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One of the most distinguished members of Congress pleads eloquently for an understanding of what is really wrong with our representative government

Don't Blame the Bureaucrat!

By

Hatton W. Summers

(See note on page 2)

WE ALL believe in democracy — democracy operated through representative government. Why is it, then, that in a land where everybody proclaims his devotion to it, representative government is withering before our eyes?

The bureaucrat is blamed for this. But he is not the cause. He is the effect. The seat of the trouble lies far deeper.

Our whole political system is based on the principle of local self-government. But two forces have been destroying this principle. One is the demand of the people for the federal government to intervene in problems of every community and every class. The other is the ever-growing practice of passing all these problems on to the government in Wash-

ington. The last war gave this a big push. The postwar dislocation hurried it. The Great Depression raised it to avalanche proportions. The present war is completing the job. Every town and state, every trade association and trade union, every class and group and desperate minority brings its problems to Washington. And Washington is gladly accepting that responsibility.

But Congress is made up solely of mere human beings. And *Nature has not endowed any group of human beings with the sweep and grasp of intelligence necessary to handle the multitude of federal and local problems dumped upon Washington.*

Not being able to handle the impossible burden itself, Congress of necessity creates bureaus and passes on the overload to the bureaucrats.

By bureaucrats I do not mean those government employes once called "civil servants" because they were employed to "serve" the government and execute the laws of Congress. I refer to the bureau chief and his squadrons of counselors and economists and specialists. I am not criticizing them but the system. They issue what are called "directives," which actually have the force of law. One bureaucrat in the Securities and Exchange Commission said recently: "We *do* make the law. This order *supersedes any laws opposed to it.*" Actually the bulk of what in effect are our general laws are now being made not by Congress but by bureaucracies.

This is not a new thing. It was under way 30 years ago when I entered Congress. I made a speech in the House warning of it in 1923 and again in 1932. I am not discussing the concentration of federal power which has been made in order to fight the war. The present picture is merely the natural development of our policies over several decades. It is a procedure as old as tyranny. *But it cannot exist in a democracy, because where*

it exists government inescapably ceases to be a democracy.

The essence of democracy is that laws shall be enacted by representatives of the people, and that all sides have a hearing. But laws enacted by bureaucrats are fashioned behind closed doors. The real author is not known to the people. He is appointed, not elected. Generally the first the public knows of his directives is when they are proclaimed. The law, once thus announced, is subject to frequent and sometimes capricious amendment. The bureau enacts it, enforces it and sits as judge in interpreting it. Most of these imperial bureaus are provided with tribunals equipped as courts and recognize a multitudinous bar which practices before them.

It is not easy to get a law passed by Congress. But the bureaucrat can toss off a directive while you wait. The very facility with which he legislates encourages the multiplicity of laws. The fact that he does not have to face a constituency makes him irresponsible to the people in the performance of this, the highest function of sovereignty.

The promoters of centralization are more and more resorting to the exercise of another unlimited power against which no constitutional barrier will ever stand: the control of the purse strings. By making the units of state government financially dependent on the federal government, that government is acquiring the power to control the units of

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state government. When this is fully consummated, the sovereignty of the state governments will be liquidated.

This job will have been done with money sent by Washington in the form of loans and gifts to states, towns, school districts, individual citizens. This money has served to attach all these interests directly to the central government and make them subject to its power.

But we are approaching the day of reckoning. Up to now Washington has been borrowing money and scattering it among the states. I do not refer to war activities but to ordinary current government activities. The federal government, long before the preparation for this war, was mortgaging the taxpaying ability of future generations to pay current expenses. The taxes to service these vast federal operations and pay the interest on the debt must come out of the same pockets from which the states and cities must collect their funds. *The federal government has first call on these funds. We are therefore moving rapidly toward a condition where there will not be enough left to run the states.*

In weakening the states we weaken the whole fabric of free government. The inescapable price of free government is that we exercise it. The most destructive force in the world is nonuse. If we do not use our powers of self-government in the states we will awake one day to find that self-government has passed irrevocably out of our hands.

Government is exercised best in the local community. There the problems are perceived with greater clarity because they are close to the people and on a scale within their grasp. The self-reliance of the individual, town and state is being destroyed as they are being relieved of the necessity of governing themselves. When people stop thinking for themselves there is always someone willing to step forward and do their thinking for them.

What shall we do about it? Change bureaucrats? Consolidate bureaus? Abolish bureaus and turn the whole intolerable load back to Congress? None of these makeshifts touches the real problem. It is folly to talk about abolishing bureaus as long as we continue to pile on the central government the problem of every state and town and social group in the nation. The men who are trying to drive us toward government by bureaucracy understand this. The chief adviser of the National Resources Planning Board, recently abolished by Congress, prophesies crisply:

Congress will surrender to the Administration the power to tax. . . . Congress will appropriate huge sums of money; will surrender its power of directing when and how the money will be spent.

Other extraordinary powers, such as to effect great social reforms, will be delegated to the Administration, which will retain most, if not all, of its wartime powers.

This is precisely the bureaucratic control we will have if we persist in making Washington the guide, philosopher, big brother, supervisor and master of every activity within our borders. The remedy — and the only remedy — is to send all these nonfederal functions back where they belong: to the states and the local communities, where they can be handled upon a scale within the comprehension of the limited mind of man.

Strangely, those in Washington who fight for this new bureaucratic central control call themselves progressives and those who oppose them are branded as reactionaries. Such is the power of labels. We are grasping at ancient evils, and call them progress.

This disease has been most devastating in Germany. In Imperial Germany men already talked of the

"tyranny of bureaucracy." The republican government which succeeded the Kaiser greatly expanded it. It reached its full flower under Hitler. Indeed, National Socialism may be described as government by bureaucracy. If we think Hitler's system is better than ours we should have the honesty to say so instead of copying while we denounce it.

The states must resume the status of responsible sovereign agencies of general government or democracy cannot live in America.

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Comedy of Errors

¶ A VISITOR sightseeing in New York City fell into conversation with a Negro who began to point out places of interest with enthusiastic civic pride. As they approached a courthouse, the self-appointed guide proclaimed: "And that am the place where they dispense with justice!"

— Albert J. Pyle

¶ AN EARNEST worker, newly employed by an aircraft plant in Ohio, was informed that the factory was on a 24-hour-day basis. He went to work and when his foreman came in the next morning he was still on the job.

"Well, boss," he reported, looking distressed, "I got along O.K. for the first 24 hours, but between you and me, I'm pretty much worried about the next 24."

— Marian B. Gaffin