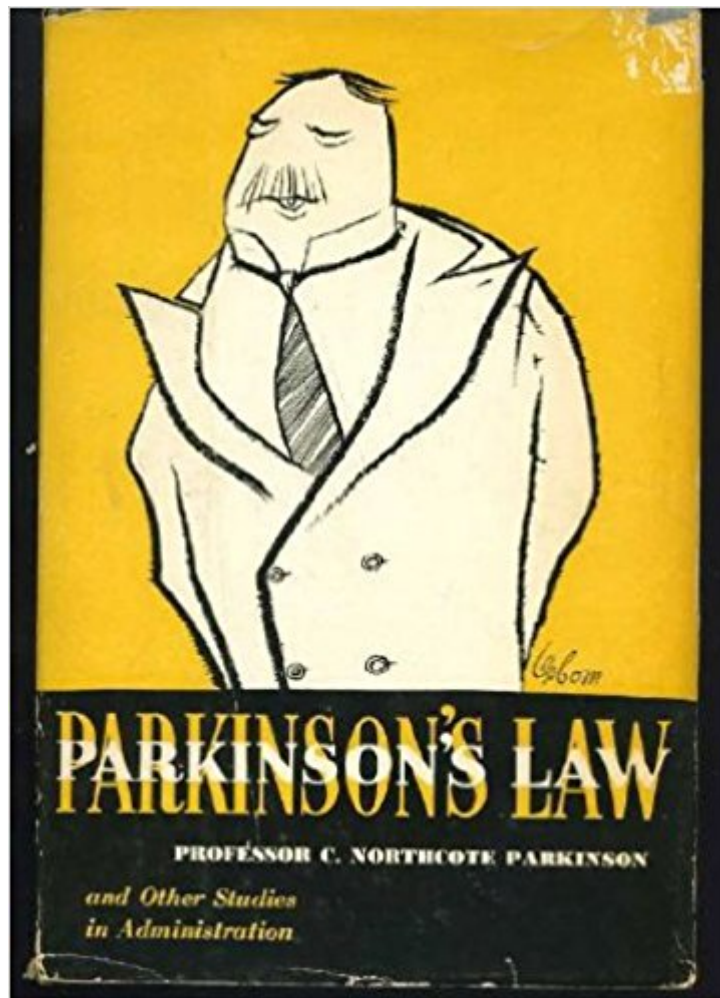


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# Parkinson's Law, And Other Studies In Administration



## Synopsis

Parkinson's Law, and Other Studies in Administration [Hardcover] 1957

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

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Unlike technology, administration hasn't changed much since man created bureaucracy. Parkinson adds amusing and insightful information to understanding bureaucracy. I mentioned this book to a management instructor a few months ago and he immediately added it to his reading list for his students. Since there is no correlation between the actual objectives or outputs of the bureaucracy, One might read something like "The Banality of Evil" to understand the bureaucratic mentality and its potential hazards to the real world.

I bought this book to explain to my MD son how organizations function, regardless of their purpose. Parkinson used the British Navy and a maiden lady as examples; I found from experience that his laws were equally applicable to American industry and civil service as well as to our universities. I believe my son will find them equally applicable to the medical clinic. I was fortunate to have the experience of hearing Parkinson speak to our department when he was visiting professor at our university fifty years ago. His thoughts on the birth, maturing and eventual withering of organizations was scary in that we were just achieving his pinnacle indicator, a new building. His idea of how to tell the important people at parties has fit every major event I've ever attended and has given me

pleasurable evenings of observation which might have been dreary times. Hats off to you, C. Northcote Parkinson, and to your tongue-in-cheek laws. I feel honored to have an autographed copy of your book and will cherish it together with your memory.

Professor Parkinson turned light onto a situation that no one else seemed to have noticed. His commentary is vital for anyone involved in management.

"Heaven forbid that students should cease to read books on the science of public or business administration -- provided only that these works are classified as fiction...intermingled with volumes about ape men and space ships, these textbooks could harm no one" This quote, from the preface, sets the tone for the rest of the book. We've all seen just how efficient government and corporate bureaucracy is, but Parkinson shows us that we still give them too much credit. This devastating and witty satire goes after every aspect of administration and really makes one wonder how anything ever gets done at all. And it was written in the 50s. Given the expansion of government and the rise of multinational corporate conglomerates since then, this book is as relevant now as when it was written. Pick it up and find out just how deep the rabbit hole of incompetence goes. Parkinson begins, appropriately enough, by describing Parkinson's Law: "Work expands so as to fill the time available for its completion." Thus, a retired old lady can spend hours writing and mailing a postcard, while a busy man will get it done in a few minutes. Closely related is the steady expansion of bureaucracies: every bureaucrat wants assistants both to increase his importance and lighten his workload, but it turns out that managing these assistants (who will eventually want assistants of their own) takes up any time he might have saved, and before long there are five people doing a job that one man was perfectly capable of doing himself. Bureaucrats create work for each other. To illustrate this point, Parkinson points out how the staff at the Colonial Office swelled while the Empire was losing its overseas colonies and how the Royal Navy hired more clerks and officials at a time when most of the capital ships were decommissioned and the number of seamen fell by 30%. That's all in the first chapter. Later, Parkinson shows how budget committees spend their time. Nobody on those committees knows much about nuclear reactors, so there's not much to discuss about a \$10 million proposal for a new reactor; it's approved within minutes. However, most of the committee knows about bicycle sheds, so they can have a lively debate on how to cut costs on a proposed bicycle shed for employees--and everyone knows about coffee, so naturally they'll have the longest, best-informed debate on the subject of whether to get a new coffee machine. Penny wise, pound foolish. Later chapters detail the inverse ratio between the size of a cabinet and

its effectiveness as well as why the best indicator of an organization's decline is the construction of a new headquarters, among other morsels of wisdom. Some of the content might be a bit dated (and one chapter is arguably racist), but the rest of the book more than compensates. I highly recommend it.

This book will change your understanding how bureaucracy works

There are ten highly insightful, humorously written essays in this short gem of management literature, with Parkinson's Law being just one of them. Parkinson's observations about annual meetings, board meetings, the size of committees, hiring, the life cycle of physical plants, and more of the ins and outs of organizations are as priceless today as when they were written over sixty years ago. In over twenty years as CEO of a nonprofit organization, I have been grateful many times for having read --- and re-read --- this little book.

Good. As expected.

This is a one stop trip to sanity. If you ever wondered why big government is terrible then look no further. Parkinson's Law is a humorous and informative trip to clarity with a tongue in cheek humor that never stops. I've always loved this book and I just got another copy because I couldn't find the one I had. I remember the author on the old Tom Snyder talk show early in the morning and his cure for big government is still etched into my mind. Get this and laugh your way through it.

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