









face up to goal-setting, to ordered priorities, and to concentrating their resources (the public service administrators who are willing to ask: "What is the smallest number of people we need to attain our objectives?") may not always be popular, but they are respected, and they rarely have any trouble at all. They may not get as far in their political careers as the ones who put popularity above performance, but, in the end, they are the ones we remember.

### III

But perhaps even more important than cowardice as an explanation for the tendency of so much of public administration today to commit itself to policies that can only result in non-performance is the lack of concern with performance in public administration theory.

For a century from the Civil War to 1960 or so, the performance of public service institutions and programs was taken for granted in the United States. It could be taken for granted because earlier administrators somehow knew not to commit the "deadly sins" I have outlined here. As a result, the discipline of public administration—a peculiarly American discipline, by the way—saw no reason to concern itself with performance. It was not a problem. It focused instead on the political process, on how programs come into being. *Who Gets What, When, How?*, the title of Harold Lasswell's 1936 classic on politics, neatly sums up one specific focus of American public administration, with its challenge to traditional political theory. The other focus was procedural: "The orderly conduct of the business of government" an earlier generation called it. It was a necessary concern in an America that had little or no administrative tradition and experience and was suddenly projected into very large public service programs, first in World War I, then in the New Deal, and finally in World War II.

We needed work on all phases of what we now call "management": personnel, budgeting, organization, and so on. But these are inside concerns. Now we need hard, systematic work on making public service institutions perform.

As I noted, for a century, from the Civil War until 1960 or so, performance of public service institutions was taken for granted. For the last 20 years, however, malperformance is increasingly being taken for granted. Great programs are still being proposed, are still being debated, and, in some instances, are even still being enacted, but few people expect them to produce results. All we really expect now, whether from a new Department of Education in Washington or from a reorganization of the state government by a new governor who preaches that "small is beautiful," is more expenditure, a bigger budget, and a more ineffectual bureaucracy.

The malperformance of public service institutions may well be a symptom only. The cause may be far more basic: a crisis in the very foundations and assumptions on which rests that proudest achievement of the Modern Age, national administrative government.<sup>2</sup>

But surely the malperformance of the public service institution is in itself a contributing factor to the sickness of government, and a pretty big one. Avoiding the "deadly sins" of public administration may only give symptomatic relief for whatever ails modern government, but at least we know how to do it.

### Notes

1. On this, see my article, "What Results Should You Expect? A User's Guide to MPO," *Public Administration Review*, Vol. 36, pp. 12-19.
2. I hope eventually to finish a book on this subject, tentatively entitled "Can Government Be Saved?," on which I have been working for ten years or more.