REVISING THE BUREAUCRATIC IDEAL:

THE NEW LEFT AND THE NEW

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

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by

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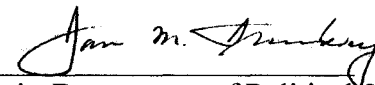
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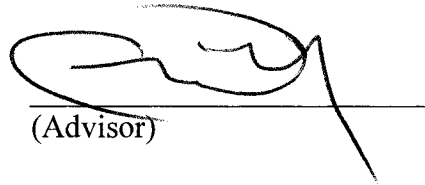_____   _____
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Abstract

Of all that is written and said about the American 1960's, one thing remains undisputed – it was a decade of significant change. In fact, change is probably the most perceivable characteristic historians use to approach the 1960's as distinct from those decades surrounding it. Even those too young to have experienced it for themselves can tell you about the activism, turbulence, reform and cultural diversity that the decade produced. It is what we read in history books, see on television, and hear from parents – the 60's were special, different.

For many of those witnessing the approach of the 1960's, American society was in need of renovation and American thought, redirection. Consequently, much of the literature in the social science in the late 50's and early 60's reflected an eagerness for innovative research, theory and even action. The old clothes didn't fit anymore, and it was time to tailor a fresh approach to society's new challenges.

One of those challenges was the organizational and sociological implications of a vast and dominant bureaucracy. The administrative arm of the U.S. government's executive branch had certainly gained in size and strength in the aftermath of the New Deal and World War II legislation. However, many began to question not only the efficacy and efficiency of bureaucratic product, but also the moral implications of its goals, values, structure and character. In the 1950's and

60's, bureaucracy seemed a likely target for criticisms about American society, government, and culture. In time, quiet criticism would galvanize discontent

The Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), the American New Left's largest and most visible intellectual and student activist group of the 1960's, served as the major expression of discontent youth in that decade. Critical of their nation's sanctimonious liberal administrative state and society, SDS sought to re-align espoused American principles with its practice by organizing around common values of democracy, community, humanism and freedom. Antithetical to such values was what SDS regarded as a dehumanized, hierarchical, anti-democratic bureaucracy – a sprawling institution characterized by complaisance and conformity, largely unresponsive to the interests and needs of the American public.

Despite being regarded as the classical organizational concept for efficiency, Max Weber's 'Bureaucratic Ideal' was in need of serious revision by the mid-20th century. And, the New Left wasn't the only intellectual group eager to revise it. In fact, SDS, perhaps without even knowing it, influenced thousands of middle-class students, who carried New Left values into their respective professional fields. The field of public administration was one of those disciplines affected by the principles of the Left.

In Sept of 1968 young public administration students and professors met in Minnowbrook, near Syracuse University for a convention that would serve as a turning point in the theory of public administration. Acknowledging New Left influence, these advocates of a New Public Administration, as they called it, were

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more interested in social equity, democratic procedure, and a responsive bureaucracy than traditional bureaucratic values of efficiency, economy and rationality.

Using New Public Administration as an example, I argue that SDS would have been bettered served had it remained focused on the campuses, its original base-camp, as well as on the young middle-class residents of the university. This is where they had significant, if unrealized, success transforming those students going into fields of social science, including Public Administration. Having internalized many of the values the New Left was espousing on campuses across the nation, these Public Administration students entered the field as professors or practitioners – a sizeable group armed with not only New Left rhetoric, but New Left values, ready to reform the subject of their study and work.

Acknowledgments

The writing of a Thesis is no small undertaking. It requires the support and help of others, who I would like to recognize now.

Special thanks are extended foremost to my husband, Daniel Cook, for his unwavering support and sacrifice during the two years of my graduate program. His comfort, care and encouragement kept me focused, dedicated and enthusiastic throughout the process as a whole, while his hard work and income made this opportunity for higher education possible.

I would also like to thank Dr. Michael D. Gambone for introducing me to the New Left and guiding me through it for the past several years. Without his inspiration, assistance and feedback, I may have easily lost initiative and direction. Thank you for always going above and beyond what was required or even expected. You are a true teacher and friend.

I am also grateful for the opportunities provided to me as a graduate assistant in the Political Science and History departments. In particular, the History department faculty and staff were instrumental with their support and feedback during the writing of certain segments of the Thesis project.

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Chapter One

The Road to Minnowbrook

Introduction

In September 1968, about thirty-five young people gathered at the

Minnowbrook Convention site, a remote cabin near Syracuse University, to discuss

social issues and forge essentially a "new" ideology. After deciding to abstain from a

formal conventional style, including panels and meetings, participants broke up into

smaller groups to exchange ideas in an informal atmosphere. Much of the discussion

centered on the topic of bureaucracy and its relevance in a time of turbulence.

Conferees read papers with themes including decentralization, participation,

democratic values, and social equity, while dialogue centered on the need to make

bureaucracy more responsive to public needs, including not only elitist self-interests,

but those of minorities and the marginalized poor. As one organizer observed, if the

subject of efficiency or economy was mentioned, it was done only in passing.[1]

At first glance, a meeting like that described above may easily be mistaken for

a New Left gathering or convention of the Students for a Democratic Society, a

radical group of young people who were passionately committed to social justice and

democratic values. Certainly such SDS conferences were commonplace throughout

the 1960's. However, on this occasion, the participants at Minnowbrook were not

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[1] Frank Marini. *Toward a New Public Administration*, (Scranton: Chandler Publishing Company, 1971), xvi.

radical students per se, but were young assistant professors, scholars and practitioners in the field of public administration. In fact, the meeting was a public administration conference, initiated and organized largely by Dwight Waldo in order to give his younger colleagues a chance to discuss issues of importance to them. What the so called "Minnowbrook perspective" produced was an acknowledged departure from traditional bureaucratic and organizational theory into something participants and subsequent literature deemed a "New Public Administration".[2]

The Minnowbrook Perspective's resemblance to New Left principles and values seems remarkable, and indeed, it was not lost on those advocating the "New Public Administration". As organizer and reporter Frank Marini explains,

"The manner and language with which we reminded one another of these real problems and the frequent insistence that public administrators, for all of their highly developed skill and professionalism, were not doing much to help the starving and the repressed of our society were probably what caused some members of the conference to characterize it as a New Left caucus in action."[3]

The fact that participants at Minnowbrook expressed very similar values and principles as those professed by the Students for a Democratic Society and other New Left organizations may not seem as surprising when one considers the environment from where these young professors had just emerged. Most of the Minnowbrook

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[2] For more on the Minnowbrook perspective, see H. George Frederickson. *New Public Administration* (University of Alabama Press, 1980).
[3] Marini, 5.

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conferees were freshly sprung from major universities across the nation, including U.
C. Berkeley and U.C. Southern California, the University of Chicago, and the
University of Wisconsin, where the New Left agenda was certainly well advertised.

Although the Students for a Democratic Society fashioned itself as a multi-
issue organization, it focused primarily on humanistic and democratic values,
stressing the need for a more participative, community-based society at all levels.
The desire of SDS to move principles into practice and policy resulted in their push to
reform institutions such as the university and government bureaucracy, which, for
them, represented outdated and even repressive institutions. Perhaps because of
disagreement among SDS members about how best to advance their program and
reform society, the radical organization ended up concentrating on both campus and
local community - the university administration as well as the federal government.
However, as the decade progressed, results and reforms in both camps were not as
immediate and fundamental as SDS had demanded.

The dominant power structure and bureaucratic institutions of American
society proved more resistant to change than the young radicals had imagined.
Consequently, the leadership of Students for a Democratic Society became less
willing to wait for incremental reforms, and instead began to promote a more
revolutionary approach to social, political and economic problem-solving. Anything
less than a total revolutionary change in the social and political institutions of society
was deemed insufficient and even a failure on behalf of radical elements to make
significant changes in America.

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By the late 60's and early 70's, many New Left critics and even participants were reporting the death knoll of the movement that had seemed so promising in its early reformist days. Since the Students for a Democratic Society had failed to create an all out revolution, former participants began to consider their efforts futile. They refused to acknowledge the reforms they did manage to accomplish. And, indeed, the influence of the New Left was more significant than they gave themselves credit. Their influence was felt strongly on campuses across the nation, and by those who internalized New Left values while earning degrees in the social sciences.

In the 1960's, universities witnessed not only a surge in enrollment, but a surge in those entering fields of the social sciences – deemed by many as more relevant for the times than those fields and occupations geared toward the "pure" sciences. All of these would-be social scientists had to earn their way through academe, which was a hotbed of New Left activity in the 1960's. Although not all students subscribed to New Left ideology, a significant portion of the student body considered themselves radicals by late decade.

