

Administrative Historian: DWIGHT WALDO

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Introduction

Dwight Waldo is very closely associated with the history and theory of public administration than any other thinker. A ‘chronicler’, a leading ‘philosopher-historian-theoretician’, a ‘defining figure’ of public administration, his contribution to the discipline of public administration has been outstanding. He was interested not only in virtually every facet of administrative studies and learning, but also in the larger aspects

of social world which shape and are themselves shaped by the administrative centres of the governments. Waldo had very significant influence on the teaching and theory of public administration during the second half of the twentieth century.

Life and Work

Clifford Dwight Waldo (1913-2000) was born in DeWitt, Nebraska. After high school, Waldo joined Wesleyan College in Peru, Nebraska from where he received B.A (1935). He looked for a job as a teacher, but unable to get in the throes of the Great Depression, he accepted the job of reading papers at the University of Nebraska - Lincoln and enrolled in the master's program in political science. After receiving a master's degree in political science (1937) from the University of Nebraska, he joined as a Cowles Fellow at Yale University. After the Second World War, Waldo joined the University of California at Berkeley as an assistant professor. Waldo helped to establish a Graduate School of Public Affairs and contributed to changing the University Bureau of Public Administration to that of the Institute of Governmental Studies, and served as its Director from 1958-1967. In 1979, he retired as professor emeritus from Syracuse and spent the next two years at the Woodrow Wilson International Centre for Scholars of the Smithsonian Institute. He remained professionally active since that time and was a member of many prestigious associations, both national and international, until his death on 27th October 2000 at the age of 87.

Waldo wrote extensively – books, monographs and articles. The publication of *The Administrative State*, a revised version of his doctoral dissertation, made him a 'pariah' in the public administration discipline. His other significant publications include *The Study of Public Administration* (1955), *The Novelist on Organisation and Administration* (1968), *Public Administration in a Time of Turbulence* (1971),

Democracy, Bureaucracy and Hypocrisy (1977), *The Enterprise of Public Administration* (1980), *Bureaucracy and Democracy-A Strained Relationship* (unpublished manuscript with Frank Marini, 1999).

Waldo was actively associated with the American Society for Public Administration and its Comparative Administration Group and served on the Society's Council (1963-1966). He served on the Council and then the Executive Committee of the American Political Science Association (1957-60) and became its vice-president in 1961. Waldo served as president of the National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration (1977-78). He served on the editorial boards of the *American Political Science Review* (1959-1963) and *Public Administration Review* (1958-66) and as its Editor-in-Chief (1966-77).

The Administrative State

Waldo represents a perspective on public administration - the administration as politics approach - that emerged in the 1940s. His position was initially based on his response to the classical approach, but his later writings extend elements of that critique to the behavioral approach. Waldo denies that politics and policy considerations can be excluded from administration. Moreover, facts cannot be separated from values. Consequently, administration is inevitably both an art and science and perhaps more art than a science. Since administration cannot be separated from politics, Waldo argues that public administration is different from private administration; distinguished by the political environment in which the public administrator operates. To him the objective should not be to keep administrators out of policy and political matters, but to encourage cooperation between the political and administrative domains and to discover ways in

which we can benefit from the creative potential as well as substantive contributions of administrative officials.

Waldo advanced four central ideas. Firstly, there is an intrinsic tension between democracy and bureaucracy that obliges career public servants to protect democratic principles. Secondly, the politics/administration dichotomy is false. Public servants hold political positions that require more than merely implementing policy set by elected officials. Thirdly, public servants must negotiate efficiencies demanded by the scientific management movement with due process and public access to government. Finally, government cannot be run like a business. Honouring the constitution and other democratic imperatives make managing a unit of the government far more challenging than a comparable private sector organization. Waldo denied the possibility of constructing a science of public administration, doubted the existence of 'principles' of administration, questioned the plausibility of a unified theory of organization, skeptical of those who would indiscriminately intermingle politics and administration and despaired of reaching a common agreement on a definition of the field of public administration.

