

RESEARCH REPORTS

Reviews of new research by public agencies and private institutions

“Making Government Work: A Common Cause Report on State Sunset Activity”

Common Cause, Issue Development Office, 2030 M St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036. 121 pp. \$3.00.

Sunset legislation, which provides for the automatic termination of government agencies unless they are recreated by statute, is a growing response to public resentment over lackluster government performance.

First conceived by the Colorado unit of Common Cause in 1975, Sunset laws have now been enacted in 29 states. They are meant to increase government accountability by establishing a timetable for executive and legislative evaluation of programs, laws, and agencies. The threat of termination provides the incentive for rigorous analysis.

“Sunset should not be a tool for those out to destroy government,” says this Common Cause report. “Nor should it be mere rhetoric designed to placate the public.” The authors propose guidelines for any workable Sunset law. Among them:

Programs or agencies covered should automatically terminate on a certain date, unless recreated; termination should be periodic (e.g., every six or eight years).

Sunset mechanisms should be introduced gradually, beginning with those programs to which they seem most applicable. (Twelve states have followed Colorado’s lead and focused coverage on regulatory agencies, such as public utility commissions and licensing boards, that have a heavy economic impact and are a source of dissatisfaction with government.)

Programs and agencies in the same policy area should be reviewed simultaneously by legislative audit and review committees in order to encourage consolidation and responsible elimination of unnecessary government bodies; consideration should be preceded by competent and thorough preliminary study.

Review committee membership should be rotated and should have review criteria to guide their oversight functions; there should be safeguards against arbitrary terminations, and the public should have access to information and meetings.

In its review of current Sunset legislation, Common Cause finds that most state Sunset laws follow these principles. All provide for automatic termination of government agencies, except in Alabama, which requires action by both houses of the state legislature. Nineteen of the laws require preliminary evaluation reports that can help legislators refine the goals and purposes of government agencies. Twenty-five of the states establish a periodic termination schedule, and all but three require public hearings.

Federal Sunset legislation placing almost all federal programs on a 10-year termination schedule was passed by the U.S. Senate on October 11, 1978, but no final action has been taken in the House of Representatives, where proponents expect to push for a vote in the current 96th Congress.

“The Ungovernable City: The Politics of Urban Problems and Policy Making”

The M.I.T. Press, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, Mass. 02142. 219 pp. \$4.95.

Author: Douglas Yates.

In the 1960s, many government officials assumed that the nation's urban problems could be eliminated with enlightened leadership and large infusions of money. By the early 1970s, however, it was apparent that the new urban programs launched during the administration of President Lyndon Johnson were having little effect.

The problem, says Yates, a political scientist at Yale, is one of government. The average city's policymaking system “is incapable of producing coherent decisions, developing effective policies, or implementing state or federal programs.”

Yates argues that urban policymaking is fragmented, overburdened, and reactive. City hall “may be forced to worry about a snowstorm one week, a wave of crime in its schools the next week, and a decision by the state or local government to shut down a city program in the third.”

In addition, mayors and other high-level administrators do not exercise

enough control over public service employees to ensure quality performance. Nor can they ensure that money is spent efficiently. City bureaucracies are usually so decentralized that it is impossible to know how essential services are allocated.

In Yates' analysis, city government is caught between the forces of neighborhood interest groups and higher level government. He suggests a “hybrid” solution that combines centralization and decentralization to ease the burdens on city government.

Some of a city's operating, planning, and financing responsibilities for transportation, housing, welfare, and education would be taken over by the state and national governments. Services with a strong neighborhood impact, such as police, fire, and education, would be decentralized to increase the powers of neighborhood-level institutions, both community organizations and government departments.

“Alcoholism Among Soviet Youth”

Radio Liberty Research, RFE-RL, 1201 Connecticut Ave. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036. (Research Report RL 291/78)

Author: Sergei Voronitsyn.

The Soviet Union is the undisputed world leader in consumption of *strong* varieties of alcohol (notably vodka), although it ranks only 12th in the overall quantity of alcoholic beverages consumed. What concerns Soviet officials, says Voronitsyn, analyst for Radio Liberty, is that young people are being introduced to alcohol at an

early age with serious repercussions for health, job productivity, and social harmony.

Soviet studies show that 90 percent of alcoholics in the USSR started drinking at age 15 and 33 percent of them before the age of 10. Some 80 percent of juveniles began drinking with parental consent, and adolescent

alcoholism is on the rise.

Laws restricting the sale of alcoholic beverages to minors are constantly violated. State economic plans assign sales quotas that government employees often meet by illicit sales to teenagers. One food store manager in Moscow told *Pravda* in October 1978, "We do have a conscience, and we also have children. We do not want them to become drunkards. But we have our plan, and we want to receive a bonus."

