Book Reviews

Science and the Presidency

Presidential Management of Science and Technology. The Johnson Presidency. W. HENRY LAMBRIGHT. University of Texas Press, Austin, 1985. xiv, 224 pp. $25. Administrative History of the Johnson Presidency.

In many ways, the Executive Office of the President is the most difficult governmental institution to study. Members of Congress vote, represent constituencies with relatively easily identified interests, and accomplish their objectives by making written proposals in a formal decision-making process. Judges write opinions in which they are called upon to defend the basis for decisions. Even bureaucrats face the full gamut of procedural requirements that apply to their particular domains whenever they agree to a contract, promulgate a regulation, or make a grant. Within the presidency—that is, the president and the collection of officials who have his trust—the forces driving the decision process are far murkier. The presidency is a dictatorship, but a largely unmanageable one that requires considerable delegation of responsibility and authority. Written trails are left about the reasons for a decision, but the allocation of true influence among the players and the key arguments that tipped the balance are usually very difficult to identify.

W. Henry Lambright has, therefore, taken on a formidable task in trying to explain how science and technology policy was made and implemented during the Johnson Administration. The purpose of his book is to address certain key issues about science policy: how and why certain issues become important, the role of the president in prioritizing issues, causing policies to be adopted, and shepherding the implementation, continuation, and perhaps eventual termination of a policy. Lambright also seeks to assess the influence of the president's science adviser and the overall science and technology policy that emerges from the "technoscience presidency"—that is, the president and the collection of major players in the executive branch on science policy issues.

Not surprisingly, Lambright's conclusions are largely negative and pessimistic. He finds science policy in and since the Johnson Administration to be chaotic and inconsistent because it is fragmented. Instead of connecting science policy to broader social objectives regarding research, technology, and education and centralizing its management to promote coherency, Johnson and his successors dispersed programmatic initiatives and control on a program-by-program basis largely in response to short-term crises and fads. Johnson apparently viewed the role of science and technology as being to provide a "technical fix" to the problem of the moment, whether it be infiltration of North Vietnamese into South Vietnam, the commitment to put a man on the moon, the slow pace of productivity growth in the construction industry, or the Northeast power blackout. The general health of science and the state of the nation's technological base, or simple intellectual curiosity about how the world works that was unconnected to a current problem, would, if offered as a rationale for a program, cause the presidential eyes to glaze.

Lambright believes that the president's science adviser is the logical, if not the only, candidate to provide coherency and integration for science and technology policy. Only the science adviser has the knowledge base and the connections to external constituencies to perform this function. But to accomplish this task, the science adviser has to be a member of the president's inner circle of advisers. Unfortunately, in the Johnson Administration and subsequently the science adviser has not had this status. In asking why this has turned out to be the case, Lambright provides the following answers: (i) science policy was too complicated and busy to be handled by the tiny Office of Science and Technology; (ii) the institutional role of the science adviser in relation to Congress, the Bureau of the Budget, and the scientific community undermined its role as internal adviser by making it also an advocate of certain programs and a contact point with politically important constituencies; and (iii) the personal relationship between the president and his science adviser generally has not been strong. Lambright assigns primary importance to the institutional role and concludes by exhorting the president to fix it.

> What is needed is an approach that reflects both discipline and breadth. To have such a strategy requires a president who is oriented to the future. That is, it requires one who consciously seeks to shape the future and sees science and technology as a means of doing it. . . . If his eye was toward the future, he would have science and technology at the forefront of his thinking. . . . The foresight and skills of the president remain the key to any presidency [p. 190].

Certainly this book will prove interesting to readers who care about science and technology policy, especially those who have had relatively little exposure to the general scholarly literature on the presidency. Its method—a detailed classification of the steps of the decision-making process with examples from 24 policies that were considered or managed during the Johnson Administration—will bring some organization and structure to a complex domain of policy. The principal features of the book that are not to my taste are the absence of a systematic treatment of the 24 cases, the failure to explain in detail what a satisfactory science and technology policy would amount to in terms of coverage and performance, and the rather limp conclusion cited above. If for decades the nation has lacked a coherent science policy then the problem assuredly runs deeper than a need for exhorting presidents to have a clearer vision of the future. Moreover, if a philosopher-king ever does become president, he will need some guidelines on how better to organize the technoscience presidency and to bring order to the chaos without losing substantive political control to his scientific advisers. The book does not help us very much in understanding why presidents systematically underestimate the importance of science (assuming that they do), or how the system could be made to work better, or even how to recognize an improvement in its performance. Its principal contribution is to show where and how Johnson intervened decisively to alter the course of science policy and what roles were played by his underlings.

ROGER NOLL
Department of Economics, Stanford University, Stanford, CA 94305

Guiding Values

Habits of the Heart. Individualism and Commitment in American Life. ROBERT N. BELLAH, RICHARD MADSEN, WILLIAM M. SULLIVAN, ANN SWIDLER, AND STEVEN M. TIPTON. University of California Press, Berkeley, 1985. xiv, 355 pp. $16.95.

Habits of the Heart is part of a sociological tradition that sees American culture in crisis, analyzes the causes of that crisis, and calls for a spiritual renewal to redirect our lives. The crisis here is not fundamentally economic or political but personal. *Habits of the Heart* is directed at the problem of how Americans can construct some ultimate meaning for their personal lives. Its basic argument is classically sociological: People can construct meaning only from the cultural resources available in their society, resources that let them view their personal activities as contributing to some collective goal. In societies with a dominant religious goal, political crusade, or kinship tradition, people make sense of their daily lives by interpreting their activities as contributing to these ends. Modernization eliminates such cultural resources and makes the construction of meaning difficult. This is especially so in the United States, where the dominant culture