Public Administration - History

Public Administration, according to Waldo, as a field and practice has its origin in the earliest times of human civilization. Administration and civilization have coexisted and each nourished the other. Both were internal parts of human progress. Civilization promoted administration and administration made civilizational achievements possible. Both have contributed to the development of each other. If there is a single dominant theme in Waldo's work, it is probably the importance he attaches to history or as he puts it, a strong sense that "what is past is prologue." Waldo believes that there is much to be learned from history and he deplores the fact that much of the public administration

literature has been anti-historical in nature. Waldo asserts that history does indeed repeat itself, though in different keys and with endless variations of its themes, and that ignoring the past denies an important source of insights, hypotheses and scientific conclusions.

Waldo considers government and its administration to be more than merely an artificially created intruder in a state of nature that would otherwise be serene and prosperous. Government is no more a creation than markets or private enterprise and the sustaining, nurturing and creative role of government has largely been ignored. Waldo acknowledges that government is always marginally oppressive and sometimes massively so that there are things that government cannot do or can do only clumsily. However, the government and its administrative apparatus have performed their functions with at least moderate success despite increases in the scale and complexity of their activities.

Classical Approach

Waldo emphasized that public administration did not begin in the 20th century. A stream of administrative technology has developed over the centuries to which, until recent times, the public sector has made the more important contributions. Waldo does credit the late 19th and early 20th centuries with the development of the self-conscious study of public administration on a scale new in human history and identifies the United States as a major focal point of administrative studies. Although a number of forces were important in shaping the overall contours of the field, Waldo asserts that the proximate determinants of the specific content of public administration were the reform movement and the progressive era. They emphasized executive leadership, civil service reform and education for citizenship and sought to expose inefficiency through scientific

investigations. All these characteristics were incorporated in what came to be known as the classical approach to public administration.

Waldo identified five basic characteristics of the classical approach to public administration, which dominated the field until roughly 1940. A first and fundamental premise of politics-administration dichotomy was that politics should be separated from administration and that administration falls in the realm of expertise from which politics should be excluded. It calls for a strengthened chief executive to curb the centrifugal forces of the administrative branch. A second characteristic - generic management orientation - assumed that the techniques of private management were applicable in the public sector. Waldo argues that public administration accepted both business procedures and a business ideology as the business model was used to deprecate the balance of powers and aggrandize the role of the chief executive as well as to justify hierarchical control mechanisms, merit appointment and the adoption of business-like budgetary procedures.

A third characteristic was the search for a science of administration. It was believed that the scientific study of administration could lead to the discovery of general 'principles' of administration on which efficient government could be based. The fourth is the emphasis on centralization of executive activities. The general prescription was centralization, simplification, and unification. The objective was to centralize responsibility, to build the power of the chief executive by establishing stronger hierarchical controls within the executive branch, and to abolish the superfluous offices in the name of efficiency. Finally, the classical approach contained a basic commitment to democracy. However, democracy was defined substantively rather than procedurally. Democracy was to be achieved by establishing a strong, responsive and responsible

government designed to serve efficiently the needs of the people in an emergent 'Great Society'.

Finally, Waldo challenges the classicist's emphasis on efficiency intended to replace a moralistic approach to public administration. Waldo maintains that the idea of efficiency itself became imbued with a moral significance, however, as a pursuit of "technical efficiency" was transformed into a pursuit of "social efficiency." Although efficiency itself is not a value, it is a useful concept only within a framework of consciously held values. That is, one must consider the object of efficiency, since it is not reasonable to assume that it is desirable to accomplish *any* end efficiently.

Politics and Administration

Waldo unequivocally abandoned politics-administration dichotomy. He explains that politics/administration relate to democracy/bureaucracy. He was known as a heterodox critic of the politics-administration dichotomy. This reputation seem to be based on his early publication *Administrative State* in which he conceptualized politics/administration narrowly as deciding and executing. But his later publications offer 'much broader conceptualisation and a more ambivalent and even a more positive appraisal of the dichotomy'. To him the dichotomy was intended to resolve the conflict between bureaucracy and democracy by making elected officials responsible for framing policy and restricting administrators to the execution of that policy. In actuality, public administration in the classical period was false to the ideal of democracy. Democracy was seen as desirable, but peripheral to the concerns of administration and hostile to the central principle of efficiency.