Official Soviet efforts to combat alcoholism appear to be punitive rather than therapeutic. Violating regulations on the sale and consumption of alcohol can result in a heavy prison sentence, transfer to a lower-paid job, loss of bonuses and travel privileges, and forfeiture of one's place on the waiting list for an apartment.

Occasional articles in the Soviet press urge the creation of an All-Union Temperance Society to lead the fight

against alcoholism. But they have received no endorsement from official quarters. Suggestions for some form of prohibition have been rejected.

The ambiguous attitude of Soviet authorities, says Voronitsyn, has its origins in decisions taken during the early years of Soviet rule. In 1925, a wine tax and a state vodka monopoly were instituted as "temporary" measures to help finance economic development. Joseph Stalin saw the dilemma. In 1927, he told a delegation of foreign workers, "it would be better to stop producing vodka since it is an evil. But then it would be necessary to sell ourselves temporarily to the capitalists, which would be an even greater evil." To halt vodka production, he said, would mean forfeiting 500 million rubles of income with no guarantee of reduced alcoholism because the peasants would then make their own and risk poisoning themselves.

"Postharvest Food Losses in Developing Countries"

National Academy of Sciences, Washington, D.C. 20418. 205 pp.

Author: Board on Science and Technology for International Development.

By conservative estimates, at least 107 million metric tons of food were lost worldwide in 1976 as a result of spillage, contamination, attack by insects, birds, and rodents, deterioration in storage, and other postharvest problems.

The amounts lost in cereal grains and legumes alone would provide more than the annual minimum caloric requirements of 168 million people (one-quarter the population of India), according to this National Research Council study.

Losses are not concentrated at any single stage. Southeast Asian rice-loss estimates indicate that a few percent of a crop are lost in harvesting, a few percent in immediate postharvest

handling, and a few percent each in threshing, drying, storage, and milling. With perishables such as fruits and vegetables, losses accelerate rapidly, "often becoming total within weeks or even days."

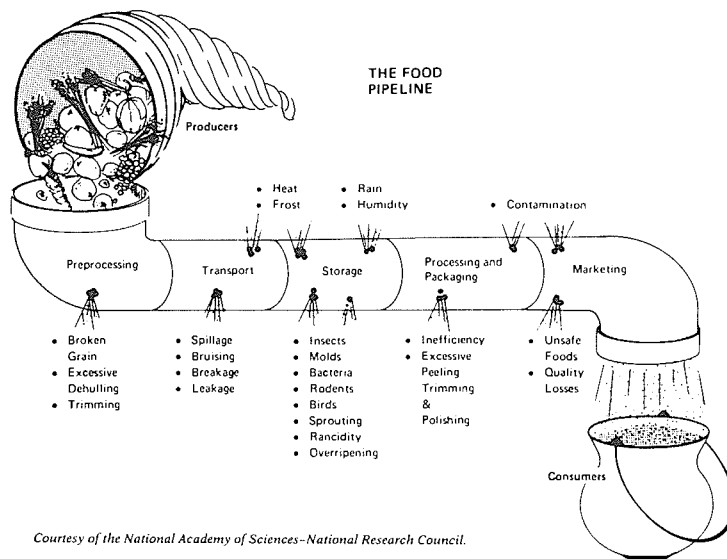
"Given modern technology and sufficient resources, it is theoretically possible to conserve most food commodities almost indefinitely," says the report. It is, however, an undertaking that requires careful planning and cost-benefit estimates. Low-cost cooling systems "offer the greatest possibility for extending the life of perishables . . . making this a priority area for research."

Traditional cereal grain varieties survive better in storage than newer

varieties selected for high yields, because they dry more readily and have a thicker seed coat that resists rodents and insects.

Reducing postharvest food losses by 50 percent, which the U.N. General

Assembly has recommended as a 1985 goal, would save an estimated \$5.75 billion worth of food annually. This would greatly reduce, or even eliminate, the present need of some countries to import large quantities of food.



“Referendums: A Comparative Study of Practice and Theory”

American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1150 17th St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036. 250 pp. \$4.75.

Editors: David Butler and Austin Ranney.

Interest in the use of popular referendums has been growing since the early 1970s, particularly in Western Europe and the United States.

Britain invoked a referendum for the first time in 1975 when it asked for voter approval of the government's decision to join the European Economic Community. Greece and Spain used referendums in moving from dictatorship to constitutional democracy in the mid-1970's. And regional

separatists in Quebec have announced their intention to hold a referendum on secession from Canada.

There is little published information on popular referendums, report Butler, a Fellow of Nuffield College, Oxford, and Ranney, a resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute. Their study is an attempt to fill the gap. Starting with the 18th century, they survey the history of referendums in the United States, Australia,

France, Scandinavia, Ireland, the United Kingdom, and Switzerland (a country described as being "addicted" to referendums).