This implies that the New Left was more successful than they thought at using moral suasion to change the ideas, values and consciousness of their generation. While SDS was busy trying to first reform and later revolutionize the ideas, values and lifestyles of the older generation in the established power structure, they failed to recognize the import of their influence on the middle-class student body, which would become the power structure of tomorrow.

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These students were graduating in the late sixties and early seventies and moving into professional fields, including public administration. However, for all the SDS rhetoric about grass-roots organizing and building an insurgency from the bottom-up, much of their effort focused on either the top echelons of the establishment or the very poor and marginalized segments of society. Eschewing the significance that the middle-class elements of their generation could have on society in the future, the New Left failed to recognize the fact that they had transformed a large segment of the American population, who would take their values into the scholarship of bureaucratic theory, the practice and program of bureaucracy, and into the classroom of bureaucratic studies, teaching a new crop of students to share their values and to continue to reform society.

In this vein, the efforts of those calling themselves part of a New Public Administration represent a tremendous success for New Left influence. Through moral suasion, the Students for a Democratic Society and other humanistic, democratic organizations of the New Left had, perhaps unknowingly, transformed a new generation of middle-class scholars, professors, and practitioners to reform society through the social sciences. As far as those in the New Public Administration were concerned, the social sciences, including bureaucratic, organizational and behavioral theory, were in dire need of revision.

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Public Administration Literature Review

The study of public administration is a relatively new one - in the 1960's, its literature had only been developed for about 50 years, beginning in America's 19th and early 20th century industrial era. In fact, most bureaucratic and organizational theorists trace the origins of their field to the now classic notions of Max Weber, who realized that industrialization in the Western world had launched bureaucratic organization to the forefront of socio-political importance. His Bureaucratic Ideal, which shall be discussed below, became the premier conceptual tool for comparing organizational reality. It also became a model for bureaucratic structure and practice, especially in the first half of the 20th century. In other words, efficiency and economy became the normative theory that most industrial and public institutions organized around.[4] However, as future theorists would argue, Weber's ideal failed to consider bureaucratic dysfunctions or the human component of organization. It also failed to challenge assumptions that based organizational values on economy and efficiency.

Frederick Taylor succeeded in moving theoretical focus into the factory, studying employee motivation and management style. However, he too was strictly tied to a belief in the primacy of efficient production. Taylor's time and motion studies became incredibly popular in both private and public organizations seeking precision and control over worker speed and output. Taylor, like Weber, believed that hierarchy, specialization and impersonality were of vital importance to industrial

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[4] Frank McGee, "Phenomenological Administration: A New Reality," in Marini, 167.

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organizational health and production. However, Taylor, with what became known as "scientific management", conducted his business as if employees were merely cogs in the organizational machine. Subscribing very strongly to the concept of private income, he considered working wage the only variable relevant to the motivation and happiness of employees.[5]

Both Weber and Taylor represent Classic Theory in Public Administration literature. Developed during a period of intense industrialization, classic notions of organization based their assumptions on the need for efficiency, economy and rationalization in the private sector. Progressive reform movements of the late 19th and early 20th centuries helped guarantee that public administration literature and practice also centered on values of rationalism, impersonality and efficiency. The 1881 assassination of President Garfield by a disgruntled would-be recipient of a patronage position in the public sector set off a wave of protest among reformers. Such fervor pressured the government to dismantle the patronage system and replace it with a more fair, equitable and impartial means of hiring and promoting public servants.

Consequently, the Civil Service Reform (Pendelton) Act of 1883 included provisions for merit recruitment, impersonality of rules and relationships to prevent arbitrariness and favoritism, and rationalized procedure for decision-making and efficiency to curtail government corruption. It also rested firmly on the politics-administration dichotomy, which reduced civil servants to the realm of administration

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[5] Nicos P. Mouzelis. *Organisation and Bureaucracy: An Analysis of Modern Theories* (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1967).

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and implementation only. As we shall see below, however, the very reforms that Progressives fought hard to secure at the turn of the century would be called into question by reformers of the 1960's.[6]

In the 1930's and 40's, the Hawthorne experiments and the subsequent Human-Relations School began to seriously challenge Classic and Taylorian assumptions about worker motivation and satisfaction. Conducted at Western Electric by a team of psychologists and sociologists in 1938, the Hawthorne project experimented with everything from lighting conditions, management style, and interpersonal dynamics to determine which types of working environment best enhanced satisfaction and motivation in employees. These studies inspired a generation of human relationists, who began to implement the research in first the private, then the public sector.

Human-relations theory posed a serious challenge to the narrow structural assumptions of Weber and Taylor. A worker's wage, they contended, was certainly not the only factor in determining employee satisfaction or motivation. A comfortable working environment, interpersonal relations with both manager and co-worker, benefits, autonomy, and participation were also considered in the equation for the first time. Managers were encouraged to consider the whole employee - his/her goals, values, and personality - in order to motivate effectively. Human relations theorists such as McGregor, Argyris, Likert and Maslow considered the organization an informal social system, not only a rational economic system. However, this school

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[6] Michael E. Milakovich and George J. Gordon. *Public Administration in America*, 7th ed. (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth /Thomas Learning, 2001), 289-294.

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of thought, although more in tune with the human side of enterprise, also failed to reconsider the traditional goals of organization. Human relationists as well as organizational behavioralists and decision-theory advocates based their writings on the tried and true normative notions of public administration. Efficiency and economy as well as beliefs in rationalism and science still carried the day.

The Minnowbrook Perspective

By the early to mid-sixties, theorists first began to challenge the traditional assumptions of bureaucratic theory and practice. For many, the human-relations school, although an important stride away from the mechanical notions of Taylorism, was merely a means (employee motivation and satisfaction) to an end (employee efficiency and production). Public administrationsts began to consider alternative forms of organizational structure, management, and the role of administrators. Some began to proffer truly humanist and democratic values or give earlier ideas along these lines more serious thought. Others began to consider, not only the internal health of the organization, but also the success of bureaucracy in relation to its environment and clientele. However, for most bureaucratic and organizational theorists, it was incredibly difficult to separate administrative theory from efficiency and economy.

Enter new public administration. By 1968, students, scholars and practitioners of bureaucracy seemed ready for a radically new way of thinking and

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practice in administration. Advocates of the new public administration school of

thought considered their theory "the most radical version of modern public

administration because it identifies dominant values and seeks government means by

which these values can be effectuated."[7] These values included participation, social

equity, responsiveness and responsibility, democracy and even counter-bureaucratic

notions such as decentralization and devolution.They not only considered employee

needs and satisfaction, but also the needs of the public. "New Public

Administration's commitment to responsiveness and social equity", stated a

Minnowbrook organizer, "implies participation, both internally (employees) and

externally (citizens). Thus, citizen participation, neighborhood control,

decentralization and democratic work environments are standard themes in new

public administration."[8]

What was "new" about those meeting in Minnowbrook, NY? For those

advocating the Minnowbrook perspective, their values and goals represented a radical

break from traditional notions concerning public administration theory and practice.

If they built upon some of the foundations of the human-relations, the new public

administrationists certainly took the argument to a higher level, even criticizing

human relationists for their failure to regard self-actualization for its own sake instead

of as a means to efficient organization. As one contributor at Minnowbrook offered,

"Anti-bureaucratic theorists such as McGregor, Likert, and Argyris attack the rational

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[7] H. George Frederickson. *New Public Administration*. (Alabama, The University of Alabama Press, 1980), 32.
[8] Ibid, 12.

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structure of bureaucracy and call for greater employee participation in decisions. Yet, it is fairly clear that they intend that participation chiefly in decisions concerning implementation of primary organization goals rather than in the evalutation and redefinition of such goals."[9] New public administrationists' commitment to humanist and democratic values, as well as a more socially equitable and thus relevant bureaucratic environment was like nothing the discipline and literature had ever reflected.

Many at Minnowbrook even challenged the mainstay goals of classic bureaucratic theory – goals of efficiency and economy were suspect if they weren't evaluated in terms of their social relevance.[10] In fact, they questioned almost every facet of Weber's Bureaucratic Ideal, which had been hailed as the standard of bureaucratic theory for decades. Centralization had its place, but decentralization was offered as a viable alternative to enhance employee and client participation in policy-making. Flatter-hierarchies seemed a better idea. Impersonality was also eschewed for a more personal approach in dealing with co-workers and clientele. Private wages were not regarded as sufficient reward for administrators. Instead, self-actualization, participation and autonomy were trumpeted. According to H. George Frederickson, "Public administration appears to be in a transitory state, between a classic need to be organized, predictable, productive and stable on the one hand, and to be responsive,

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[9] Philip S. Kronenberg, "The Scientific and Moral Authority of Empirical Theory of Public Administration," in Marini, 216.
[10] Michael M. Harmon, "Normative Theory and Public Administration: Some Suggestions for a Redefinition of Administrative Responsibility," in Frank Marini, 175.

