Administration in the Public Interest

Administration in the Public Interest

Principles, Policies, and Practices

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Bradley S. Chilton

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For Debbie, Michelle, Joshua, and "Dakota" (our pet Schnauzer).
SMK

For the Next Christendom.
BSC

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Preface

Welcome to our survey of public administration! Whether you are looking for a basic overview of public administration—or an in-depth analysis of the concept of the public interest—we believe you will find this text useful. We hope you find it a more *readable* examination of public administration. We believe it is also more *teachable* for instructors, too! We have taught public administration for many years. More and more students study public administration for understanding federal, state and local bureaucracy, for their personal career management in public service, as well as for studies in criminal justice, social work, and other closely-related areas. Yet, nearly all public administration texts seem to be written in cryptic, professional jargon—the language of *bureaucratese*. And few include an in-depth look at the reality of non-profit organizations or faith-based initiatives in public administration.

This book includes all the usual concepts, persons, histories, typologies, and chapter topics found in most public administration texts. Instead of civil service preparation; however, we thought you might instead enjoy a current-issues tour of conflicting values in public administration, such as constitutional rights, utilitarianism, and leadership. Our tour includes more specifics and interaction on nonprofits, faith-based initiatives, and private groups in public administration. Further, we weave it all together around a theme of the public interest. We believe in a commonsense understanding of public administration that is all about the public interest, the commons, and so forth—and we promise to be honest and drop the facade of pseudo-scientists in these pages. Each chapter relates concepts of public administration with action steps for things to do in your local setting, boxed inserts on interesting persons and events, exam preparation guide (someone will have to take a test somewhere!), recommended readings, and web sites.

We assume a post-positivist world in which the public interest is ordinary, common, meaningful, and central to any understanding of the activities of public administration. Those on a quest for a "value-free" public administration will find no refuge in these pages. We appreciate a philosophy of science beyond Nietzsche and logical positivism; we instead prefer a commonsense study of how things work, ordinary talk, and the experiences of real people. We prize a century of science history that debunks hypothesis-testing models of science; we favor more radically-empirical models of science such as grounded theory, the trash-can model, and other honest science. We seek a systematic understanding of administration in the public interest, such as described in the actual experiences of bureaucrats, officials, citizens and other real-world people—not by some hidden logic in the towers of academe. Scholars should have some acquaintance with these ideas, but many have not been exposed to the humbling feeling you get when you grasp the history and philosophy of science and realize just how little we know. And others have sold their souls for money or status in a brave new world. We have written this book without assuming your knowledge on these issues, but we will still re-visit and discuss these ideas periodically.

The public interest is just right as a concept for a better understanding of public administration—not too hard, not too soft. We are not like many contemporary secular

cynics who discard the public interest as literal nonsense because its existence cannot be proven with any of the five senses—and similarly throw out other valued concepts like God, love, justice, and hope. We believe these cynics throw out the proverbial "baby with the bathwater;" in their hard-nosed pursuit of scientific truth, they betray the very empirical principles of science they supposedly uphold. When we take a radically empirical approach to the public interest, we find it within ordinary experiences, commonly shared meanings, and practical outcomes. But neither are we like scholastics that would prove the existence of the public interest by some elevated logic. Instead, we find the public interest to be written on the heart, a pattern of decision-making by good public administrators which belies the praxis of actions, rules, and being. Our perspective comes out of an appreciation which seems ascendant today—from religion to ethics to politics to science. Like so many of the important meanings of life, we find the public interest to be heartfelt and understood in context. We hope you may share this sense with this book in which we seek to present a more systematic, yet realistic, understanding of administration in the public interest.

We write this book with hope for a new generation of students of public administration. The discipline seems more balkanized than ever before. Our scholarly generation seems to have pushed away perspectives in the field such as the study of public choice, nonprofits, faith-based organizations, criminal justice, education, health policy, and other areas, and embraced positivist, post-modern, and multi-cultural issues and topics, that really hold little if any relevance to the real world of public administration and public administrators engaged in the pursuit of the public interest.

Further, many scholars have left public administration for the attraction of greater freedom and prosperity in schools of business administration or other academic stations. For whatever reasons, we believe public administration is the poorer for it, both in numbers and ideas. But we are encouraged by many young scholars who seek to reintegrate these disparate perspectives and policy topics with traditional public administration approaches—often assembled around a broader conception of the public interest as we present in this book. To this future hope, we offer *ADMINISTRATION IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST: PRINCIPLES, POLICIES, AND PRACTICES*.

