

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS OF GOVERNMENTAL RESEARCH

In September, 1970, the Bureau of Governmental Research of the University of South Carolina began its twenty-sixth year of service to the State. This issue of *Governmental Review* is devoted to looking at some of the accomplishments of the Bureau and some of the developments in state and local governments during the past twenty-five years. The Bureau was organized in September, 1945, as the Bureau of Public Administration, with the Chairman of the Department of Political Science as its Director. Funds made available by the Tennessee Valley Authority and the General Education Board of the Rockefeller Foundation for a state by state study of natural resources in the Southeast influenced the University to create the Bureau and also to provide support for it from state revenues. During this same period, similar bureaus were established by many other state universities in the Southeast. For a number of years these governmental research bureaus participated in joint projects and in efforts to acquire research funds from private sources to study governmental problems common to the Southeastern area.

Since the beginning, the Bureau has been under the supervision of the Chairman of the Department of Political Science who directs its activities as a part of the overall function of the department at the University. In addition to research and consultation duties, most bureau staff members have also served as faculty members. Often, over the years, teaching and faculty duties have consumed much of the bureau staff members' time and effort—depending partly on the number and types of courses offered in a given semester. When time spent on regular faculty duties associated with the Department of Political Science is accounted for, the professional staff of the Bureau has rarely reached the full-time equivalent of two and one-half positions.

The Bureau has received financial support from a number of different sources. From the beginning, the University has supported the Bureau as part of a total public service program to the state of South Carolina. In 1964, through the active efforts of the South Carolina Municipal Association, the General Assembly began to supplement University funds with special appropriations for the Bureau for research, training services, publications, and general assistance needed by state and local governments. To indicate a broader scope of activities than in earlier years, at this time the name was changed from the Bureau of Public Administration to the Bureau of Governmental Research and Services. Beginning in 1969, the Bureau has received funds under Title I of the Federal Higher Education Act for the development of training programs, guidebooks, ordinance compilations, and general counseling services. From time to time, funds have been obtained by making a charge based on actual cost for a service or a study which benefits only a specific agency.

OBJECTIVES OF THE BUREAU

The Bureau of Governmental Research operates under five broad objectives. These are:

- (1) To serve as a depository and clearinghouse for information relating to governmental affairs, particularly for state and local governments in South Carolina;
- (2) To provide consulting service for governmental officials and agencies in the State as well as limited services for citizens;
- (3) To make special studies at the request of public officials in the State;
- (4) On its own initiative, to engage in research that is important to governments within the State; and
- (5) To develop and provide training programs and conferences for governmental personnel and officials.

Although it is useful to list objectives separately, actual work undertaken normally contributes to the achieving of more than a single goal. For example, a research publication may grow out of a series of consultations or a training session may show the need to develop a guide for local officials to follow. Often the findings related to a specific project may show that similar information should be made available to other officials and departments. Each of the objectives just listed will be reviewed briefly.

Clearinghouse for information. Through its staff, the Bureau collects laws, governmental publications, studies made by research bureaus throughout the nation, statistical compilations, and many other similar publications essential to inquiring into governmental problems. Special emphasis is given to materials on, and published by, South Carolina governments. These resources which are catalogued and housed in the bureau library are used by staff members in making studies, answering inquiries, and obtaining comparative and background information related to local problems. The collection is available to both graduate and undergraduate students studying questions on state and local governments and public administration. Generally, the library is also open to employees of governmental agencies and interested citizens.

Consulting services and special studies. Since 1945, bureau staff members have offered their services to governmental officials in South Carolina for consultation and special studies ranging over a very wide field. The nature of these activities can best be explained through the use of concrete illustrations from activities of staff members over the past few years. Consultations have been held on many subjects: how to establish sound procedures for choosing a police chief from among existing officers within a municipal police department, the availability of federal funds for certain programs, development of training programs for state and local governments, health and environmental administration and organization, uniform accounting, requirements of a sound business licensing law, and methods for reorganizing county government.

Much staff time has been devoted to special studies related to local and state problems. In recent years, the following listing shows some of the most significant

special studies participated in by bureau staff members: legal procedures related to merger of governments within a county; state constitutional revision—involving preliminary studies, drafting of a proposed constitution, and developing procedures for getting voter approval; methods for providing municipal services for a low income area just outside an incorporated city; reorganization of state health services; governmental and social problems of an area undergoing a thorough ecological study; supervisory relationships among law enforcement personnel of the Wildlife Department; a guidebook on municipal business licensing; and a manual for magistrates. While several of these studies involved only a short period of time, many of them required more than a year to complete.