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adaptive, and changeable on the other."[11] Even the nearly century-old belief in

science was questioned at Minnowbrook. "Fears that science may be getting out of

control are especially pronounced where social science is concerned".[12]

For new public administration, the break was not only with the dominant

literature in the field over the past fifty years, but also with the Progressive reform

movements that had preceded it. These reforms were certainly important for those at

the turn of the century, and they remained guiding principles and a firm foundation

for public administration for decades. However, in the 1960's, radical Leftists

reformers as well as the new public administrationists believed that responsiveness to

a rapidly changing environment suffered when strangled by the rational and

impersonal reforms of the past. Those turn of the century attempts to make

bureaucracy less corruptive, more efficient had developed its own dysfunctions.

Many administrators displaced organizational goals for the impersonal and rational

rules that should have served as a means to an end. Therefore, red tape, stagnancy,

inefficiency, and even closed-system isolation were the unintended by-products of

Progressive reforms.

New Public Administrationists also advocated a wider role for practitioners in

the public sector. Instead of the strict politics-administration dichotomy of earlier

generations, administrators in the post-industrial world were most certainly involved

in politics. Minnowbrook participant Bob Zimring echoed the opinions of many of

his colleagues when stating that, "The new public administration should be concerned

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[11] Frederickson, 50.
[12] Kronenberg, in Marini, 213.

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with making the public bureaucracy an instrument for achieving social justice and equality."[13] Instead of just blindly implementing directives from above, "public administrators should act as agents of change."[14]

There was one theorist in the field to whom the young Minnowbrook advocates gave some credit for his commitment to democratic change in public administration. Warren Bennis had been advocating many of the same principles, values and reforms in the early to mid 60's that the new public administrationists had seized upon by 1968. An ardent advocate of decentralization and participation, Bennis argued that democratic organization was not only necessary but "inevitable" if organizations expected to survive an era of rapid change in technology, knowledge, and social pressures.[15] In his groundbreaking volume *Changing Organizations* (also known as *Beyond Bureaucracy*), Bennis advanced ideas about decentralization and participation, challenged the classic theories of Weber, Taylor, and offered an alternative institutional framework in his model of organizational "planned change", requiring administrators as "change-agents" to work closely with clientele.[16] Minnowbrook contributor Larry Kirkhart even called Bennis "exceptional because he is trying to develop an alternative to the bureaucratic model."[17]

However, although Bennis seemed a champion of many of the humanist and democratic goals of a younger generation, he still made his argument in terms of

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[13] Bob Zimring, "Empirical Theory and the New Public Administration," in Marini, 231.
[14] Frank Marini, 12.
[15] Warren Bennis. *Beyond Bureaucracy: Essays on the Development and Evolution of Human Organization.* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1966), 16-20.
[16] Bennis, 81.
[17] Larry Kirkhart, "Toward a Theory of Public Administration," in Marini, 158.

efficiency, effectiveness and organizational survivability. According to Bennis, "democracy has been so widely embraced not because of some vague yearning for human rights, but because under certain conditions, it is a more efficient form of social organization."[18] He believed that democracy in organizations was inevitable because it worked best in a rapidly changing social environment. His work aimed to make notions of democracy practical and operational in the bureaucratic world.

In 1966, around the same time Bennis was writing about his democratic alternative to centralized, hierarchical organization, a group of young students and former students was experimenting with its own institutional alternatives to bureaucracy. This band of New Left activists, fed up with tired theory and intellectual discourse, had taken to the ghettos of several American cities to forge their own ideology and practice. The Economic Research and Action Projects and the young people who participated in this socio-political experiment would become increasingly influential on the field of public administration by decade's end.

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[18] Bennis, 17.

Chapter Two

Resisting the Bureaucratic Ideal: SDS and

their Economic Research and Action Projects

By the time Max Weber set out to construct his Ideal Types, the world was
thoroughly bureaucratized. The process began with the rise of the absolute monarchs
in Western Europe; and, although primitive in terms of rationalization, it was enough
to upset the feudal order and more than a few former nobles. Exported to the new
continent, it soon became a thorn in the sides of liberal capitalists who emerged in the
American economic and political system. It became a target for democratic
revolutions in the 18th century and the Jacksonians in the nineteenth. And, yet by the
early 1900s– Weber's time – it had become an undeniable and seemingly unalterable
fact of industrial political, economic and social life. Bureaucracy had become the
organizational form of choice.[19]

Struck by the rise of bureaucracy in the western world, social scientists began
to consider the phenomenon as one of great socio-political interest. However,
according to Henry Jacoby, "Max Weber was the first to consider bureaucracy as *the*
problem of industrial society", and the first to make it a distinct subject of

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[19] Henry Jacoby, *The Bureaucratization of the World* (Berkeley: University of California
Press, 1973), 9-83.

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sociological analysis.[20] With his neo-Kantian approach to the social sciences, Weber

constructed ideal types as abstract conceptualizations through which concrete reality

could be studied.[21] Since Weber considered efficiency as the characteristic toward

which all modern administrative apparatuses strive, the bureaucratic ideal would be

one that combined those "prominent and consequential features" most compatible for

the most rational and efficient functioning of bureaucracy.[22] Thus Weber's

bureaucratic ideal would demonstrate a high degree of specialization, a hierarchical

authority structure with limited areas of command and responsibility, impersonality

of rules and of relationships between organizational members, recruitment based on

merit, and a differentiation between private and public income.[23]

There is little doubt that Weber admired the rationality of bureaucracy,

considering it the most efficient form of organization. However, he also feared

bureaucracy as a means of domination and as a threat to democratic institutions. On

the one hand, bureaucracy's impersonal and rationalized rules as well as its deference

to rationalized law serve to protect individual freedom and dignity from arbitrary,

capricious and patriarchal decision-making. In fact, revolutionaries of the 18th

century regarded the rationalization of law as a prerequisite for indiscriminate rights

[20] Ibid, 147.

[21] Susan Hekman, *Weber, the Ideal Type, and Contemporary Social Theory* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983), 20.

[22] Max Weber, *On Law in Economy and Society*, ed. Max Rheinstein (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1967), 266.

[23] Nicos P. Mouzelis, *Organisation and Bureaucracy: An Analysis of Modern Theories* (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1967), 39.

and entitlements.[24] On the other hand, however, a sprawling and powerful bureaucracy can prove detrimental to democracy. Insulated from accountability, public scrutiny and participation, bureaucracy has often been regarded as a cold, distant and formidable Leviathan, controlling and alienating its subjects with impersonality and precision. Weber realized this as did Robert Michels who remarked that "democratic social action is only possible through bureaucratic organization, and bureaucratic organization is destructive of democratic values."[25]

Such personal ambivalence toward bureaucracy parallels that found in society as a whole. Throughout history, bureaucratic organization has always had its supporters and its critics. In the American 1950's this was still true. By that time, capitalists had made their peace with state administration, and bureaucracy was everywhere, from big business down to church. Most people accepted the bureaucratic ideal as well as the bureaucratic mindset that would allow them to become organizational men, advancing in a society dedicated to efficiency for the realization of affluence.

But, there *were* critics, warning against bureaucratic fallout and dysfunction. For William Whyte it was conformity, for Robert A. Nisbet – alienation, and for maverick sociologist C. Wright Mills it was the power elite, a "secular substitute for

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[24] Kathi Friedman, *Legitimation of Social Rights and the Western Welfare State: A Weberian Perspective* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1981), 50-63.

[25] Michael Crozier, *The Bureaucratic Phenomenon* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1964), 176.

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the will of God", dominating the apathetic, and in some cases helpless masses.[26]

Near the end of his life, Mills wrote an essay addressed to the future radicals he

hoped would organize in opposition to society's bureaucratized system of elites -

students. His "Letter to the New Left" did not fall on deaf ears.

