and Labor and Banking and Currency etc.⁷ This self-selection bias is then exacerbated by observance of reciprocity: the country boys on Interior will keep their noses out of Housing matters, if the city boys on Banking and Currency will do the same for public lands.⁸ Suddenly, even common party membership is not sufficient to insure reasonable agreement between the program of the president and the programs of the congressional committees. And the worst is yet to come.

Implicit in the notion of reciprocity is the admission that congressmen do not have as their primary goal the formulation of good national policy. That is a secondary goal; policy which benefits the district (and thereby reelection chances) is the primary goal. Consider two policy alternatives in some specific area. Policy X provides \$100 in net benefits to each of districts 1 to 400, and costs districts 401-435 \$1000 each. Policy Y provides districts 401-435 with net benefits of \$1000 each but costs districts 1-400 \$100 each. In terms of national net benefits the policies rank as follows:

Policy X: $(400 \times \$100) - (35 \times \$1000) = \$5000$

Policy Y: $(35 \times \$1000) - (400 \times \$100) = -\$5000.$

A president might understandably support policy alternatives like X; if you want to make an omelet, you've got to break some eggs. And Congress? Typically the representatives of districts 401-435 control the committee which chooses between X and Y. By enabling special interest congressmen to gain control of their area of special interest, reciprocity insures that more policies like Y will be chosen than would otherwise be the case. And given that we are a large heterogeneous country, all congressmen are special interest congressmen in some areas. Thus, reciprocity makes it possible for a relatively greater number of policies like Y to defeat policies like X than would be the case under simple majority rule.

When we see a public agency spending inordinate amounts of public funds to pave over certain congressional districts we are not observing an out of control agency. We are observing an agency which is paying off the congressmen who nurture it. The federal agencies exist in a symbiotic relationship with the congressional committees and subcommittees to which they report. Of course, not everything an agency does is of concern to its set of relevant congressmen. It purchases its freedom in such areas by playing ball in the areas which are of concern. So, part of the agency is typically out of control, but Congress wants it that way. It is a necessary cost of maintaining a bureaucracy sufficiently unconstrained (in law and by its nominal leaders) that it is permeable to congressional influence.

What do sunset laws (SSL) and zero-based budgeting (ZBB) do in such a case? Little, really. Oh, on occasion they might force consideration of some overlooked program which no longer has any conceivable rationale. But basically, such procedural innovations will only shift more of the burden of proof from Congress to the bureaucracy, and thus make it easier for congressmen to extort favors from the bureaucracy. If that's what you mean by control of the bureaucracy, fine.

The foregoing is a rather forceful statement, a statement subject to many qualifications. But in broad outline I'll stand behind it. If one is concerned about control of the bureaucracy the critical questions do not revolve around the legal instruments of control. These exist and are used regularly. The critical questions revolve around the fact that the Congress and the president do not want to control the bureaucracy for the same ends. The goals of the typical president and the goals of the typical congressman differ considerably. As a consequence what they want from the bureaucracy differs. And therein lies the problem.

The Ends of Control

Put most simply, the goals of the president lead him to prefer centralized or coordinated control of the bureaucracy, while the goals of congressmen lead them to favor decentralized, or uncoordinated control. And given that the Congress is in a somewhat stronger position than the president vis-à-vis the instruments of

control, decentralized control will prevail.

What are the goals of the typical president? Reelection comes most immediately to mind, at least to the cynical mind. But place in history is a close second. The incumbent has already achieved the highest office possible; the only thing left is retirement as a revered elder statesman. Fortunately for analytical purposes the two goals often appear to be consistent. The president is the nation's chief official and responsible for major policy directions. He will presumably attain reelection as well as a prominent place in the history books by successfully solving important national problems: attaining peace with honor, stoking up a sluggish economy with a disgraceful rate of unemployment, cooling down a runaway economy with a cruel rate of inflation, ending crime in the streets, achieving racial equality, etc. Naturally there are times (as former President Nixon so often reminded us) when the short-run bullet must be bitten to achieve long-run goals, times when reelection and place in history pull the president between them (e.g. energy policy circa 1977). But even when his goals are not completely consistent the fact remains that the president will desire to do something, to accomplish broad policy ends. He will not be content to sit in office and react to each specific problem or situation which arises. And in order to accomplish broad policy goals the president must control the executive branch. Many of the Nixon administration's more original shenanigans were at least in part attempts to harness elements of the federal bureaucracy which were not under control of the

Administration. As representative of all the people the president desires centralized control of the bureaucracy, whether to construct the national coalition he needs to win reelection or to make the major policy initiatives which will insure his place in history.

