James Wilson And Bureaucracy Essay, Research Paper

Wilson’s main theme throughout this book is that the reason American agencies are operated the way they are is, because of the way we as a society have designed them to be run. Wilson argues that bureaucrats are people who are behaving in response to the incentives, laws, rules and organizational structures that make up our public agencies.

Wilson identifies three organizational levels, the technical or operator’s level, the manager’s level, and the executive or organizational level.

\* The operators deliver the services people associate with a specific agency or department. They are closely in touch with the needs of clients and are in a good position to comment on how well specific policies, when implemented, affect clients. These include teachers, police officers, fire fighters, etc. They know their role in the organization as a whole, but only their part. The organization’s credibility depends on how well these operators do their jobs.

\* The executive’s responsibility is to convince people and groups who can influence agency mission and resources that what the operators are doing is worthwhile. Credibility is established as executives convey agency needs along with information about those needs and the importance of the agency’s mission to those who can support the agency. The executives are also responsible to translate political and value concerns in the agency’s environment into direction, mission, goals, objects that the agency can fulfill as a way of inserting the agency into politically important context. The goal is to link the world of influence outside the agency into support for the agency and its mission.

\* The managers are responsible for making the operators life easier by providing the operators with the resources they need and by protecting them from political or other outside influence so the operators can concentrate on doing their job. Managers are also responsible for insuring that their work is done in accordance with agency goals, policies, rules and regulations so that the operator’s work will not create political difficulties for executives who are trying to build credibility for the agency. The manager’s job is to make connections between the operators and the executives. They translate the executive’s big picture into smaller pictures relevant to specific operators. They also try to inform executives of what is going on at the organization’s edges, so that they have a more accurate understanding of what is going on where the organization’s real work is being performed.

Private organizations are often more efficient in producing the same type of goods and services that are governmental agencies due to the constraints that are put on these public bureaucracies. These include bidding procedures that include minority preferences, low bids (even at the expense of quality work), the use of more expensive products, because of regulations (i.e. products made in America rather than a country that produces it for less), the price preparing the documentation proving compliance for these rules, and many others. In order for these agencies to run more efficiently we need to make sure that these agencies are provided the resources to perform the tasks they are designed to perform and lessen the unnecessary red tape they are required to adhere to.

Wilson lists three constraints that are common characteristics of public agencies. The control over revenues, the inability to allocate the resources in accord with the preferences of the organization, and agency goals are vested in groups that are external to the organization. These are largely legislatures, courts, politicians, and interest groups. These governmental constraints limit the efficiency of each organization.