In 1960, the League for Industrial Democracy's student organization changed

it name to Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), marking a symbolic break with

their Old Left tradition to match the ideological break that was emerging. The New

Deal, Cold War and the Red Scare had diluted much of the Old Left's radical zeal by

the 1950's. Furthermore, the Communist Party's betrayal of Marxist intent had left

many socialist organizations staunchly anti-Communist, and, consequently, closer

allies than enemies of the American Cold War consensus. These developments

proved to create a noticeable void on the Left that would be filled by the new issues

and approaches of the young radicals beginning to stir on campuses and in

organizations such as the Students for a Democratic Society.[27]

As their Constitution states, the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) was

"an association of young people on the left", who felt the "urgency to put forth a

radical, democratic program whose methods embody the democratic vision."[28]   This

"democratic vision" was addressed on multiple issues, including the arms race, the

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[26] William Whyte Jr, *The Organization Man* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1956); Robert A. Nisbet, *The Quest for Community* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1953); C. Wright Mills, *The Power Elite* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956).
    [27] SDS was officially affiliated with the LID until 1966, when the parent organization decided to stop funding the increasingly radical group. For more about SDS' relationship to the LID, see Kirkpatrick Sale, *SDS* (New York: Vintage Books, 1973).
    [28] The Students for a Democratic Society "Constitution," *New Left Notes*, Vol. 1 No. 43 (Nov. 11, 1966): 2.

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civil rights movement, public political apathy, poverty, campus life and the sprawling bureaucracy. Unlike their Old Left parentage, the SDS was more likely to picket with Southern blacks than with labor unions, more likely to oppose the Cold War than support it, more likely to read Mills than Marx, and more likely to subscribe to the "democratic ideal" than the "bureaucratic ideal". However, they were also *less likely* to have a solid and comprehensive ideology – a fact that would plague their attempts to put principles into practice. Instead, the SDS chose to operate along the guiding principle of "participatory democracy", which was presented as the main theme in their defining 1962 document, The Port Huron Statement.

Participatory democracy rested on the "two central aims" outlined in the Port Huron Statement: "that the individual share in those social decisions determining the quality and direction of his life" and "that society be organized to encourage independence in men and provide the media for their common participation."[29] Such principles were broad enough to resonate with a growing number of SDS members, yet too vague to serve as theory for social change. As historian James Miller states, participatory democracy's elasticity was also a cause of its instability.[30]

Instead of sound theory, participatory democracy would remain a guiding principle for direct action, a litmus test for challenging established assumptions, and a defining concept for SDS values. And, at this time, it was values that SDS concerned itself with most. Regarding men as "infinitely precious and possessed of unfulfilled

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[29] "The Port Huron Statement," 1962, http://coursesa.matrix.msu.edu/~hst306/documents/juron.html.
[30] James Miller, *Democracy is in the Streets* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987), 142.

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capacities for reason, freedom, and love," SDS resented the institutional manipulation it recognized in schools, corporations and government.[31] Their aim was to reduce apathy and alienation by reasserting community and participation.

With values like these, it comes as no surprise that SDS rejected a bureaucratic framework built on impersonality, isolation, centralization, and cold rationality. In fact, much in the early 1960's New Left literature resembles that being offered by human relation theorists. In the Port Huron Statement, the Students for a Democratic Society stated that "work should involve incentives worthier than money or survival. It should be educative, not stultifying; creative, not mechanical; self-directed, not manipulated."[32] They also believed that "the allocation of resources must be based on social needs. A truly "public sector" must be established, and its nature debated and planned."[33] This included opening up the long closed system of bureaucracy to citizen participation and scrutiny. With government's executive branch taking on more social responsibility since the New Deal, such participation and scrutiny seemed necessary in order to maintain a democratic system.

However much they might sound like human relationists, those in SDS were more interested in humanism and values for their own sake rather than as a facilitator of efficient organization. The human relations school was even referenced in the Port Huron Statement – "the use of modern social science as a manipulative tool reveals itself in the human relations consultants, who introduce trivial sops to give laborers

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[31] The Port Huron Statement, 3.
[32] Port Huron Statement, 5.
[33] Ibid, 30.

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feelings of participation or belongingness, while actually deluding them in order to further exploit their labor."[34] Certainly, these young activists weren't likely to condone the use of human values as a sacrificial lamb on the altar of efficiency. "American society and culture are thoroughly managed and administered," one contributor to *New Left Notes* claimed in disgust.[35] With "steadfast opposition to bureaucratic coagulation" SDS activists began to ask: "how shall the public sector be made public, and not the arena of ruling bureaucracy?"[36]

Answers to these questions required the search for alternatives to established institutional practice. By 1963, SDS was eager to implement such alternatives in an effort to put principles into practice, prefigure a utopian society[37], build theory based on experiment, and challenge the liberal establishment to higher ideals of possibility. Without stating it so explicitly, SDS was preparing to resist the 'bureaucratic ideal' in favor of a democratic alternative. As Kirkpatrick Sale writes, "SDS had a subliminal desire to escape from the bureaucratic and programmed world into something explicitly irrational and inefficient."[38]

What SDS needed was an issue from which to launch their democratic experiments and challenge the status quo. This they found in the topic of American poverty, which was just being brought back to the national agenda with publications

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[34] Ibid, 39.
[35] Paul Booth, "Facing the American Leviathan," *New Left Notes*, Vol. 1, No. 33 (September 2, 1966): 1-4.
[36] The Port Huron Statement, 5.
[37] ERAP's attempt to "prefigure" a utopian society is the theme of the following source: Wini Breines, *Community and Organization in the New Left 1962-1968: the Great Refusal* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1989), 6.
[38] Sale, 101.

such as John Kenneth Galbraith's *Affluent Society* and Michael Harrington's *The Other America*. To those in SDS itching to organize, the poverty issue seemed perfect. It combined the opportunity to prove moral fervor, implement participatory democracy, build community, galvanize reform, mobilize a radical constituency, and present an alternative to the bureaucratic welfare structure.[39] In fact, SDS member Richard Flacks considered "a concerted effort to abolish poverty, unemployment, and racial inequality" as a "prelude to the effort to bring into being a participatory democracy."[40]

Some members of SDS, including founder Al Haber, doubted the practicality of moving from campus to ghetto.[41] This difference of opinion among SDS members led to the "Hayden-Haber" debates concerning the direction and organizational thrust of SDS. Tom Hayden favored ghetto organizing because of its opportunity to put principles into action – a chance to try out New Left theory among those most marginalized by the system. Haber, however, believed that getting caught up in the "cult of the ghetto" was essentially "remote from the needs of both students and the nation as a whole."[42] He also feared that, by concentrating resources on the campus and ghetto, SDS would risk "spreading itself too thin."[43]

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[39] It was also an attempt to transcend what C. Wright Mills had labeled the "labor metaphysic" in his "Letter to the New Left", found in Priscilla Long (ed.), *The New Left: A Collection of Essays* (Boston: Extending Horizons Books, 1969), 14.

[40] Richard Flacks. "America and the New Era," found in Massimo Teodori., *The New Left: A Documentary History* (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1969), 172-182.

[41] Al Haber, the intellectual founder of SDS, considered the "cult of the ghetto" both "sick" and impractical. He preferred to build an intellectual base on campus. See James Miller, 190-191.

[42] Sale, 106-107.

[43] Ibid, 107.

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Although the ERAP faction eventually won the vote, the tension between those who favored campus organizing vs. those who favored ghetto organizing remained within SDS. As will be argued below, perhaps SDS could have had better success with middle-class students and future professionals than it did with marginalized poor or even the working-class. Steve Max sums up the argument well:

"We have a special position as people who can affect and attract college and university students with two views in mind: the planting in their minds of seeds of doubt and thought which will bear fruit in their changing attitudes and actions with respect to social issues; the direction of an understandably smaller group of students toward active involvement in social change, after they graduate and throughout their lives. The actual work of social change [i.e., ERAP] must be subordinate to those two goals."[44]

In September 1963, support for community organization was official, as members began to implement a new program they hoped would attack poverty and the system on the basis of democratic ideals. Accordingly, ten cities were chosen as sites for Economic Research and Action Projects (ERAP). With a donation from the United Auto Workers of America, organizers moved into the ghettoes by the following summer.[45]

Largely because of the theoretical and strategic gaps left incomplete, ERAP began and ended in ambivalence. Their first problem concerned goals. While ERAP

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[44] Sale, 129.
[45] Sale, 95-115.

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was being hailed as the answer to all of SDS' dreams, members were still uncertain about what these dreams ultimately meant. Caught between a faith in liberal reform and a burgeoning tendency toward resistance and revolution, ERAP goals ended up reflecting both, however incompatible. Their larger vision, to create working alternatives to established institutions and build insurgencies, implied revolution, while their short-term objectives to demand and win concessions from federal poverty agencies indicated a hope for gradual reform.[46] This attempt to reconcile sweeping vision with realistic objectives remained a major stumbling block in ERAP plans. Never coming close to the ultimate goal of structural change, short-term means and intermediaries became ends themselves.