Congressmen are in a different situation. Most of them simply wish to stay where they are, although House members are always on the lookout for a stray Senate seat, and increasing numbers of senators find personally compelling reasons to offer themselves as presidential candidates. With a few exceptions place in history is an unrealistic goal for congressmen. Each Representative is a paltry one vote of 435. Unlike the president he can not credibly claim responsibility for putting the economy back on its feet or healing the wounds of the civil war. At best several generations may remember him as the person who brought many sewage treatment plants to the district. Senators are in a somewhat better position, but even so they are merely one vote of one hundred, and how many twentieth century Senators can plausibly be said to have achieved a prominent place in history?⁹ No, for congressmen life is in the here and now. (Especially for representatives — "now" is literally "now" — their lives are organized into two year cycles.) For congressmen the primary goal is figuring out how to survive the next election.

And survive they do! Since the Second World War about 90 percent of all incumbents have chosen to run for reelection and on average 90 percent have succeeded. Moreover, they have been getting even more successful in recent years.¹⁰ How have they

managed given that traditional partisan sources of support have been eroding, and public cynicism toward government institutions and incumbents has been increasing? Elsewhere I have argued that the key to this puzzle is a mid-century change in the congressional role.¹¹ As the scope of the federal government has expanded the federal bureaucracy has enjoyed a concomitant expansion. Citizens in turn "enjoy" increasingly more opportunities to interact with their federal public servants, whether in an effort to take advantage of various federal programs or to evade various federal regulations. The congressman finds himself ideally situated. Traditionally, if one is having problems with the bureaucracy one writes his congressman. The latter has a long history of intervening in bureaucratic decision-making for the benefit of constituents. With the expansion of the federal role the congressman's role as an intervenor -- an ombudsman -- has become more important. Objectively there is a greater demand for his services, and sensible incumbents have done little or nothing to stem that demand. In fact, some representatives, particularly the more junior ones, have actually stimulated the demand for ombudsman services, seeing such activities as a means to reach those individuals in their districts who would otherwise oppose them on policy, ideological, or party grounds. In short, congressmen are increasingly deemphasizing their role as formulators of national policies, which are, after all, controversial, and emphasizing their role as ombudsmen who strike fear in the hearts of incompetent or arbitrary bureaucrats. Citizens in turn increasingly ignore the congressman's position on major national

policies. What does it matter if he's a conservative or liberal, Republican or Democrat? He can't make much of a difference given that he holds only one vote out of 535. But as subcommittee chairman or ranking minority member of such and such he's been a whiz at helping us get sewage treatment plants, mass transit feasibility studies, or what not. Moreover, he kept the old coke ovens from being shut down by EPA and tracked down umpteen hundred lost social security checks. Why give up the seniority and experience he's built up just because you disagree with him on the B-1 or revision of the Hatch Act?

How have congressmen managed to carry out ombudsman activities so successfully? Simple. Congress has powerful instruments of control over the bureaucracy, and there is ample evidence that the threat of those instruments is seldom far from bureaucratic minds.¹² The effectiveness of those instruments is made all the more real by the establishment and maintenance of the elaborate committee-reciprocity system already mentioned. Each congressman is given the opportunity to exercise disproportionate influence over segments of the federal bureaucracy which are of special concern to him. If an agency is causing particular problems for his constituents a congressman need not organize a coalition of 51 or 218 members to discipline that agency. He need only get four or five subcommittee colleagues to see things his way. And given those facts one can hardly blame an agency for paying special attention to "suggestions" from an interested congressman.

The Congress has had a standing committee system for quite some time, of course (upwards of 150 years), but the major trend of the twentieth century has been a decentralizing one.¹³ First, the party leadership lost power to the committee leadership, then more recently the committee leadership lost power to the subcommittee leadership. All of this has occurred under the guise of democratic "reforms" to be sure. But we should not forget that the impact has been one of ever-increasing division of the power to control the bureaucracy. The House under Czar Reed could and probably did exert coordinated control over a small federal executive. The House under Tip O'Neill and 175 subcommittee chairmen still can coordinate the activities of a much larger bureaucratic establishment, but it won't. Reed was willing to lose back-benchers who were forced to support locally unpopular party positions -- breaks of the game. Today there are no back-benchers.

