

VII

BUREAUCRACY

The term "bureaucracy" is of recent origin. Initially referring to a cloth covering the desks of French government officials in the eighteenth century, the term "bureau" came to be linked with a suffix signifying rule of government (as in "aristocracy" or "democracy"), probably during the struggles against absolutism preceding the French Revolution. During the nineteenth century, the pejorative use of the term spread to many European countries, where liberal critics of absolutist regimes typically employed it to decry the tortuous procedures, narrow outlook, and highhanded manner of autocratic government officials.¹ Since then this pejorative meaning has become general in the sense that any critic of complicated organizations that fail to allocate responsibility clearly, or any critic of rigid rules and routines that are applied with little consideration of the specific case, of blundering officials, of slow operation and buck-passing, of conflicting directives and duplication of effort, of empire-building, and of concentration of control in the hands of a few will use this term regardless of party or political persuasion.² During the years following the Second World War this common stereotype was given a new twist by the witty, mock-scientific formulations of Parkinson's Law, which derided empire-building, waste of resources, and inertia by implying that official staffs expand in inverse proportion to the work to be done.³

This popular, pejorative usage must be distinguished from "bu-

¹ Karl Heinzen, *Die preussische Bürokratie* (Darmstadt: Leske, 1845).

² Goodwin Watson, "Bureaucracy as Citizens See It," *Journal of Social Issues* 1, 1945, 4-13.

³ C. Northcote Parkinson, *Parkinson's Law, and Other Studies in Administration* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1957).

Reinhard Bendix, from *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* (New York: Macmillan and Free Press, 1968), II, 206-219.