Viable strategy was another problem. Organizers admittedly realized that they didn't know how to tackle poverty or build alternative institutions. Documents such as *America and the New Era* and *An Interracial Movement of the Poor* had attempted to address the issue of turning participatory democracy into a strategy for social change. In short, they suggested that activists mobilize "new insurgencies"[47] of both black and white poor around issues of jobs, income and an end to automation technology. However, it soon became apparent that this analysis of what the poor wanted was misguided, as they seemed less interested in jobs than in services such as trash pick-up and daycare. This fact precipitated the JOIN (Jobs or Income Now) v. GROIN (Garbage Removal or Income Now) debate within ERAP and SDS. Although the acronyms sound tongue-in-cheek, they reflect deep-seated ambivalence

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[46] James Miller, 150-151.
[47] Richard Flacks, "America and the New Era."

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concerning the issues on which to mobilize and radicalize the poor. Their

commitment to "Let the People Decide" was a matter of pragmatics as much as it was

principle.[48]

Despite their difficulties, ERAP organizers *were* able to organizationally resist

the Bureaucratic Ideal on all fronts. According to SDS historian Wini Breines, "on

any scale one could devise, new leftists would rate very low in inclination toward

bureaucracy."[49] In fact, for each of Weber's ideal characteristics, ERAP represented

the opposite, although the maintenance of this alternative generated its own

dysfunctions. Dashing hopes to the contrary[50], the trade-off for a lack of

bureaucratization was indeed a lack efficiency and effectiveness.

Specialization: While SDS as a whole grappled with how to remain true to its

democratic ideals and yet administer as a growing national organization[51], ERAP was

free to experiment with participatory democracy at will. Considering it a necessary

complement to democratic organization, ERAP projects were organized to enhance

egalitarian, communal living.[52] In fact, those writing the Port Huron Statement

believed that "the specialization of human activity leaves little room for sweeping

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[48] JOIN, the Chicago ERAP, proved successful, lasting longer than any project, perhaps even NCUP (Newark). For more about JOIN, see the ERAP report in *New Left Notes*, Vol. 1 No. 32. (August 24, 1966): 7-9.

[49] Wini Breines, 73.

[50] Advocates of participatory democracy claimed it enhanced the long term efficiency or organizations. Essays regarding participatory democracy in theory and practice can be found in the following source: George C. Bennello and Dimitrios Roussopoulos (eds.). *The Case for Participatory Democracy: Some Prospects for a Radical Society* (New York: Grossman Publishers, 1971).

[51] SDS always struggled with organizational dilemmas stemming from the desire to stay true to its ideals and the desire to build a national movement. Their attempts to resist bureaucracy can be read about in Kirkpatrick Sale's *SDS* and Wini Breines' *Community and Organization*.

[52] Richard Ellis, *The Dark Side of the Left: Illiberal Egalitarianism in America* (Laurence: University of Kansas Press, 1998), 174-190.

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thought."[53] Therefore, jobs were held in common as was food and living space. This created its own tensions, and, as Richard Rothstein notes, it is too incommensurable to know how much the pressures of communal living and lack of privacy lead to personality differences and other obstacles to goal achievement.[54]

Hierarchical authority: In an effort to prevent centralization and top-down organization, ERAP participants discouraged leadership and dismantled hierarchy. Instead, decentralization became an obsession, everyone was encouraged to participate and decisions were made by consensus.[55] These procedural ideals, however, also proved to limit progress. Getting the poor to attend meetings was an arduous task in itself, while getting neighborhood residents to come to a consensus about an issue on which to take action was next to impossible. It didn't help that the cravings for consensus guaranteed that meetings would be long and demanding. Cleveland organizer, Sharon Jeffrey remarked: "Freedom is an endless meeting."[56] Whether this comment is one of exaltation or exasperation is difficult to discern.

A further attempt to decentralize resulted in the1965 abolition of the ERAP central office. Of course, this also destroyed any sense of communication and coordination between projects, which lead to isolation and the belief of each project that it held the burden of solving the nation's problems rested on them alone.[57]

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[53] Port Huron Statement, 3.

[54] Richard Rothstein, "Evolution of ERAP Organizers," found in Priscilla Long (ed.).

[55] Despite the fact that some projects remained lead by charismatic men (JOIN and NCUP), the skills of women ERAP organizers were very important in connecting with welfare mothers. For more about the impact of women in ERAP, see Sara Evans, *Personal Politics: The Roots of Women's Liberation in the Civil Rights Movement and the New Left* (New York: Alfred A Knopf Inc., 1979).

[56] James Miller, 215.

[57] Sale, 139-141.

Impersonality: For ERAP, the reassertion of the personal in human relationships was of vital importance to the moral fabric of democratic institutions, whether in community, workplace, university or state. In fact, their whole grass-roots campaign in urban neighborhoods was designed around the notion that the "personal is political". In other words, individual hopes and desires could and should be translated into policy.

But, as with their other ideals, ERAP's personal touch was also problematic. Limited by their principles, ERAP organizers were hesitant to push issues and thus risk being perceived as manipulators. And, since many of the poor they encountered were at sea with policy demands and political processes, a coherent and informed strategy for change was never put forth. Furthermore, the tendency of the poor to blame themselves instead of institutions for their condition made ERAP efforts to link the personal with the political a moot point.

Merit recruitment and private income: Unlike bureaucratic merit recruitment, ERAP operated on moral recruitment, as anyone dedicated to true democratic ideals was welcomed to help organize in the community projects. And, it must be said, ERAP was supplied with some of this nation's most committed and altruistic citizens, who also happened to be volunteers. In fact, they were surviving on the courtesy of private donations, divided among several projects for food and shelter. Rationing of food became a contest between projects, and a line item for entertainment purposes didn't exist. This lack of resources precluded the possibility of ERAP attacking

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poverty materially. They would still need to petition government bureaucracy for that.

But, if still dependent on government handouts, how could organizers build institutional alternatives? And, if established institutions proved more resistant to change than hereto imagined, how could the unemployed, who were without access to the levers of the capitalist machine, demand more? In the end, ERAP projects gained concrete concessions in only a few instances, although their overall impact would be difficult to evaluate. Such lack of progress certainly diluted earlier optimism about changing the world through liberal reform. Consequently, frustrated ERAP participants increasingly became more cynical and revolutionary.[58] By 1967 most ERAP projects were abandoned, and the war in Vietnam became the new issue on which to confront the government.[59]

Although ERAP may have resisted bureaucratization, SDS as a whole did not fare so well. According to Kirkpatrick Sale, "SDS, almost without even thinking of it became an organization of officers at the top and bureaucratic administrators below."[60] An influx in SDS membership by mid-decade brought with it a "new breed" of radicals, hailing mostly from the mid-west, and dedicated to a new SDS organized around "prairie power".

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[58] Richard Rothstein, "Evolution of ERAP Organizers." SDS also underwent an evolution toward revolutionary, Marxist ideology, and violence.

[59] Actually, ERAP ceased to have much influence after 1965. Only JOIN (Chicago) and NCUP (Newark) saw 1967. For a good first hand account of the Newark ERAP, see Tom Hayden, *Reunion: A Memoir* (New York: Random House, 1988).

[60] Sale, 75.

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These students, oftentimes younger and less intellectual than the Old Guard founders of SDS, were much more serious about their distrust of leadership, centralization and top-down organization. They began to organize SDS according to strict anti-bureaucratic principles, which meant that administrative tasks within the organization suffered. Chapters were forming themselves across the nation without national SDS even knowing about them. Requests from grass-roots chapters for SDS literature and guidance weren't granted. As Sale states, "forceful energies in the organization were flowing from the bottom-up"; however, these forces were being largely ignored and wasted.[61]

As the decade progressed, SDS commitment to reform waned while its commitment to revolutionary change waxed. Consequently, many of those in SDS opposed to national organization efforts and centralization began to modify their arguments in order to make revolution more operational. The successful infiltration of the Progressive Labor Party into SDS brought with it more revolutionary rhetoric and centralized organization. Such infiltration precipitated serious factionalism within SDS between the PL and those remaining in SDS who organized around RYM (Revolutionary Youth Movement) – a much more violent and less democratic faction than that of earlier SDS. Although these two factions disagreed bitterly over the direction of SDS (which would eventually tear SDS apart by decade's end), they both agreed that nothing less than revolutionary and fundamental change in the system would satisfy their desires.

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[61] Sale, 123.