The Current Situation and the Immediate Future

The status quo in the last quarter of the twentieth century is not comforting. The citizen increasingly finds himself in contact with a bureaucratic establishment, usually federal, or at least federally stimulated. This bureaucratic establishment is somewhat unresponsive as bureaucracies are wont to be; at times it may be downright capricious. And every day it seems to extend a little further into the citizen's life. But whether in the right or in the wrong the citizen knows that he can count on one powerful ally in his attempts to triumph over bureaucratic procedures and/or

dictates: his congressman. Increasingly the citizen views the congressman as a powerful, benevolent friend in an ever more threatening, impersonal world. Citizens get favors, congressmen get votes.

Meanwhile down in Washington, Congress maintains a federal bureaucracy deliberately organized to make it permeable to congressional intervention -- not only to the chamber as a whole, but to subgroups and even individuals. So long as an agency cooperates when congressmen make specific requests it is unlikely to suffer long-term losses no matter how poor its performance. In fact, the more inefficient and/or unreasonable its performance the greater the political resource it constitutes. Not completely tongue in cheek, one could say that if OSHA did not exist, Congress might find it necessary to invent it.

And the President? Poor fellow, he is something of the odd man out. His personal appointees become the captives of the subgovernments they were appointed to control.¹⁴ He finds himself circumscribed at every step. In the first flush of victory throwing a net around "runaway" agencies addicted to cement pouring seems like a fine idea. But then Congress tells him that he can forget about a national energy policy if he doesn't learn to keep his nose out of where it doesn't belong. To achieve his goals the President must actively use a coordinated bureaucracy to achieve some positive purpose. But to achieve their goals congressmen can increasingly do no more than fend off perceived bureaucratic assaults on their constituents. This asymmetry would put the president in a weaker position than Congress even if his formal powers were comparable.¹⁵

The described state of affairs has several important consequences for the operation of the federal government in the foreseeable future. First, in terms of organization and administration we can expect more of what we've got in the way of inefficient, "out of control" bureaucracy. For Congress has no electoral incentive to work toward coordinated control. Quite the opposite. Congress is making increasing use of instruments which keep the bureaucracy more closely tied to increasingly decentralized congressional control: the congressional veto, "come into agreement" requirements, and sunset provisions. I think it is probably accurate to say that we are currently experiencing an increase in uncoordinated control and a decrease in coordinated control. Moreover, the dynamics of current trends have a self-perpetuating aspect. The more that congressmen are perceived as and elected as ombudsmen, the greater their incentive to maintain the current system, and the greater their reluctance to agree to proposals which would make major changes in the direction of coordinated control.

Second, in terms of policy, we can identify certain biases which arise from conflicting presidential and congressional goals. A president may look fondly on proposals to replace the jerry-built structure of income security programs with a guaranteed annual income accomplished entirely through the tax laws. Or perhaps he might contemplate razing the educational grant structure and implementing a voucher system. In theory such programs carry the promise of alleviating gaps and conflicts in the existing program structure while requiring smaller administrative apparatus

and allowing greater individual freedom of choice. They are natural for presidents on the prowl for places in history. Congressmen have a different bias. Even if such massive program shifts resulted in no net changes in their constituents' welfare (admittedly an unlikely possibility), they would decrease the political resource base of congressmen. If benefits are distributed automatically, constituents will expect them as their due and not treat them in part as the gift of benevolent congressmen. And if costs are imposed automatically, as with the collection of taxes, fewer citizens will seek the aid of the congressmen in efforts to avoid those costs.

