Bureaucracy

Bureaucracy—any large, complex organization composed of appointed officials.

Authority is divided among several managers; no one person is able to make all the decisions.

Characteristics of Bureaucracy

Max Weber—sociologist who studied bureaucracy He focused on bureaucracy in Germany, but his principles can be applied to bureaucracies in any country.

Dominant in industrial societies because they can coordinate efforts to provide services and accomplish tasks in an efficient manner. Bureaucracies are more efficient than if every person worked independently.

1. Hierarchy

Higher-level supervisors coordinate and direct the activities of subordinates.

Hierarchy allows a large organization to have all of its employees working towards the same goal, a goal established by those at the top.

2. Specialization

Bureaucracies are efficient because each employee can specialize in a narrow field or activity. eg: there may be one particular person within an agency who handles complaints and another one who takes new applications from people. Tasks don't overlap.

3. Work as a Career

Bureaucrats tend to make careers out of the jobs they hold. It's a stable job and if you perform to reasonable expectations, it will be difficult to lose that job.

The longer you stay in your job, the better you should be able to perform it.

4. Recruitment by Merit

Employment is based on passing aptitude, educational or experience standards.

Civil service requirements have ended the patronage system, where you could get a job because you did someone a favor.

5. Formal rules
Every person is expected to conform to standards of performance and behavior established by the organization.

The expectations for each job within the organization are defined, and anyone serving in that job is expected to abide by those standards.

It's the rules that matter, not the people. You can't just change the people; you have to change the policy before things will be different within an agency.

6. **Impersonality**

   All rules within an organization are to be applied impersonally and equally to everyone.

   Impersonality is designed to ensure that all people are treated equally and no one is discriminated against.

**Growth of the Bureaucracy in the United States**

The Constitution made no mention of a bureaucracy. It simply allowed the president, with the advice and consent of the senate, to appoint all other officers needed to accomplish the goals established by the existing branches.

The bureaucracy expands during wars--the Civil War, World War I and II, the Korean War, to a lesser extent, Vietnam

   The number of civilian and military employees goes up sharply. They're often hired by agencies not directly related to the war. The number of employees goes down after the war ends, but never to the pre-war level.

The Civil War was a key period in the development of the bureaucracy.

   The war caused an increase in the number of government employees that were needed.

   It lead to demands for civil-service reform so that better qualified people would be working for the bureaucracy.

Following the war, industrialization was wide-spread and a national economy emerged.

   Nationwide railroads developed.
Commerce between the states increased. State governments couldn't handle all the new demands of the modern society. And the federal government had to increase in its size to meet the demands for control of interstate commerce, a responsibility of the federal government.

Early on, the bureaucracy performed only service functions.

People believed in limited government, state's rights, and they feared a government that could become too powerful.

People believed in laissez-faire economics—the government shouldn't regulate the economy.

And the Constitution said nothing about giving regulatory power to bureaucrats.

No agency could engage in regulation unless Congress first established the rules that would regulate the agency's behavior.

It took time to accept that a bureaucracy had the right to exist and be involved in government; people wouldn't have accepted it if the need hadn't been there.

Functions the Bureaucracy Performed

the Post Office

the Pension Office paid benefits to Civil War veterans

the Department of Agriculture was created to help farmers

the Department of Labor was created to help workers

the Department of Commerce was developed to help business-people.

The Interstate Commerce Commission (1887) was the first government agency designed to actually regulate the economy, and not simply provide goods.
The Great Depression

The New Deal programs that were created in response to it changed the nature of the bureaucracy. People's expectations of what the bureaucracy would do change. The people now expect the government to deal with economic and social problems—to find a solution.

Changes in constitutional interpretation of what the bureaucracy can and should do. The Court begins to hand down decisions allowing the expansion of a bureaucracy that will be more actively involved in the economy, and it allows Congress to delegate its power in these areas to the bureaucracy.

Programs or policies ruled unconstitutional in the first few years of Roosevelt’s first term eg: programs to regulate the economy, are now accepted as constitutional.

World War II

Federal Income Tax established First time we see the federal government using federal income taxes on individuals and businesses to finance its activities. Just as there were only small reductions in the number of employees working for the bureaucracy after the war ended, there were also no substantial tax reductions.

People accepted the need for military preparedness People believed that being ready for military conflicts in the future was worthwhile enough to continue paying taxes to support.

People demanded social welfare programs be maintained People wanted to keep the social programs they had gotten used to.

Other factors contributing to the development of the bureaucracy

Expanding economy—people are able to buy more things than in the past because the economy stronger; they have more money to spend.

There are many new products on the market, and there must be new agencies to ensure they're safe—FDA, Consumer Product Safety Commission.

Business Regulation—with so many new businesses in existence, the government has to make sure that the
practices they engage in are fair—eg: must prevent monopolies, prevent businesses from overworking employees, exposing them to unsafe working conditions.

**Science and Technological developments**—society is more complex. Need new agencies to deal with problems.

- no need for **NASA** until we had spacecraft
- no need for the **Federal Communications Commission** until we had telephones, radios, and televisions.

**Basic Belief in Progress**—people believe the government can tackle new problems and achieve results more effectively than individuals working alone. If a problem arises, someone somewhere will know how to fix it.

**Ambitious Administrators**—The role of bureaucracy expands when administrators take on new goals for the organization. They need more money and manpower to meet these demands. The bureaucracy grows even larger.

- **Bureaucrats are keenly aware of keeping their organization important to the rest of society**—they’ll keep their jobs.

**Unique Influences on American Bureaucracy**—The Constitution and our Political Traditions

1. **Separated Powers/Checks and Balances**—Political authority over the bureaucracy is not in one set of hands but shared among several institutions.

   - Divided authority encourages bureaucrats to play one branch of government off against the other—-they use the media to do this.

   - **There is no accountability. There is no way to control them and no one to blame.**

2. **Federalism**—the idea that there are local or regional governments as well as a national government.

   - Most agencies of the federal government share their functions with related agencies in state and local government.

   - Many federal agencies work with other organizations at other levels of government eg: the Department of Education gives money to local school systems; Department of Housing and Urban Development gives money to local community development programs.
There are two or three different bureaucracies from two or three different levels of government trying to work together.

3. We have an adversarial culture—preserving and expanding personal rights is very important.

People are likely to challenge virtually every decision of the bureaucracy if it impinges on individual rights.

Other countries with less of a focus on individual rights will be more likely to accept regulations imposed by the bureaucracy.

In the U.S., it means it will take longer for bureaucratic regulations to be implemented because they will be fought out in the courts.