This evolution can be analyzed along lines of SDS' growing disillusionment with liberal rhetoric.[62] From its inception, SDS had criticized the manipulation of the state and the lack of comprehensive and democratic programs for civil rights and social rights.[63] Despite such criticisms, ERAP organizers in 1963 still hoped to influence liberals to higher ideals, thus demonstrating a latent faith in liberal reform. However, SDS became more disillusioned with liberal social tokenism and foreign militarism as the decade progressed. Also, their maturing structural analysis of American problems and the discovery of corporate liberalism broke their liberal hearts.[64] By mid-decade, the earlier optimism of SDS was replaced by staunch bitterness toward a system they could no longer stomach.

According to Alan Adelson, "ERAP was the last try SDS made to work with liberalism".[65] However, even ERAP organizers increasingly questioned the possibility of modifying liberals or the value of seeking local liberal allies in their quest to end poverty.[66] In fact, anything liberals attempted was now regarded as insufficient, misguided and compromised.[67] SDS member Todd Gitlin considered the welfare establishment "irrelevant at best and inimical at worst to the standard of

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[62] Richard Rothstein.

[63] Such criticisms were seen as early as 1962 in the Port Huron Statement.

[64] SDS member Carl Oglesby delivered a speech in October 1965 that clearly illustrates the growing disillusionment of SDS toward liberalism. Defending his anti-American sounding speech, Calvert exclaimed: "Don't blame me for that. Blame those who mouthed my liberal values and broke my American heart." Carl Oglesby, "Trapped in a System," found in Massimo Teodori, 182-188.

[65] Alan Adelson, *SDS* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1972), 211.

[66] See "Working with Liberal Organizations." *New Left Notes*, Vol. 1, No. 32. (Aug 24, 1966): 3.

[67] This attitude was prevalent in SDS in general; however, there were sects within SDS which maintained faith in electoral politics. Consequently, many students went "Part of the Way with LBJ" in 1964, while others got "Clean for Gene" in 1968.

democracy".[68]   Johnson's 1964 declaration of an "unconditional war on poverty"[69]

and the subsequent programs of the Economic Opportunity Act were seen not as a

victory for New Left influence, but as a co-optation of New Left practice. Asking "Is

the Great Society Just a Barbecue?," Richard Flacks asserted that "liberal corporatism

tends toward the *co-optation* of dissent and reform rather than their suppression."[70]

The fiercest charges of co-optation were directed at the administration's

attempt to create "maximum feasible participation" of poor residents in federally

implemented, yet locally situated community action programs. Influenced by many

of the same social theory structuralists as SDS, these community action programs,

headed by the Office of Economic Opportunity, represented the federal government's

most innovative and ambitious attempt to ameliorate, even eradicate, poverty through

increased community participation of the poor.[71]

Unlike the Economic Research and Action Projects of SDS, the Office of

Economic Opportunity ultimately sought to strengthen, not resist, the bureaucratic

ideal, albeit in a new way. In fact, federal advisors for the War on Poverty programs

were specifically interested in reforming local welfare agencies and local officials,

whose patrimonial, discretionary and even arbitrary practices were regarded as

dangerously removed from bureaucratic rationality.

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[68] Todd Gitlin, "Power and the Myth of Progress," found in Massimo Teodori, 188-192.
[69] Announced in the State of the Union address, January 8, 1964.
[70] Richard Flacks, "Is the Great Society Just a Barbecue?" found in Massimo Teodori, 192-196.
[71] A great history of America's evolving approach to poverty can be found in the following source: James T. Patterson, *America's Struggle Against Poverty: 1900-1985* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981).

For federal officials, local bureaucratic domination threatened not only to weaken social rights and entitlements, but also to abuse legislative intent and undermine efficiency and effectiveness. Consequently, federally implemented welfare programs as well as a string of Supreme Court decisions in the late 1960's should be regarded as attempts to reassert the rationalization of law and the goal of efficiency so cherished in Weber's bureaucratic ideal.[72] In other words, the federal government attempted to reconcile the latest theories regarding community and participation with traditional theories of bureaucratic efficiency and rationalization.

However, this attempt ultimately failed. New, federally mandated rules and regulations designed to reform local agencies only contributed to the red tape and confusion already existing in bureaucracy. Also, the term "maximum feasible participation" proved to be as vague and ambiguous as participatory democracy had been for SDS. Met with great misunderstanding[73], government conservatives and moderates viewed it as too progressive, while radicals criticized it for being too timid - "encouraging the *forms* of participation without its substance".[74] To SDS, it represented little more than corporate liberal compromise.

The OEO concept of participation, like most public policy, *was* compromised. Not wanting to alienate liberal local officials, or interest groups, the OEO operationalized 'maximum feasible participation' with the rule of thirds,

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[72] Kathi Friedman, *Legitimation of Social Rights and the Western Welfare State: A Weberian Perspective* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1981).

[73] Daniel P. Moynihan, *Maximum Feasible Misunderstanding: Community Action in the War on Poverty* (New York: The Free Press, 1969), 90.

[74] "On Organizing the Poor in America," *New Left Notes*, Vol. 1, No. 49. (December 23, 1966): 1-5.

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meaning the poor had to share participatory power with middle class residents and experts, claiming to know best.[75] What constituted 'maximum feasible participation' of the poor was also difficult to define. Consequently, it never reached rationalization to any degree, leaving a grieving gap between what it promised and what it delivered.

In fact, the whole Great Society was a compromise, attempting to satisfy a plurality of interests including big business, state and local officials, federal departments, and radical activists. Johnson's eagerness to capitalize on his 1964 election-day consensus produced what Doris Kearns calls the "politics of haste".[76] Bills were passed and bureaucracies set in motion without adequate knowledge about poverty or viable strategy for change. In the end, the Great Society had something for everyone, yet pleased no one. By the late 1960's, continued controversy and inefficacy lead Johnson to consider his legislative package a political liability.[77] Taking national attention and resources with him, Johnson, turning from domestic to foreign interests, guaranteed a loss for the War on Poverty and liberal progress.

Although ERAP resisted the bureaucratic ideal while the OEO sought to strengthen it, both programs shared some common features, many of which contributed to their shared fate of failure regarding the ultimate goal of poverty elimination. First, both programs operated on the optimistic belief that poverty could

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[75] Patterson, 147. Participation was divided in thirds, each belonging to local officials, local interest groups, and resident poor.

[76] Doris Kearns, *Lyndon Johnson and the American Dream* (New York: Harper & Row, 1976), 216.

[77] Patterson, 147. Local officials, such as Chicago mayor Daley, resented the encroachment on their power; while the Bureau of the Budget allegedly associated the OEO "radicals" with Communist subservience. They began to dismantle the budget of OEO in the late 1960's on grounds of inefficiency.

be eradicated, a notion almost unheard of until the 1950's and 60's. They also

subscribed to the belief that community participation of the poor should be utilized in

poverty programs, and they helped educate the poor about how to relate to and

participate in bureaucratic systems closed to them in the past. However, in the

absence of clear goals, viable strategy and adequate resources of time, knowledge and

money, neither ERAP nor the OEO were equipped to fight poverty effectively.

In fact, the "politics of haste" Kearns uses to describe Johnson's hurried

approach to anti-poverty legislation can also be applied to ERAP. Both the federal

and the radical programs reflected an eagerness for action and results, leaving little

time for informed debate, planning, and strategy. Without sound theory or strategy,

ERAP and the OEO were left with the vague concepts of participatory democracy and

maximum feasible participation to guide policy and action. Compromise provided

another difficulty for both camps – ERAP traded in efficiency for principles, while

the OEO sacrificed principles for practicality and plurality. In short, neither radical

youth nor professional policy-makers knew what they were doing. When positive

results were slow to materialize, both programs were abandoned in disappointment.

The absence of rational and efficient bureaucratic apparatuses has long been

regarded as the Achilles Heel of poverty and welfare programs. And, since ERAP

never sought the bureaucratic ideal, and the OEO never achieved it, the experiences

of these contemporary anti-poverty attempts can certainly not be used to dispute the

argument that bureaucracy is the key to policy efficacy. However, what the OEO and

ERAP do demonstrate is that bureaucratization isn't the only factor in evaluating the

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outcomes of poverty programs. Since social problems are complex and social rights expensive, adequacy of knowledge, time and money, must also be considered in the formula. Just which variables do contribute to successful outcomes remain to be discovered by additional empirical research on the topic.