In essence, congressional goals encourage a bias toward programs with a New Deal cast. Use the bureaucracy to regulate and subsidize and deliberately leave room for arbitrary (i.e. politically determined) decisions. Avoid general income redistribution; permit it to happen only as a by-product of a congeries of federal programs. If at all possible avoid revenue sharing; it's too easy for the locals to forget who gives them the money. Of course, we should consider the possibility that the congressional biases are preferable to the presidential biases. Those interests vested in existing programs think so. I'll leave this question hang since I hope to deal with it in a succeeding paper.¹⁶

Finally, in terms of political responsibility, we can expect the continued abdication of that responsibility by the U.S. Congress. Theodore Lowi has provided a compelling analysis of the problem.¹⁷ Elected officialdom delegates power to the bureaucracy

and provides vague or nonexistent standards for the exercise of that power. Again the persistent theme appears. The bureaucracy can be out of control only because those charged with the responsibility to control it choose not to. Why do they so choose? Lowi's diagnosis of the cause of the problem is more controversial. He sees the roots in acceptance of a public philosophy which exalts flexibility over uniformity and dependability, a philosophy which holds that every problem should be bargained and brokered rather than settled according to a fixed rule of law. Perhaps. But why should this philosophy have such a hold on our decisionmakers? Lowi blames a generation of pluralist social scientists who laid the intellectual groundwork in the classrooms of academia. That is rather heavy stuff for a discipline which has been remarkably irrelevant to the conduct of political affairs. Still, ideas may take hold where we least expect.

Again, I think a more satisfactory explanation lies in the goals held by individual congressmen. They adopt a public philosophy based on pluralist tenets (or appear to adopt that philosophy) simply because it rationalizes what their political self-interest dictates. Peter Woll makes the case nicely:

A major reason for the power of the bureaucracy in policy formulation is the frequent lack of congressional incentives to adhere to the Schechter rule and establish explicit standards for administrative action. This is particularly true in the regulatory realm, an area involving political conflict that legislators often wish to avoid. Congress is always willing to deal rhetorically with problems requiring regulation and with the area of

regulatory reform, but real decisions on the part of the legislature will undoubtedly raise the ire of powerful pressure groups on one side or the other that are affected by government regulation.¹⁸

Why take political chances by setting detailed regulations sure to antagonize some political actor or another? Why not require an agency to do the dirty work then step in to redress the grievances which result from its activities? Let the agency take the blame and the congressman the credit. In the end everybody benefits. Congressmen successfully wage their campaigns for reelection. And while popularly villified, bureaucrats get their rewards in the committee rooms of Congress.

A public philosophy which holds that the bureaucracy should be granted the flexibility to deal with complex issues may seem to be the best way for an assembly of generalists to make public policy in a postindustrial society. But the entire justification of the committee-reciprocity system rests on the specialized expertise it purportedly fosters. Can we have it both ways? Can we afford to have it both ways?

III. SOME UNLIKELY PROSPECTS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Postwar political science has been slow to embrace proposals for change in our federal institutions. For example, prior to the internal fracturing of the congressional seniority system in the early 1970s professional students of Congress probably were more united in defense of that system than any other subgrouping of

the population, save perhaps old congressmen. And today, campaign "reform" proposals are far more controversial within our ranks than among the informed public. Radicals in our midst charge us with reactionary defense of the status quo, whether as an unconscious by-product of concern with scientific standards, or as a conscious result of more sinister motives. Such theories are hardly necessary to explain the anti-reform bias of our discipline. History provides us with a distressingly long list of reforms which have failed to solve the intended problems, created new ones, and produced unanticipated side-effects. Our hesitancy to support reform reflects our uncertainty about the eventual consequences; perhaps the devil that we know is better than the one that we don't.

In this paper I have expressed skepticism about the consequences of currently fashionable concepts like ZBB and SSL. My skepticism in no way implies approval of the existing situation. In fact I like ZBB and SSL. They are better than nothing, but I believe their impact will be marginal rather than major.

If we really want to work for coordinated control of the bureaucracy, we should be prepared to think big. For example, if it were possible to make one change in our federal institutions I'd suggest that we consider replacing the single member district system with a list system of proportional representation, treating the entire country as a single district. To elaborate, in every election each party would put up a list with a presidential and vice presidential candidate, 100 senatorial candidates and 435 representative candidates. Citizens would cast a single vote for the party of their choice. If

one party got 55 percent of the vote, it would get the presidency, the first 55 candidates on its senatorial list, and the first 239 candidates on its representative list. The impact of such a reform, of course, would be to bring the goals of presidents and congressmen into closer agreement. To a much greater extent than presently both the president and congressional candidates would depend for election and reelection on the party's national record compiled over the same time period.