Constitutional issues, such as a change in the electoral system or the status of a monarchy, have dominated popular referendums held worldwide since 1900. Territorial issues, such as membership in the EEC, rank second. Social issues, such as divorce, the status of religion, and prohibition of alcoholic beverages, place third. Abortion, homosexuality, and capital punishment have largely been avoided.

Only Switzerland and various American states have put these questions to popular vote.

Critics of referendums argue that they force a decision between two alternatives and discourage compromise. When compromise appears unlikely, however, referendums can be useful in ending debate and producing a decision that has legitimacy.

Referendums have been "valuable adjuncts to representative democracy," Ranney and Butler conclude, and "they are almost certain to increase in number and importance."

"In The Wake of the Tourist: Managing Special Places in Eight Countries"

The Conservation Foundation, 1717 Massachusetts Ave. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036. 278 pp. \$15.

Author: Fred P. Bosselman.

Tourists inevitably change the nature of the landscape they visit. The problem, says Bosselman, a Chicago attorney and consultant on land development policy, is how to control these changes so that tourism "enhances, rather than destroys, the qualities the tourist seeks."

Two areas where the development of tourism has been controlled with relative success are Mt. Fuji in Japan and the Lake District in England. Both are national park regions consisting of a mixture of public land and publicly regulated private land.

Britain's Lake District is managed by a planning board that must approve any new development proposals for the area. Local control is emphasized. The park region around Mt. Fuji is supervised partially by local officials and partially by the national Environment Agency, which administers new building standards and other development regulations.

Even formal planning, however, does not guarantee success. One effort by the French, for example, to develop an area of the Mediterranean coast at Languedoc has been disappointing. Although the project brought highways, harbors, hotels, and condominiums to a neglected area, the planners forgot the environmental costs. What once was a "vital wetland resource, which provided a breeding area for marine life, a bird habitat, and flood absorption area, has been lost," Bosselman writes.

In many urban areas, planning has come too late. Hotel construction booms have already grossly altered two of the world's most popular tourist centers—Jerusalem and Acapulco.

In rural areas of Europe, however, the problem is not hotel construction but what Bosselman calls "recreational sprawl"—the proliferation of campgrounds and cottages used by

"self-catering" tourists.

While not denying the negative impacts of tourism, Bosselman notes its positive benefits. "Insofar as the tourist seeks the beautiful, the exciting, or the authentic, the economic benefits

he brings may provide the incentive to create and maintain these qualities," he writes. If local popular support is present, the technology and legal means can always be found to preserve natural attractions.

"Disparity Reduction Rates in Social Indicators"

Overseas Development Council, 1717 Massachusetts Ave. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036. 80 pp. \$3.00.

Author: James P. Grant.

In 1975, World Bank president Robert McNamara estimated that 900 million people were living in "absolute poverty." They were subsisting, he said, "on incomes of less than \$75 a year in an environment of squalor, hunger, and hopelessness."

The World Bank, the Club of Rome, and others have called for a global effort to overcome the worst aspects of severe poverty by the year 2000. Their goals: an average life expectancy of at least 65 years, an infant mortality rate of 50 or less per 1,000 live births, and a literacy rate of at least 75 percent.

Grant, who is president of the Overseas Development Council, proposes a new standard—a Physical Quality of Life Index (PQLI) on a scale of 0 to 100—as an indicator of social progress. The PQLI integrates infant mortality, life expectancy, and literacy into one rating. A PQLI of 100 is defined as the condition that will probably exist in the most highly developed countries by the year 2000 and in which all basic human needs are satisfied. Present PQLIs range from Niger's 14 to Norway's 97 (the United States rates a 93).

Progress toward the satisfaction of

human needs can be measured by the rate at which the gap, or discrepancy, between the PQLI of a developing country and the ideal 100 is being narrowed. This is defined as the Discrepancy Reduction Rate (DRR). If a developing country is merely to halve the discrepancy between its present PQLI and the ideal 100 by the year 2000, it will have to achieve an annual average DRR of about 3.5 percent.

Such rapid progress will be difficult, but possible, even for countries with low income levels. Between 1960 and 1975, Sri Lanka, with a per capita GNP of \$200 in 1976, increased life expectancy from 61 to 68 years, increased literacy from 61 to 78 percent and cut infant mortality from 57 to 45 per 1,000 births for an overall annual DRR of 3.5 percent.

The exact recipe for achieving rapid progress remains elusive, but improvements in nutrition, housing, and health care are essential.

Since the poorer Third World countries are in no position to carry the whole burden, Grant concludes, annual global assistance to them between 1980 and 2000 will have to total \$12 to \$20 billion.