For, despite failing to reach their ultimate goals, the anti-poverty programs of SDS and the OEO have contributed to our knowledge of social science, making subsequent attempts more informed, and hopefully, more prepared. Certainly, the quest for community as a cure to poverty did not end by 1970, as theorists and activists still grapple with the implications that the 1960's programs have left us. If nothing else, we may find inspiration in their ideals and education in their mistakes.

Chapter Three

Analysis and Evaluation

With SDS' sharp turn from reform efforts to acceptance of nothing less than revolutionary change, the radical organization was asking too much of its government and too much of itself. Repudiating the efforts of Congress and the President's administration was repudiating the democratic political processes in America, which many Americans considered legitimate. Of course, SDS believed that these processes were a mere pretense, serving only elitist special-interests – certainly not representative of the public at large, especially not for those who needed help the most. And, it *is* quite possible that there were those in government who wanted to co-opt New Left rhetoric and practice for their own gain, to dilute revolutionary potential.

However, for the most part, government officials may have seemed resistant to New Left demands because radicals were asking them to deny the established democratic process, founded on the half-century old Progressive reforms in which they strongly believed. The liberals of the 1960's were the descendants of

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Progressives at the turn of the century.[78] They ardently held that rationalism, impersonality for the guarantee of rights, and incremental reforms in a Madisonian process of pluralism were all necessary for the nation's democratic health. Kathi Friedman reminds us that "under modern authority, the protection of citizens is impersonalized. What are protected are rights, and they are protected by way of impersonalized law."[79]

The SDS did recognize the need to work within the democratic process to some extent. Certainly, there were those within SDS, who still held out hope for reform, realignment, moral suasion and democratic channels (Steve Max, Al Haber etc). Also, in ERAP, participants worked to educate the poor on the political options available to them. ERAPers helped the poor petition local governments and schools to respond to their demands and make changes. They helped register the poor to vote, or encouraged them to enter politics for themselves. However, ERAP quickly grew impatient with the slow-moving nature of democratic politics, and liberal broken promises. They too soon turned to a more revolutionary agenda.

SDS and ERAP should have given the process more time. This was difficult for them to do, for sure. Realizing the need for a rapid response to a rapidly changing socio-political and technical environment, SDS wanted to modernize what they considered to be a sluggish system, ill-equipped to respond in the post-industrial age. Certainly, a goal such as this can not be condemned. However, democratic change is

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[78] Hugh Heclo, "The Sixties' False Dawn: Awakenings, Movements, and Postmodern Policymaking," in Brian Balogh, *Integrating the 60's: The Origins, Structures, and Legitimacy of Public Policy in a Turbulent Decade* (University Park: Penn State Press, 1996), 38.
[79] Kathi Friedman, 25.

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a slow-moving process probably best suited for incremental reforms. And, adjusting to a new environment was an arduous task for everyone. It required the transformation of long-established values and structures. It required the changed consciousness of bureaucrats and officials, who had built their career on Progressive values.

When the system did begin to respond, albeit slowly and incrementally to the demands of the era, radicals criticized it for co-opting radical rhetoric or for not moving fast enough. This represents one of SDS' most impractical blunders. "Those who oppose a plan merely on the grounds of the possibility of co-optation merely signal that they are opposed to everything imaginable."[80] No wonder SDS bridled at what they considered a hegemonic system resistant to change. Such are the costs of a plural and democratic society.

In fact, by becoming more revolutionary-minded and giving up on the process of reform, SDS turned their backs on their original principles. By decade's end, with the rise of RYM and the Weathermen, SDS had certainly outgrown the Port Huron's claim to "find violence abhorrent."[81] Certainly, violence and revolutionary force were incredibly removed from participatory democracy. However, by 1969, "SDSers even leveled attacks against old standbys as participatory democracy."[82] In less than ten years, the Port Huron dream was destroyed by its own organization, leading a

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[80] Noam Chomsky, in Priscilla Long, 192.
[81] Port Huron Statement, 5.
[82] Sale, 522.

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rabbi witnessing an SDS rally at Columbia in the late sixties to shout "you are condemned by your own principles."[83]

Revolutionary strategy was impractical for SDS from another angle as well. Though there were extremes in the economic conditions of Americans (the very rich and the very poor), the degree of these extremes wasn't enough to topple the system. In other words, the presence of a large middle class in America precluded the possibility of revolutionary success.[84] Instead of remaining true to their original goals of reform and grass-roots base-building, New Left activists quickly turned their aims to transforming society from the top-down. In other words, SDS' demands for swift and fundamental change led them to appeal to the very so-called elitists they claimed to despise. Instead of base-building and moving reforms slowly through the system, SDS created an "us" and "them" environment which then required revolutionary commitment. However, the stabilizing effect of the middle-class turned out to be the detriment of SDS' subversive agenda. In fact, the revolutionary zeal of Leftists radicals alienated potential middle-class allies, the working class, and even the poor, who were really striving for a middle-class lifestyle themselves, not revolutionary change.

Alienating the middle class in America is alienating a huge segment of the population – a segment of the population to which SDS should have given more heed. This is especially true in regards to the student body in America – a captive audience,

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[83] Adelson, 84.

[84] Jeremy Varon, "Between Revolution 9 and Thesis II: Or Will We Learn (Again) to Start Worrying and Change the World?" in John McMillan and Paul Buhle (eds.) *The New Left Revisited* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2003), 217.

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not yet set in their ways and opinions, which could have been transformed to fit New Left ideals and consciousness. Indeed, changing consciousness had been one of the stand-by goals of SDS throughout the decade. Targeting campuses had also been the original plan, even the mandate of C. Wright Mills, who warned radicals not to get lost in the "labor metaphysic." In his "Letter to the New Left", Mills had pointed to the young intelligentsia as the agent of change in America.[85]

SDS founder Al Haber had known this, and he fought to keep SDS geared toward the student body. Haber recognized the radical potential of students – would-be professionals, who could internalize SDS values and apply them in the workforce. As Haber pointed out when arguing against the SDS penchant for ghetto organizing, "As an organization for students, SDS will have failed. It will have people deny what they are, and hence never learn how to apply their values in what they do."[86] For Haber and a handful of others within SDS, "Political education is the central job of the radical...the role of the radical is to organize self-conscious political cadres by raising radical consciousness among those whom economic theory predicts will be the victims of the collapse of capitalism."[87]

As the decade progressed, many in SDS, and especially those claiming "prairie power", began to seriously avoid and even curse anything that resembled middle-class values or lifestyle. This included the university, which was increasingly being regarded as a "training camp for cookie-cutter capitalists, bureaucrats, elites

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[85] C. Wright Mills, "Letter to the New Left," in Priscilla Long, 24.
[86] Sale, 111.
[87] Al Haber in Priscilla Long, 299.

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etc."[88] Haber and other SDS "alumni" still faithful to reform hoped to create a viable

adult version of SDS entitled the Movement for a Democratic Society. Its ground-

work was laid at two important conferences in 1968, the Radicals in the Professions

Conference and the New University Conference, which aimed to move radical

ideology into the social science professions and classroom.[89] Former SDS activist

Dick Flacks, who went on to be a Left-leaning professor at the University of Chicago,

was among those who supported the initiative. However, the younger, more militant

generation of SDS leaders refused to acknowledge the importance of so-called

bourgeois attempts to dilute the revolution with "moderates". As Kirkpatrick Sale

asserts, "SDS might have played a cardinal role in fashioning this student generation

into an ongoing political organization of national consequence, SDS chose not to."[90]

This refusal to recognize the long-term potential of middle-class professional

allies was a profound mistake on the part of SDS leadership. SDS members

themselves admittedly realized that attacking "the system" in its totality was a

daunting task "requiring economic and political genius to figure out where the system

is really vulnerable and how to attack it effectively."[91] The real genius would have

been to infiltrate the system slowly and incrementally. In other words, the student

generation could have become the "Trojan Horse" of long-term, operational political

reform. A most evident example of this potential can be seen in the transformation

·and legacy of the New Public Administrationists.

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[88] Wini Breines, 24.
[89] Sale, 411-413.
[90] Sale, 215.
[91] Alan Adelson, 191.

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As Warren Bennis said, "if you want to change things, then you get your ideas to the people in power, or people who influence someone who can influence someone in power."[92] By transforming the consciousness of millions of university students, the Left could have created a band of insurgents from within the professions, working their way up the ladder to political power and influence. These students were going into fields of the social sciences, including Public Administration, where they could implement their principles and change the system piecemeal in their respective fields of study and work. Future professors could share their values with a whole new student body or, through journal articles, influence the discipline literature. Consultants would channel reforms through practitioners. In this way, the New Left could have created a movement of persistence and a cycle of value inheritance, which would slowly change society.

