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Urban Government

A Reader
in Administration and Politics

Revised Edition

EDITED BY *Edward C. Banfield*
HARVARD UNIVERSITY

1969

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Preface to the Revised Edition

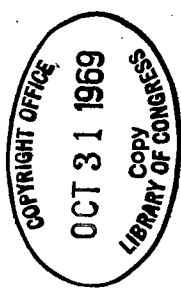
IT IS astonishing how much has happened in and to the cities in the eight years since the first edition of this book appeared. There have been fundamental changes in public opinion (in 1961 the first civil rights revolutionaries had just begun to take their seats at segregated lunch counters), in the rules governing the electoral process (the first one-man one-vote bombshell had not yet burst), and in the techniques of management (planners were beginning to talk about benefit-cost ratios but few of them had ever set eyes on a computer). Not until I set about revising the book did I realize how much the situation had changed and how much it needed to be brought up to date.

The changes have not been such as to require changing the general character and plan of the book, however. I have retained the original structure, the intention of which is to place the materials within an analytical framework that will make their larger significance apparent to the student. The approach is also the same in that it is concerned with how urban government works rather than with rules-of-thumb for its improvement. The distribution of emphasis is much as it was except that I have enlarged Part VII, Problems of Management, to give a much fuller account of the various kinds of planning that are making their appearance in response to the growing scale and complexity of urban problems. My hope is that students of city planning will find it useful to have these materials brought together in one place.

I believe that about half the material in the book is new. I have not hesitated to retain articles that I consider classics (Norton Long's two, for example) or to print very long articles which could not be cut without serious injury (for example, the note from the *Harvard Law Review* on City Government in the State Courts). There are readings that are very up-to-date (on Negro politics, riots, and reapportionment of local government, for example) but I have not knowingly sacrificed anything of analytical importance for the sake of being topical.

All of the readings in the last Part are new. They all contribute to a single theme, of course—how policy is formed—but the reader should note that each of them contributes to other parts of the book as

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well. Harold Kaplan's article on Metro Toronto, for example, adds something to the section on Metropolitan Organization, Richard A. Cloward and Frances Fox Piven's article on welfare adds something to the section on Influence and Leadership, and H. R. Wilde's article on the Milwaukee riot adds something to at least three sections: The Theory of Good Government, The Trend of Urban Politics, and Influence and Leadership. My own article on the public library might be read in connection with the section on Problems of Management.

The bibliography has been brought up to date and an index has been added.

Preface to the First Edition

THIS IS a collection of the readings that I have found most valuable in teaching courses on urban government to both undergraduate and graduate students.

The readings come from so many places that even if each were readily available it would be a tedious task for a librarian to bring them all together on a reserve shelf. But many, like Henry Jones Ford's theory of corruption, would not be available at all in most libraries, and some, like Rexford G. Tugwell's evaluation of the career of Robert Moses, have never before appeared in print.

A book of this kind can be used in at least three ways: as a supplement to a textbook, in place of a textbook as an accompaniment to classroom lectures, or as a basis for a discussion series. It has been my experience that readings of this sort help give analytical depth to a course. The usual textbook provides a descriptive account of the more formal aspects of governmental structure and process, and then leaves it up to the instructor to show the student the larger meaning of what has been described. This book is designed to help him do this. Accordingly, I have selected the readings for the *ideals* that they contain.

Since some instructors will want to use the book without an accompanying text, the essential descriptive materials are supplied here in the form of a Glossary. Because the Glossary contains all of the background information necessary for understanding the readings, many students will find it useful to begin by reading the Glossary from start to finish.

The approach of this book differs from that of most texts in several respects. The most important difference, perhaps, is that this book tries to explain what really happens in urban government and to do so largely in terms of the concepts and theories of social scientists. Most textbooks on state and local government are preoccupied with what "experts" think *ought* to be the case; this one is occupied with what *really* is the case. While the views of reformers and experts are represented, they are not assumed to be authoritative, and they are placed in juxtaposition

position with those of social scientists. Thus, for example, the student is exposed not only to the usual criticisms of the big city machine but also to the views of the eminent sociologist, Robert K. Merton, on the machine's latent functions.

This emphasis on the social scientist's view of things as they are, as distinguished from what they ought to be, has inevitably led to a much heavier emphasis on politics than is common in most textbooks on urban government. Works on urban government all too often assume that the tasks of city government are almost entirely matters of administration—collecting garbage, repairing streets, putting out fires, and so on. Without belittling the importance of such activities, this book seeks to give politics—the struggle for power and the management of conflict—the attention that it deserves.

Politics would be important even if it had no consequences extending beyond the boundaries of the city. But the fact is that American national politics is to a very large extent local politics, and no one can possibly understand the national political system without first understanding politics in the cities, especially the larger ones. This is another reason for the emphasis here on politics.

This book focuses on the processes rather than on the techniques of government. Most students, for example, do not need to know anything about the technique of designing and filling out the forms of a city budget. Not one in a thousand will ever have use for such information, and the rare one who will can certainly best get it on the job. On the other hand, all students should know the kinds of things that are explained by William H. Brown, Jr. and Charles E. Gilbert in their article on capital programming in Philadelphia: what capital programming is, why it is done, how it is organized, what its connection with city planning is, what its political setting is, and what are the practical and theoretical limitations upon its effectiveness.

Some of the readings provide models for students who would like to go into the local community and do research of their own. The selections from Mark K. Adams, James Q. Wilson, Robert A. Dahl, and Kenneth E. Gray and David Greenstone should all be suggestive to the student who wants to try his hand at this and to the class that is carrying on a joint research project. These examples show how much can be done without a computing machine, providing one has sound legs and a good mind.

Each Section of the book is preceded by an introductory note formulating the central questions around which it is organized, underlining the points that the editor believes are of the greatest analytical interest, and showing the relevance of each reading to the general themes of the book.

The bibliography lists items generally regarded as standard refer-

ences on each topic. These are annotated for the benefit of the non-specialist.

The author acknowledges with thanks the assistance of Martha Derthick, who prepared the Glossary and the Bibliography.

September, 1961

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I

Urban Government as a Subject for Study

GOVERNMENT serves two very different functions. One is that of providing goods and services that cannot be, or at any rate are not, provided under other, private, auspices. With respect to this *service* function, government is in many ways like a private enterprise. Private enterprise provides certain kinds of goods and services to people called "customers"; public enterprise provides other kinds of goods and services to people called "taxpayers." Both types of enterprise are judged by how well and how cheaply they supply the goods and services that are wanted.

The other function of government is to deal with conflict. Wherever there are people, there are bound to be differences of opinion and of interest. Politics is any kind of activity—reasonable discussion, heated argument, bribery, fighting, balloting, and so on—by which conflict in matters of public importance is carried on. Government deals with this conflict by regulating the manner in which it is carried on, by arranging compromises and balancing interests, and by imposing settlements which the parties to the disputes have to accept.

Whereas the service function is of necessity performed consciously and deliberately, the political function is often, but not always, performed as a more or less accidental by-product of a politician's effort to get office or of a bureaucracy's effort to maintain and expand itself.