Of course, major change in the electoral rules is politically improbable and constitutionally almost impossible. Additionally, it might create a multiparty system and numerous other by-products. Changing the electoral system is probably the least likely and most risky of the conceivable alternatives.

A less radical means of bringing congressional and presidential incentives into closer agreement could be accomplished within the existing electoral structure by superimposing a responsible party system on it. I am familiar with the reasons why such a system would not be "good" for the United States.¹⁹ I only remind the doubters that we approximated such a system in the last years of the nineteenth century and first years of the twentieth. Can it be demonstrated that the country is governed better today than it was then?

I do not have the slightest hope that we could bring about a resurgence of responsible party government. Party bonds in the electorate are progressively weakening — an irreversible trend in the view of some scholars.²⁰ And candidates increasingly have

divorced themselves from party organizations, an option which owes its attractiveness at least in part to the existence of decentralized control of the bureaucracy.²¹ Advocating a responsible party system at this time is akin to advocating a strengthening of the presidency, which is another possibility we might consider.

Who has the incentives to exercise coordinated control of the bureaucracy? The president. Ergo, to increase such control we should consider ways to strengthen his hand vis-à-vis the Congress. Scholars of the presidency are much like French generals in their capacity to overlearn the lessons of history. After working under Franklin Roosevelt they spent two decades expounding the virtues of strengthening the presidency. Now, following the tragedy of Vietnam, the revelations of Watergate, and precedents for those excesses, everyone sees great dangers in a strong presidency.²² A bit more intellectual even-handedness would be desirable.

At any rate, given recent history and the attitudes formed in reaction to it, advocates of a stronger presidency are unlikely to meet with much success. I find it difficult even to sketch the lines along which the Presidency might be strengthened. Congress will not give up its existing powers. Thus, if we strengthen the ties between the presidency and the bureaucracy, we are more likely to increase stalemate than coordinated control. Recall too the fundamental asymmetry: to achieve his goals the president must take positive action, whereas congressmen can do well enough by reacting and blocking.

Finally, we have the unlikely alternative of strengthening the Congress -- as an institution, not as an agglomeration of 400

odd subcommittees and committees, amorphous parties and weak institutional leaders. The bureaucracy is subject to decentralized control because the Congress itself is so decentralized. Increasingly, the individual members can achieve their primary goals independently of, even in opposition to, the ends for which the institution was created. As Fenno wryly notes, we see candidates running for Congress by running against Congress.²³ What can we do to harmonize the desires of the individual members for reelection and the integrity of the institution as a democratic, policy-making assembly?

The trick involves making the fate of individual members more dependent on institutional performance and less dependent on their personal efforts.²⁴ One possible change would be to assign members to committees randomly, for a maximum tenure of say, four years.²⁵ This innovation would curb the present practice of allowing congressmen proportionately greater influence in areas of special concern to their districts. It should reduce the number of policies and programs which exploit a large part of the country (e.g. consumers) for the benefit of narrowly based interests (e.g. shoe manufacturers). Less able to play the role of district ombudsman, the congressman would have little other choice than to play the role of national legislator. He could only hope that if his colleagues did the same they all might come out okay. Of course, we would have to sacrifice the system of specialization which exists, but I regard it as a fair price to pay.

In the past a great deal of imagination has gone into proposals for the reform of Congress. I hope that imagination still

exists. For in the final analysis an out of control bureaucracy reflects an out of control Congress. We might just as well avoid preoccupation with the symptoms and focus directly on the cause.

FOOTNOTES

1. Stephen Hess, Organizing the Presidency (Washington: Brookings, 1976).
2. Peter Woll, American Bureaucracy (New York: Norton, 2d ed., 1977).
3. Samuel Huntington, "Congressional Responses to the Twentieth Century," in David Truman ed., The Congress and America's Future (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1965), pp. 5-31.
4. Woll make this point very cogently in Chapter 4 and passim.
5. This conclusion is the basic thrust of Seidman's analysis. See Harold Seidman, Politics, Position, and Power: The Dynamics of Federal Organization (New York: Oxford, 1975).
6. Presumably, too, the serious president would instruct his people to look very hard at entitlement programs, existing and proposed. An uncontrollable budget is hardly a necessary feature of reality.
7. Kenneth Shepsle, The Giant Jigsaw Puzzle: Democratic Committee Assignments in the House of Representatives, forthcoming, University of Chicago Press, 1978).