Those at Minnowbrook certainly seemed convinced of many New Left principles. Some, who may even have been active in SDS chapters, acknowledge the New Left influence. One participant confessed "that Stokely Carmichael and Mario Savio have done a damn sight more for my understanding of the behavior of this insane society of ours of bureaucracy than any six given scholars in the field."[93] Another Minnowbrook contributor commented that, at times, participants "came close to being as anti-administration as some New Left students."[94] One group of

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[92] Warren Bennis. *Beyond Bureaucracy: Essays on the Development and Evolution of Human Organization* (New York: McGraw-Hill Books, 1966), 103.
[93] Marini, 57.
[94] W. Henry Lambright, "The Minnowbrook Perspective and the Future of Public Affairs," in Marini, 341.

young administrators organized themselves into the Federal Employees for a Democratic Society, clearly fashioning themselves after SDS.[95]

Many new public administrationists, along with Haber, realized the potential of the student body for radical change. Frederick C. Mosher wrote that "the universities offer the best hope for making the profession safe for democracy."[96] H. George Frederickson concurred, believing schools represented the best chance to teach professionals to "work collectively to keep the organization changeful and responsive."[97] In his book detailing the Minnowbrook perspective, Frederickson cited the work of two scholars in the field, William G. Scott and David K Hart, who argue that, not the elite, not the poor, but the professional class represents the true vanguard of radical change.[98] "Reform can come from the professionals because mass support for change is growing and they have the technical and organizational expertise to galvanize this support into a reform movement."[99]

In other words, these young scholars, professors and practitioners, no doubt influenced by the Left, didn't have their heads in the clouds. Another advantage for the New Left was that these professionals knew their fields, knew what needed to be changed, and had a better idea of how to operationally make that change happen. They discussed concepts such as "buffered rationality", which argued for an

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[95] James M. Elden, "Radical Politics and the Future of Public Administration in the Postindustrial Era," in Dwight Waldo, *Public Administration in a Time of Turbulence* (Scranton: Chandler Publishing Company, 1971), 25.
[96] Frederick C. Mosher. *Democracy and the Public Service* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), 79.
[97] Frederickson, 118.
[98] Frederickson, 116-119
[99] William G. Scott and David K. Hart. *Organizational America* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1979), 220-221.

incremental, less fundamental approach, containing "fewer social and political risks...probably better suited to public organizations."[100]

Although Bennis advocated getting ideas to the people who can influence, he also warned that "there is simply no guarantee that a wise individual who attains power will act wisely."[101] Certainly, much of the SDS leadership would have agreed with this sentiment. In fact, it was this fear that prevented SDS from using the middle-class professionals to their advantage. They considered professionals, even those considered radical, moderates at best. Furthermore, the young middle-class, they believed, although imbued with democratic spirit today, would easily be assimilated into the dominant culture of elitist power and corruption tomorrow.

SDS concerns about the middle-class do have validity. But, consider the options? Established government officials and administrators were either committed to their own version of democracy or corrupt by power. The poor and working class were largely uncomfortable with or even hostile to Leftist rhetoric. They sought to attain middle-class lifestyle, not destroy it. By process of elimination, the middle-class student body remained the best bet.

Not only were young students and professionals receptive to the principles of SDS, they were able to internalize Leftist values and take those values into the social sciences. And, for the radicals, it couldn't have hurt to have a generation of professionals and bureaucrats on their side. As anyone knows, bureaucrats are in the position to alter, sabotage or even refuse to implement directives if they do not agree

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[100] Frederickson, 60.
[101] Bennis, 106.

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with them. However, by influencing young public administrationists, the New Left would have almost guaranteed that a whole new generation of practitioners and scholars would be receptive to radical reform, if not revolution.

However, perhaps the revolutionary zeal of SDS was important in some ways. It certainly gained notoriety and attention from the public and the press. Most of this attention was negative, but perhaps, as the saying goes, any attention is good attention. It did advertise the New Left agenda. Furthermore, SDS' willingness to challenge the American system as a whole appealed to many young people who also felt there was something drastically wrong with American society. Because SDS was radical and even revolutionary, SDS was visible.

But, the young middle-class professionals were less receptive to revolutionary ideals than ideals of reform. SDS author Alan Adelson reminds: "you don't horrify people you are trying to win to your politics. You educate them."[102] For these reasons, the SDS leadership should have exerted more effort toward channeling New Left values and reforms through the middle-class students instead of withdrawing from professionals in particular and the system in general. As George C. Bennello and Dimitrios Roussopoulous state, "The developing counter system will require a dialectical linkage with the existing system. Just as it is useless to confront the existing system when an alternative does not exist, so it is useless to build a counter

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[102] Adelson, 167.

system which has no bridges to the existing system."[103] In regards to bureaucracy, the

New Public Administrationists represented that bridge.

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[103] C. George Bennello and Dimitrios Roussopoulous, *The Case for Participatory Democracy: Some Prospects for a Radical Society* (New York: Grossman Publishers, 1971), 211.

Chapter Four

Conclusion

Even without much attention from SDS in the latter years of the 1960's, young professionals internalized New Left values and took them into professional careers in the social sciences. The young professors and practitioners of the New Public Administration offer a valuable example of the influence the New Left had on a new generation of middle-class professionals.

After Minnowbrook, the new public administrationists continued to fight and write for reforms in bureaucratic theory and practice. They had considerable impact, and throughout the 1970's, administrative literature was filled with articles on bureaucratic responsiveness, democratic procedure, client-based organization and social equity. In part because of their efforts, the administrative process became more open to public participation and scrutiny with the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and sunshine laws. The Civil Service Reform Act of 1978 served to revise the outdated notions of the Pendelton Act (1883).[104]

However, in the 1980's and 1990's, calls for down-sizing and reinventing government seemed louder than ever before, as conservative efforts to dismantle the liberal growth of previous decades reflected the public's disappointment with the government and its ability to cure the ills of society. It is in these more recent

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[104] Milakovich and Gordon, 316-320.

decades that one can evaluate the lasting effects of New Public Administration and even New Left residual.

In 1984, public administration scholars met to forge a new direction for bureaucratic study, which became known as the Blacksburg Manifesto, or Blacksburg Perspective. Troubled by the negative public opinion concerning government and bureaucracy, those advocating the Blacksburg Perspective sought to re-evaluate and even defend administrators' legitimacy as political actors in a democratic process. "We must refound public administration in governance, the public interest, and its democratic character."[105]

In fact, much of the Blacksburg Manifesto's normative theory resembles that of New Public Administration. However, for Blacksburg participants, the efforts of the New Public Administration marked a turning part in the literature, albeit "less than earthshaking."[106] As authors Gary L Wamsley and James F. Wolf write, "Those of us involved in the "Refounding" project resonate with those [New Public Administration] aims; we merely feel that the ends might have been better realized if they had been grounded in anything other than good intention or social concern."[107]

The Blacksburg Perspective, its aims, and its opinions on New Public Administration serve as a good indicator of the effects of Minnowbrook and New Left values in the field of public administration. Despite a lukewarm attitude toward the legacy of Minnowbrook, the very presence of Blacksburg Manifesto, and the

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[105] Gary L. Wamsley and James F. Wolf, *Refounding Democratic Public Administration: Modern Paradoxes, Postmodern Challenges* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1996), 5.
[106] Ibid, 20.
[107] Ibid, 20.

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normative, democratic goals of its authors, implies that the values of New Public Administration had endured into the 1980's and 90's. Public Administration scholars were still discussing and evaluating the democratic implications of bureaucracy on society decades after Minnowbrook. They were still committed to responsiveness and even change within bureaucratic practice.

However, on the flip side, the presence of the Blacksburg Perspective also implies that the work of the New Public Administration scholars was still left incomplete. There may have been incremental reforms, but the need for further change in the field was felt and commented upon. However, the expressions of Blacksburg participants may offer some hope in the endurance of bureaucratic reform movements. "So far as we are concerned, the refounding of public administration is an ongoing project, a work under construction that hopefully will never be finished."[108]

For New Left alumni, this comment may offer some consolation. The field of bureaucratic theory and administrative practice had become receptive to reform as well as more responsive to felt needs for change. However, the work was still unfinished, meaning that deep-rooted problems in bureaucracy remained to be eradicated. The persistence of these problems has led many SDS alumni and researchers to give more attention to the failures of the New Left than to its successes. The legacy of New Public Administration, however, represents a definite success for the New Left. Those serious activists in the latter years of SDS may have shot for

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[108] Ibid, 10.

revolution, but what they got were the important and lasting, if incremental, reforms the organization had originally sought.

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