Organization Theory

Waldo divides the development of organization theory into three stages. The first stage was the classical period, epitomized by the works of authors such as Taylor, Gulick, Fayol and Mooney. The classical stage of organization theory was based on the machine model of the organization and emphasized the rational aspects of human behavior. This stage reached its zenith in the 1930s and culminated in the publication of the *Papers on the Science of Administration*. Waldo labels the second stage to the development of organization theory the neoclassical approach. This stage began with the Hawthorne studies in the 1920s and retained major importance through mid century. In contrast to the classical, the neoclassical approach emphasized the emotive and socio-psychological dimensions of human behavior in organizations. The final stage in the development of organization theory is modern organization theory, which, according to Waldo, began with the publication of March and Simon's *Organizations* in 1958. This theory is based on an organic or natural system model of the organization and stresses organizational growth and survival. It endorses organizations that have less reliance on hierarchical controls, more recognized sources of authority, greater opportunity for personal mobility, and greater receptivity to organizational change. Modern organization theory is decidedly behavioral in orientation, adopting the methods of the physical and biological sciences and seeking a value-free general theory of organizations true for all times and places.

Comparative Public Administration

The second major focus of the contemporary period has been comparative public administration. According to Waldo, comparative public administration (CPA) both resembles and differs from modern organization theory. It shares with modern theory a concern for methodological problems; a reliance on models such as the systems

framework and structural functionalism; an interdisciplinary orientation; a search for universal concepts, formulas and theories; and an emphasis on empirical description. However, CPA differs from modern theory in its explicit comparative perspective, its focus on cultural diversity and its fascination with Weberian bureaucracies.

Though it was at one time widely believed that CPA was the area of greatest promise in contemporary public administration, Waldo feels that that promise has yet to be fulfilled. CPA tells us about the relationship between administration and social ends, the critical dependence of civilization on effective governmental administration and the difficulties in transferring the Western model of administration to other cultures. But the basic problem of the CPA movement was the distance between the theoretical models employed and the evidence of field research. And even with its strong theoretical bent, Waldo asserts that the movement failed to produce anything in the way of rigorous theory.

New Public Administration

A major development in contemporary public administration is the New Public Administration movement. This movement, spawned by the social and political ferment of the late 1960s and early 1970s, was, according to Waldo, part of the rebellion of youth and the counter culture of the non-Marxian left. The conference was hosted by Waldo bringing together young and progressive scholars and practitioners who were under 35 and hell-bent in revolutionizing the field of public administration. Minnowbrook - Syracuse University's Conference Center - is considered as shorthand for an entirely new school of thought. The conference signaled the rise of the 'Waldovian perspective' keeping future in mind. Its goal was to establish new directions for the field

and to reconcile public administrations' role in the context of social upheaval. The New Public Administration criticized the old public administration for its lack of an explicit ideological-philosophical framework and supported an activist role for the administrator in the pursuit of social equality. Waldo refers to the movement as a "New Romanticism," as it shares with that philosophical movement the assumption that man is inherently good but is corrupted by bad institutions, and it reacts to rationalism by emphasizing the role of feeling over reason, senses over the mind, and spontaneity, creativity and self-fulfillment over convention and rules.

The basic themes of the New Public Administration were participation, decentralization and representative bureaucracy. Participation was supported both as a political process and as an organizational process. Political participation was seen as a means of dispersing power and increasing citizen involvement in government. The movement rejected both simple majoritarianism and pluralism in favour of alternatives described by Waldo as ranging from organic communitarianism to moral and political elitism. Support for organizational participation was part of what Waldo sees as the movement's massive hostility to anything perceived as bureaucratic. It was to be a means for promoting change and dispersing power within the organization. Decentralization, like participation, was intended to disperse power and increase citizen involvement in governmental and organizational processes. Representative democracy was meant to promote client-centered administration and representation of clientele interests by administrators.

Waldo finds some validity in the anti-organizational stance of the New Public Administration, but he considers much of the indictment to be unfair, spurious and above

all, unrealistic. He notes that most innovative techniques and technologies have been created in bureaucratic organizations and that the era of bureaucracy has been an era of rapid change. Even if the bureaucracy serves the status quo, the status quo itself is not a monolithic interest, but a diversity of interests, all of which must be served. In addressing the question of efficiency, Waldo charges that the critics attack a narrow conception of efficiency that had long been discarded. He says that there is no such thing called “public philosophy” and that the problem now is to find the boundaries of public administration.

