

Bureaucracy Swallows Up Presidents

By Jack Anderson

Like every President before him, Richard Nixon has issued directives, delivered pronouncements, dictated memos and otherwise sought to bestir the vast federal bureaucracy.

He has put on a personal show of efficiency and has sounded solemn warnings that he expects renewed vigor from all federal workers.

But also like every past President, Mr. Nixon has made little impression upon the bureaucrats who respectfully note the presidential stirrings and then go on doing as they have always done.

Thoroughly frustrated, he fusses over the negative attitudes of most bureaucrats, fumes at their can't-be-done responses to his new ideas and chafes over the bureaucratic inertia he has encountered.

In exasperation, he has complained that government officials "spend one-half of their time writing papers to each other." He cites, as an illustration, the excess paper work that Washington demands from local and state authorities in return for federal grants. Over 30 major steps, involving more than 100 different forms and reports, often are required for a simple \$1,000 grant.

Inside the Whale

Mr. Nixon's predecessors must be smiling indulgently on high. Franklin D. Roosevelt after struggling with the Naval bureaucracy compared the encounter to "boxing a featherbed." Dwight D. Eisenhower, who masterminded history's largest war, wound up on the losing side in what he called "the battle of Washington." And John F. Kennedy wryly likened his experience with the bureaucracy to "grappling with a whale."

Now comes Mr. Nixon to grapple with the whale. After a year of valiant struggle, he has found himself in the whale's belly looking out.

The bureaucratic phenomena is wondrous to observe. Like a giant amoeba, it sort of slurps along, a shapeless blob, following the path of least resistance. It pushes out in every direction, and it substance flows into the bulges.

When it encounters a morsel, the bureaucratic amoeba

flows around it and absorbs it. And when the bureaucracy can no longer contain its own bulk, it simply divides—one into two, two into four, and so on. Today one amoeba, tomorrow 16.

From another view, the federal apparatus resembles a marvelous, monstrous factory, which is engaged in the manufacture of a single, basic product: Confusion.

The Fuddle Factory

Call it the fuddle factory.

The maze of bureaucratic wheels, cogs and gears, spinning in different directions, often countering each other, would delight a Rube Goldberg. All the whirling and whirring creates the illusion of great industry. For all its movement, however, the fuddle factory goes nowhere.

The actual dimensions of the bureaucracy are known to no man, but some inklings can be gained from the 1967 Census of Governments. These figures show that an astounding 81,299 government entities now exist in the United States. The breakdown:

| | |
|-------------------|--------------|
| U.S. government | 1 |
| State governments | 50 |
| Local governments | 81,248 |
| Counties | 3,049 |
| Municipalities | 18,048 |
| Townships | 17,105 |
| School districts | 21,782 |
| Special districts | 21,264 |
| Grand Total | 81,299 |

All of which lays to eternal rest the notion that a missile is the most complex contrivance known to man. For each of the 81,299 entities of government is a moving part. Within each entity are other moving parts, wheels within

wheels, all going round and round.

Bureaucratic

Consider the U.S. government. George Washington started out with nine executive agencies, employing a grand total of 1,000 federal workers. From this small bureaucratic beginning, the federal government has spread and swollen into a crazy patchwork of nearly 2,000 agencies, each itself a conglomeration of bureaus, sections, divisions and committees.

Out of sheer desperation, President Nixon has threatened "massive personnel cuts in every area of government." This betrays a certain naivete, however, about the bureaucracy's powers of self-preservation.

The fuddle factory constantly finds more, not less, fuddling to do. Lacking constructive work, the fuddle factory turns inward and produces for itself rather than for the people it is supposed to serve. Hence, the bureaucratic dictum: expand or expire.

The Bureau of Indian Affairs provides an example. On the Pine Ridge Reservation in Western South Dakota the Oglala Sioux are recipients of \$8,040 per household in bureaucratic services. About 1,400 government officials work full-time on the reserva-

tion, and an additional 425 work part-time. This doesn't include additional hundreds who work in district, area and regional offices.

The fuddle factory, then, could provide a live-in bureaucrat for every Oglala family.

Thus has fuddling become a fine art—from the most remote reservation to the fuddle capital of the free world in Washington.

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