1938

Book Review. The President's Committee on Administrative Management: Report of the Committee with Studies of Administrative Management in the Federal Government

Ralph F. Fuchs
Indiana University School of Law

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Recommended Citation
Fuchs, Ralph F., "Book Review. The President's Committee on Administrative Management: Report of the Committee with Studies of Administrative Management in the Federal Government" (1938). Articles by Maurer Faculty. 1589.
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immunity against self-incrimination and refusing to testify at inquiries into their official acts, shall be ousted from their jobs.

The new charter was drawn up by a commission alleged to be non-partisan and non-political, appointed by the mayor and headed by Thomas D. Thacher, a former federal judge and United States solicitor general. It was submitted for ratification at the presidential election in November, 1936, and was passed along with a shorter work day and the three platoon system for the fire department. The new officers were elected on November 2, 1937, to begin operating under the new charter January 1, 1938. The opinions expressed by leaders in city affairs seem to be largely favorable and hopeful as to the changes and improvements attempted. Some, including ex-Governor Alfred E. Smith, have charged that the new charter is merely the old one with a few amendments. Perhaps that is true, but it does not necessarily condemn the change. Provision is made for amendment by initiative and referendum, and so the voters of New York City may change still further the new charter.

EDWARD JAMES WOODHOUSE.

Department of Political Science,
University of North Carolina,
Chapel Hill, N. C.


All of the well-known proposals for legislation in the volume under review have met with crushing defeat in the present Congress under circumstances that must intensify existing doubts of the ability of democracy to function under modern conditions. In so far as reason and fair discussion have a role to play in government, however, the Report of the President's Committee and its attendant studies will continue to furnish material for legislation, as well as food for thought in regard to the administrative side of government. Possibly many of the specific suggestions for improvement will find their way into statutes as the years go by; and in the meanwhile others are susceptible of adoption by executive action. For the Committee's proposals embrace more than the unification of management under the President to which so much attention has been paid. Even the recommendation for unification is supported with reasoning that may lead to the adoption of much of it in calmer times, if calmer times come again to prevail.

Space does not permit even the summarizing of the chief features of the volume. The principal recommendations include gathering the
entire federal executive into twelve single-headed departments, with continuing power in the President to allocate agencies among them; enlargement of the White House staff; extending the scope of the Civil Service, with a single administrator in charge; establishing a permanent planning board; and replacing the independent Comptroller General with an Auditor General possessing only auditing functions and answerable to Congress. The Report proper, which is preceded by the Presidential message transmitting it, occupies only 53 pages. The nine special studies by members of the Committee's staff contain not only the data and much of the reasoning upon which the Report is based but also much additional detailed information upon such matters as the conduct of personnel administration, the exercise of financial control, the performance of accounting and auditing functions, the management of the field services, the preparation of regulations, and the drafting of bills within the federal administration at the present time. It is in regard to some of these matters that numerous improvements, susceptible of adoption without legislation, are proposed.

The Report and most of the studies are the work of political scientists, many of whom had previously rendered service in improving state and local administration. A few of the studies are couched in rather technical language which the plain people in Congress and in other non-academic circles doubtless find hard to understand; but in the main these essays are characterized by realism, vigor, and directness. They are not overloaded with facts, but only three can be said to be deficient in them. A good many legal critics, including the writer, have pointed out the inadequacy that is believed to be present in the analysis of the work of the regulatory commissions which is contained in the Report and in the study that is devoted to this subject. The merging of these agencies into the departments was eliminated from the bills introduced into Congress to carry out the Committee's recommendations.

The report itself is written in an especially distinguished style, constituting it an eloquent plea for effectiveness in democratic administration. The Government Printing Office has supplied a typography and a format that are worthy of the contents of the volume. The American people might well take pride in the entire product. They can achieve no greater destiny than the one an understanding of its message would help them to attain.

RALPH F. FUCHS.

Washington University School of Law,
St. Louis, Mo.