Frequently, studies made the Bureau influence governmental action, even though the exact extent may be difficult to establish. A few illustrations will suffice. Many business license ordinances have been revised on the basis of information in the guidebook. Health studies have influenced the establishment of health planning districts within the State. A study on the usefulness of legislative councils preceded the organization of one by the South Carolina General Assembly. The municipal election laws for small towns of the State were changed following the publication of a study revealing the need for such amendments.

A special series of studies began in 1969. Since that time ordinances of the small towns have been revised and codified for a number of South Carolina municipalities. This work is being done on a cost basis by qualified University law students, who are supervised by an attorney on the bureau staff. Through this project the ordinances of many towns are being revised, improved, and updated. Without this service, many small municipalities would not be financially able to have codifications made. Up-to-date ordinances are often required before a town may qualify for some federal and other types of grants. At the same time, a number of possible future city attorneys are receiving significant laboratory training in municipal law.

Research. Many research studies which have been prepared through the initiative of the bureau staff members have been of significant value to governmental agencies and citizens alike. A number of studies prepared by the Bureau resulted from the interest of the author rather than being based on a direct request. Yet, these studies are related to specific problems of government. The ideas for such inquiries are generally related to studies which have been officially requested or which grow out of needs revealed through meetings or discussions with governmental officials or interested citizens.

Such research reports as the following have been published: South Carolina's Natural Resources, Municipal Government in South Carolina, On Politics and Politicians, Business Licensing in south Carolina Municipalities, Presidential Voting in South Carolina, Antipoverty in South Carolina, and Three Hundred Years of Development Administration. Overall the Bureau has published more than twenty-five such studies not including numerous short monographs issued in limited numbers. In addition, many short articles prepared by the bureau staff are published in the Governmental Review.

Since 1960, this Review has been issued quarterly and is distributed throughout the State, including high schools.

The staff frequently cooperates with out-of-state research agencies in supplying information concerning South Carolina government. Sometimes, this is simply reporting. Other times, a thorough analysis on a particular subject must be made. For example, contributions have been prepared for national studies on coroners, political parties, apportionment within the General Assembly, and state constitutional revision.

Training for governmental employees. The bureau staff has always stressed the importance of in-service training and conferences for governmental employees. Until 1969, training services were primarily directed toward municipal employees. Training programs began on a regular basis in 1953 when the first conference for municipal finance officers was held. Several training programs were conducted annually from 1953 until 1969 when the Bureau received a grant under Title I of the Federal Higher Education Act. Funds under this grant, together with state matching revenues, have permitted the Bureau to retain a full-time training director, employ other regular staff on a part-time basis, and to obtain other qualified instructors when needed. In addition, the grants help to defray the overhead costs associated with the training program. Training programs are being provided for municipal, county, and state personnel. The programs range from one-day conferences to seminars covering twenty-four or more hours of instruction. The scope of the training since 1969 may be illustrated by the following listing: seminars for building officials, supervisory methods courses for state and local employees, seminars for mayors and councilmen, courses in municipal finance administration, programs in supervisory techniques for public works supervisors and foremen, conferences for county council members, and yearly conferences for city finance officers and attorneys. Thus, it can be seen that some training programs are designed primarily for elected officials while others are intended for full-time employees. Training programs are offered in cooperation with the South Carolina Municipal Association, the Association of Counties, the State Personnel Division, and the regional councils of government.

Training programs are very essential to the proper administration of government within the State. For example, newly elected officials need to understand the laws and become familiar with recognized administrative techniques. Supervisors should understand how to work with employees, methods for achieving full performance, and techniques which promote good human relationships. Elected and appointed officials must keep abreast of the times and should know ways for getting financial and other assistance for the programs they administer. The opportunity to attend classes and conferences with fellow employees is a good morale booster as well as a means of learning.

Aid to citizens. Believing that interested and active citizens are an asset to good government, the Bureau of Governmental Research has helped citizens whenever

possible. Often citizens wish to study a governmental problem, but do not know where to start or how to obtain information related to the proposed study. On many occasions, citizens need qualified people to read what they have written on a governmental problem and to advise them on accuracy, omissions, and the soundness of their findings and conclusions. Often, a taxpayer has an idea but needs help in understanding if his idea can be pursued by him or if his proposal is a major research assignment. On numerous occasions help is sought on data needed hopefully to win a private argument.