8. Classic discussions of reciprocity are found in Donald Matthews, U.S. Senators and their World (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1960), pp. 99-101; and Richard Fenno, The Power of the Purse (Boston: Little, Brown, 1966), Chapter 4.
9. No lover of Senators, Woodrow Wilson once remarked that "The Senators of the United States have no use for their heads except as a knot to keep their bodies from unraveling." Ironically, Wilson's nemesis, Henry Cabot Lodge, is one of the few twentieth century senators whose names are relatively familiar outside the ranks of professional historians.
10. Albert Cover and David Mayhew, "Congressional Dynamics and the Decline of Competitive Congressional Elections," in Lawrence Dodd and Bruce Oppenheimer, Congress Reconsidered (New York: Praeger, 1977).
11. Morris P. Fiorina, Congress -- Keystone of the Washington Establishment (New Haven: Yale, 1977).
12. Fenno, Power of the Purse; Aaron Wildavsky, The Politics of the Budgetary Process, 2d ed. (Boston: Little, Brown, 1974).
13. This statement should be recognized as an interpretation, not an uncontested fact. For an elaboration of the interpretation

- see Fiorina, Chapters 1 and 7. For a more complex interpretation see Lawrence Dodd, "Congress and the Quest for Power," in Dodd and Oppenheimer.
14. Thomas Cronin, The State of the Presidency (Boston: Little, Brown, 1975), Chapter 7.
15. It might appear that I am contradicting Huntington with this argument. Not so. Huntington claims that in a world in which the legislative initiative has passed to the Presidency, Congress can show its power as an institution only by acting negatively -- by frustrating presidential proposals. In contrast I am claiming that congressmen can achieve their personal goals by acting negatively. The crucial point is that the personal goals of congressmen bear a rather tenuous relationship to the constitutional purpose of Congress. In this connection see also Dodd.
16. The time is ripe for a semi-serious revision of the received wisdom from the 1960s. The prevailing view held that the president was the representative of all the people, the sole custodian of the national interest. Congress on the other hand was considered the stronghold of declining interests -- small towns, rural backwaters, the South, etc. For this reason we were told, the Presidency was a more liberal institution than the Congress (e.g. James MacGregor Burns,

The Deadlock of Democracy (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1963, passim). Today one could write that the president remains the sole representative of the national interest, and that the Congress remains the stronghold of declining interests -- the cities, the Northeast, etc. That is why the Presidency is a more conservative institution than the Congress. The point is fairly obvious. One must be exceedingly careful when talking about the respective policy biases of the Presidency and the Congress. Institutional biases must be distinguished from those which arise from ephemeral constellations of political forces.

17. Theodore Lowi, The End of Liberalism (New York: Norton, 1969).
18. Woll, p. 173.
19. e.g. Julius Turner, "Responsible Parties: A Dissert from the Floor," American Political Science Review 45 (1951): 143-152.
20. Walter Dean Burnham, "Revitalization and Decay: Looking Toward the Third Century of America Electoral Politics," Journal of Politics 38 (1976): 146-172.
21. Fiorina, passim.

22. For a critical analysis of scholarly writing see William G. Andrews, "The Presidency, Congress and Constitutional Theory." American Political Science Association Paper, Chicago, 1971, who takes note of the intellectual about faces occurring even before Watergate. Since Watergate recantations have been running at flood tide.
23. Richard Fenno, "If, As Ralph Nader Says, Congress Is 'the Broken Branch,' How Come We Love Our Congressmen so Much?" in Norman Ornstein, ed., Congress in Change (New York: Praeger, 1975), pp. 277-87.
24. Recall that national surveys typically find that 1/2 to 2/3 of the population approve of the performance of their congressman, whereas only 1/5 to 1/3 approve of the performance of Congress. The perception of a divergence between individual and collective performance is precisely the problem, although incumbent congressmen understandably wish to maintain that divergent perception.
25. See Michael Nelson, "How to Break the Ties that Bind Congress to the Lobbyists and Agencies." Washington Monthly, (December 1976, pp. 36-38).