The text is divided into three parts. PART ONE introduces the conceptual, historical, constitutional, legal, and local framework, or the **foundations** of administration in the public interest. We discuss the public interest within contemporary and historical public administration and three perspectives on the nature of the public interest: practices, principles, and policies. The practices approach to the public interest focuses on life-world and leadership experiences in public administration and attends to the ethical theory of virtue. The principles approach to the public interest focuses on duties and rules, such as the Constitution and laws within public administration, and attends to the ethical theory of deontology. The policies approach to the public interest focuses on the calculation of happiness, individual preferences, or benefits/costs within public administration, attending to the ethical theory of utilitarianism. A highlight is our focus on state and local levels of public administration and a stand-alone chapter on federalism, states and communities, as well as the usual national level examples.

PART TWO is an examination of the core functions of public administration and the role of the public interest with each, or the **applications** of administration in the public interest. The core functions include getting organized, in theory and in-fact, and pursuit of the public interest through closed and open systems, in public and in private organizations. The core function of public management focuses on the entrepreneurial approaches and strategies of the New Public Service, and pursuit of the public interest through strategic planning and various leadership styles. Public personnel management

attends to historical and current recruitment and human resources development in the public workplace, and pursuit of the public interest in issues such as whistle-blowing and loyalty, unions/collective bargaining, and affirmative action. Public budgeting and finance focuses on a pursuit of the public interest by the utilitarian calculations of economic benefit/costs analyses in these historical and current tax-finance and budgetary politics at the local, state, and federal levels. Our examination of public policy processes and analysis include a variety of public interest approaches in the study of policy-makers, policy-influencers, and the action procedures and investigative and evaluative methods of assessing public policies. And we include the core function of nonprofits and faith-based organizations, examining the history, public interest applications, and ascendance of the voluntary sector.

PART THREE brings together our findings on the public interest theme throughout the chapters with a future hope for public administration, or the **lessons** of administration in the public interest. Our analysis of administrative ethics applies public interest findings throughout the book to basic definitions and systems of philosophical ethics, including utilitarianism, deontology, and virtue ethics. We critique four dominant approaches to administrative ethics, including Terry Cooper's rational-comprehensive model, John Rawls' justice as fairness model, John Rohr's constitutional regime values, and the approach of religion and spirituality in the workplace. We apply lessons of the public interest to current concerns with administrative accountability, professionalism, ethics codes, and efforts to control or elicit ethical administrative behavior. Finally, we conclude with a future hope, embedded in trends such as information technology and administrative ethics, to anticipate a truly public aspiration of administration in the public interest.

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It is not possible to name all the persons—our faculty and mentors, colleagues, students, friends, and family—who have directly or indirectly contributed to the development of this book. It would require many more pages, and even then we may miss someone. Please know that you are all dearly appreciated—and you know who you are! We give special thanks to the support of chairpersons and administrators at our various academic stations that have supported this project, including Appalachian State University, Campbell University, Patrick Henry College, Regent University, and the University of North Texas. We appreciate this publication birthing by Keith Sipe, Publisher at Carolina Academic Press. We also give thanks to folks at Wadsworth Publishing Company, such as Editor-in-chief Michael Rosenberg, Editor Laurie Runion, and others who solicited this book, encouraged us with its potential, and sent us with good graces to Carolina Academic Press. And we are especially appreciative to the many anonymous outside reviewers who carefully read, gave insightful constructive criticism, and followed through with directions needed.

The intellectual and spiritual heart of this book came from the decades of dialog and friendship since we were young newbie junior faculty together in the Department of Political Science/Criminal Justice at Washington State University-Pullman. It was a time of intense debate over ideas, earnest aspirations for our shared discipline of public administration, and often laughter—at ourselves and our limitations, as well as at the comedy of our times. We sought to articulate a new perspective on life, spirituality, and even public administration that reflected the ascendance of the next global Christendom that we felt a part of—in which we remember the pools of transcendence. After the decades and many explorations of diverse academic stations, we now come together to express some small portion of that vision. We may not have written it all down in these pages, but we stand in responsibility for this book.