During the course of a year, staff members are called upon to make public appearances or to participate as panelist or consultants for a discussion group. The request may come from a service club anywhere in the State, a church group, the League of Women Voters, any number of women's organizations, students in another university or college, a television station, or the sponsors of the annual Girls' State.

GRADUATE TRAINING

Bureau personnel aid in the teaching of political science, particularly the courses related to public administration and state and local government. A staff member also administers the master's degree program in public administration. This special master's program began in 1967 and is designed especially to train students who are or will be working in government. Students are required to take twelve hours in courses related to basic public administration and, then, they may select additional hours from a wide variety of graduate subjects offered by the University. The program is designed so that a student may pursue a course of study which prepares him for a management career, or to be a personnel expert, or, perhaps, to work as a transportation administrator.

Currently there are six full-time and several part-time students enrolled in the program. Each year the number of students has been doubling. Upon graduation, all will be available for employment by the various governments in South Carolina. Two recent graduates are holding administrative posts in Columbia and Rock Hill, while a third is serving at the present time in the armed forces. In the immediate years ahead, many more graduates of the program should be prepared to assume important administrative positions within our governmental structure.

SERVICE ON PUBLIC BOARDS

Bureau staff members have not only made studies and counseled a governmental problems, they have also served on a number of boards, commissions, and committees created to inquire into governmental problems. Such service has extended over a long period of time and has involved a number of governmental levels and problems. Members of the staff are or have served on boards and commissions inquiring into such problems as: the merger of a city and county government, developing a personnel system for the state government, uniform accounting for county governments, community health

services, public health planning, and training methods for state employees. Service on public boards and committees helps the Bureau to participate actively in the solution of problems facing our governments and also aids in relating teaching and research to practical governmental processes.

In some cases, the personnel of the Bureau have served as the executive officer for some of the commissions established by the state. Recent examples are: the T-Square training program, the Constitutional Revision Commission, and the Committee to Study the Need for a State Personnel System.

THE NEED FOR A UNIVERSITY PROGRAM

Looking back over the last twenty-five years, and at the same time considering the recent past long with the future, it is evident that there is a great need for the services of a staff trained in public administration to make inquiries into state and local problems—and at times federal ones also. The experience of twenty-five years has indicated that governmental problems have a habit of coming to the forefront over and over again. Some are resolved for a while, only to arise again years later. Others are studied in depth at a specific time, but the fruits of the studies are not realized for years to come—frequently through restudying the same problem.

It is interesting and revealing that the first study made by the Bureau was on natural resources in the State. This study is still a useful source of material and background information for many of the current inquiries being made into the relationship between resource management and development and ecology, health, and pollution. The same type of study made in 1945 should be undertaken again. Among the first studies made by the Bureau at the request of members of the General Assembly were on such matters as automobile taxation, a board of regents for higher education, and a divorce law for the State. Although many years intervened, the State eventually acted in all these fields.

Inquiries made twenty years ago into the problems and nature of state constitutional revision served state officials making today's constitutional changes. Background information on the state's constitution was available, materials had been collected over many years, and staff members were available who were familiar with the task at hand. Also, in 1949, the first study looking toward the establishment of metropolitan government occurred in an area that is considering the question at the present time. Three major studies have been conducted on municipal business licensing and all useful to the present investigation being made on the need for changes within the legal framework. Many other illustrations could be used to show how the past and the present are related and how continuity of staff and resources aid in understanding and solving problems.

With the rapid urbanization of some of our areas, the demand for well-trained employees—professional and others, the growth of governmental services in breadth and

complexity, and the need for frequent evaluation of the adequacy of services and the level of government which should administer them, the type of services which the Bureau of Governmental Research has performed in the past will continue to be urgently needed in the State. In fact, a very convincing case can readily be made that such services should be greatly expanded. A cooperative program of governmental research and service involving university instruction for undergraduate and graduate students, research of general interest to the State, consultation and informational services of governmental agencies and officials, preparation of studies on specific governmental problems, and training programs for state and local personnel is a sound approach. Such a cooperative program aids the University, governmental officials and agencies, and citizens. Stated simply, it helps the State.