most desirable. The recognition that power will be effectively maximized by the introduction of organizational rules conducive to this type of behavior obviously takes a type of intellectual courage and penetration that may not be found among politicians at the top of any hierarchy. In the analysis that follows we shall, however, assume that the sovereign desires to achieve obedience of his subordinates in this organizational sense, rather than in the first two senses mentioned above. This type of obedience is, of course, the most difficult to achieve since it must be, so to speak, "built in" to the structure.

CHAPTER 13

PARKINSON'S LAW

When considering the number of subordinates that an intelligent politician will desire to have under his supervision, some attention must be given to the phenomenon of "bureaucratic imperialism." This has been discussed by numerous analysts (*Parkinson's Law* is possibly the most familiar, as well as the most amusing, treatment), but without a full understanding. It is usually treated as something that is inevitable in bureaucratic structures. Although there surely is a tendency toward such imperialism in most administrative organizations, it seems rarely to have been a significant problem when the broad sweep of history is taken into account. It has been awarded more importance than its due, perhaps because of the concentration on recent American and European hierarchies where the phenomenon has been pervasive.

The explanation is simple. As a more or less accidental by-product of a number of policy decisions reached for other reasons, a situation has arisen in most American and European governmental bureaucracies in which a politician is rewarded by his sovereigns for simply increasing the number of inferiors that he supervises. Obviously, this is a pathological situation. The ultimate sovereigns should reward their subordinates in terms of their accomplishments, not in terms of the number of followers whom these subordinates, in their turn, supervise. But, because the situation does exist in many modern hierarchic structures, it warrants a brief discussion here.

Two examples will indicate how the system works in modern American bureaucracy. During one of the reorganizations of the Department of State in the early 1950's, a group of experts from the Civil Service Commission were called in to inspect a particular bureau in the department to determine the appropriate "ratings" for various employees. Apparently, the only concern of the commission "experts" was that of ascertaining the number of subordinates supervised by each employee. Some of the employees in the bureau happened to be highly trained analysts who were supervising no one. Because of this, the commission experts' reaction was to recommend that these analysts be reduced in grade level.

As another example, an engineer invented a shell-loading machine which could have resulted, at that time, in a substantial reduction in the manpower requirements at various arsenals in the United States. He had no difficulty in

arousing the interest of the Department of Defense in this project, and he received funds to construct the machine for test purposes. After the machine was built, he failed to get any of the heads of arsenals to introduce the machine. None of these officials denied that the machine would save the government money. The saving in manpower resulting from its installation would have been so great, however, as to jeopardize the civil service grade of these officials, and so they were extremely reluctant to utilize the machine. These men held their positions, their ratings, by virtue of the number of employees directly under their supervision, and any reduction in that number would have had the effect of reducing their pay. These two examples indicate the danger of rewarding individuals for the wrong things, for things other than those that will further the objectives of the organization.

This type of situation can arise only if the higher members of the organization, the ultimate sovereigns, are either ignorant of or uninterested in the functions performed by the subordinates. Only this could account for the practice of using the number of subordinates as a means of evaluating a politician's worth to the organization. If such a system is applied throughout a whole organization, as it is to a large extent in the United States government, the higher officials will actually encourage their inferiors to build up the size of the whole hierarchy since their own position, as well as that of their inferiors, will depend on the number of subordinates. Under such circumstances as these, the politician need be concerned with little else than the size of his "empire." He will attempt to increase this without limit. Efficient management becomes, in this extreme case, a problem about which he need not be concerned. Parkinson's Law may well apply.

This, then, is the real basis of bureaucratic imperialism. Imperialistic activity, as such, may take two forms. First, the politician may try to increase the size of his part of the hierarchy by hiring new personnel. Second, he may try to increase it by raiding the trains of other rival politicians, his peers. Thus, the head of the Command Desk of the File Section of the Ordnance Small Arms Depot may suggest that "efficiency" requires the combination of CDFSOSAD with the Personnel Desk OSAD, under the head of the chief of CDFSOSAD. In this way, he hopes to secure promotion. The head of the personnel desk will probably think that such a change would be "inefficient."

This type of imperialistic activity may be contrasted with that which involves convincing Congress that the politician's bureau or agency should hire more people. As a general rule, bureaucrats will prefer this direct type of expansion to the raiding variety which pits them one against the other. Despite

this preference, however, the limitations on the resources that governments possess insure that most persons who have risen very rapidly will be experts in both types. But all bureaucrats, whether successful or not, thoroughly approve of an expansion of the whole bureaucracy. If the army is expanded sufficiently, all present officers can be generals or, at the least, colonels.

The taxpayer, the ultimate sovereign in the case of the United States governmental hierarchy, has opposite preferences concerning these two types of activity. Shifts of employees from one bureau to another, with the concomitant promotions and demotions, do not particularly affect him. General increases in the whole structure are, however, quite different matters since this will be reflected in an increased burden of taxation.

The remedy for bureaucratic imperialism is not difficult to recognize in principle, but is not necessarily simple to implement in practice. It is only necessary that the bureaucrat's superiors concern themselves with his performance and that of his whole division, and reward him accordingly. The bureaucratic supervisor even can be offered additional rewards for accomplishing given tasks with fewer inferiors under him. Measuring performance may be extremely difficult, but it should be possible, at least, for superiors to abandon the nonsensical method of rating inferiors by the number of followers that each is able to accumulate.

At the outset of this reference to bureaucratic imperialism, I stated that the phenomenon was rare except in modern Europe and America. The reasons for this are not far to seek. The more general system has been that of allocating to an official certain revenues along with certain functions. The official is then expected to perform the functions while using the revenues, and his superiors are not interested in the number of men that he may employ. Thus, the high admiral of Spain in early modern history received a harbor fee for each ship that entered a Spanish port and retained a small revenue service to collect the fee. If his ships were kept up to mark, no higher official asked the admiral for an accounting. In other systems the taxes were collected by a centralized organization, but the revenues were then allocated to the various departments on much the same terms. An army commander could expect to receive a given sum of money, but he would not be rewarded for his own efforts in increasing the number of men in his command.