Public Administration as a Profession

Waldo was more sympathetic to a “professional” orientation in public administration. He acknowledges that public administration is not a profession in a strict sense, is not to become one, and perhaps should not even be done. However, he considers professionalism to be a good attitude or strategy and asserts that public administration should move from a disciplinary to a professional perspective with a separate professional school status in the university. Waldo’s favourite analogy in this regard is medicine, which, he says, is both science and art, both theory and practice, has a multidisciplinary focus rather than single theory, and is given direction by a broad social purpose. Thinking of public administration as a profession, Waldo maintains, frees public administration from its second-class status in colleges of liberal arts, frees it from a sense of guilt about not having a distinctive paradigm, and gives it license to seek whatever is needed, wherever it is located. Thus, Waldo suggests that public administration might act as a profession without being one, or even hoping to become one.

Public Administration and the Future

Waldo, a self-described amateur futurist, sees the future as a world of turbulence and change. A major force for change is the current transition from an industrial to a postindustrial society. Although Waldo notes that many of the prophecies for the 1970s failed to come to pass, there is still validity to the notion that the postindustrial society will see the emergence of knowledge as a crucial factor in productivity, the creation of new technologies for processing information, the decline of the factor, the establishment of new power elites and power centres based on scientific-technological knowledge, and a shift in emphasis from production to distribution and service occupations. All of this will result in an accelerated pace of economic-social-political change that will generate institutional and psychological social crises.

These forces raise an array of problems that must at least in part be addressed by public administration. A particular problem for public administration will be dealing with new forms of organization and management and calls for the assumption of new responsibilities. Waldo predicts that organizations of the future will be less bureaucratic, increasingly of a mixed public-private nature, more chains, complexes or systems of organizations than unitary organizations, and more international and multinational in their operations. These new organizational styles raise questions about how to develop less bureaucratic organizations without encouraging chaos, how to deal with increasing ethical complexity, and how to cope with the increasing likelihood of conflict and crisis. Moreover, public administration is apt to be called on to perform even more functions. This raises the danger of overload in a system that already has responsibility beyond the authority it can command or the virtue it can summon.

In looking to the future, Waldo observes that there are two major scenarios: the totalitarian and the anarchist. The totalitarian scenario reconciles public and private mortality by definition as government totally integrates and controls. The anarchist scenario, which Waldo sees as preferable, or at least less undesirable, sees the future as characterized by a multiplicity of diffuse and complex socio-economic-political institutions with considerable ambiguity in the concept of public morality. In reaction to the anarchist scenario, Waldo feels that it is akin to watching a movie in a reverse mode as the sovereign state is dissolved and its clear vertical structure of authority is replaced by complicated, contractual and informal horizontal relationships. This does not mean that he thinks history will repeat itself. Waldo believes that the future must be created, it cannot be copied, and he expresses the hope that reciprocal learning, mutual adjustment and institutional intervention may now be speeded; that a world unified, but not unitary, harmonious, but not homogenized, may develop.

Summing Up

As is clear from the above proceedings, Waldo has been more a critic and commentator on the field of public administration than a creator. It is possible to quibble with the particulars of Waldo's approach to the history of public administration, but the larger problem with Waldo's work is his essential ambivalence. Waldo insists that public administration is necessarily involved in politics, but he sees some continuing value in the politics-administration dichotomy. He states that public administration is both art and science, but fails to specify an area in which each might be applicable.

He argues that public administration is both different from, and the same as, private administration without specifying in details the similarities and differences, or their consequences. He thinks we should have both democracy and bureaucracy, but he

does not tell us either how the conflicts between those forces can be resolved or what the optimal balance between them is. He says that public administration is not, and perhaps should not be, a profession, but he urges that it act like one. Waldo believes that administration and civilization are intimately linked and that administration is government's central mechanism for dealing with change.

Model Questions

1. Discuss the contributions of Dwight Waldo to the study of Public Administration.
2. Comment on the views of Waldo on Comparative Public Administration
3. 'Waldo was an administrative historian, chronicler and administrative philosopher'. Comment.

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