SUMMARIES

On Developing the Committee System of the Finnish Parliament

by Olavi Salervo

The working procedures of the Finnish parliament are still mainly the same as they were when the representation of estates was replaced by the unicameral parliament in 1906. However, the circumstances of today differ widely from those of the beginning of this century. Along with other responsibilities of the state, the legislative and financial activities have increased tremendously. The consequence of this has been the prolongation of the yearly sessions of the parliament from a few months to almost a year.

Under the changed circumstances, the working procedures do not satisfy the new requirements any more. In particular, this holds true of the committee system. As the matters of the agenda of the parliament have to be prepared in a committee before the plenum session, the ability of the parliament to work things out is crucially dependent upon the capacity of the committees. The principal victims of the work over-load and the poor capacity of the committees have been the initiatives of the representatives. After the Second World War a steadily increasing number of them has not been taken up for discussion because of the coming parliamentary election. During this decade the percentage of these wasted initiatives has been 80.

When attempting to remedy the shortcomings of the committee system one should pay attention to the division of labor between committees, to the number of committee members as well as to the working procedures. According to the constitution there are always to be 5 statutory committees each of which has strictly defined tasks to handle. In addition to them it is possible to set up special committees to handle — along with other things — also matters belonging to the tasks of some statutory committee. Several special committees have been set up yearly for many decades, and their tasks are in practice well-defined. Furthermore, there have been some special committees of a more temporary nature. They have usually been set up for the preparation of matters related to some narrow special field.

The work loads of the committees have differed widely from each other. At one extreme one can find committees having a very modest work load, whereas at the other extreme one can point out committees, such as the finance committee which alone prepares the yearly budget of the state and the legislation concerning the finances of the state. In order to utilize the capacity of each committee without overstraining any one committee, one should redistribute the work load of the committees effectively. Thus, one should not hesitate to change the committee legislation among other things by making the division of labor between committees subject to adjustments as the circumstances may require. In particular, one should scrutinize the possibility of distributing the budget preparatory work according to the administrative branches to those committees preparing the legislative and other matters in the respective fields. Thereby one could benefit from their competence also in the budget preparation.

Only the minimum number of committee members is indicated in the Finnish constitution. It is generally 17 in the statutory committees and 11 in special committees. In practive, the number of members has been 17 also in the special committees. As the number of active committees was generally not larger than 10 in 1920's, the sum of the numbers of members in committees was only 170 out of the 200 representatives. But as the number of committees has increased, the sum is now regularly 238. At its worst the situation was in 1968 when the sum was 271. As the cabinet members are not allowed to be committee members, the number of representatives belonging to two or more committees is even larger than one could infer from this figure. Furthermore, there have formed new organizations the members of which either have to be chosen from among the representatives or are customarily so chosen. Consequently, there have been difficulties in organizing the committee meetings so that a sufficient number of members is present. In order to avoid the difficulties the number of members in each committee should be diminished. For that purpose also the statutory minimum numbers should be diminished. In this way one could finally end up with a situation in which no representative is a member of more than one committee. Consequently, each representative could concentrate on the work of at most one committee.

The efficiency of committee work could also be improved by employing — more than at present — professional secretaries, by subdividing the committees into subcommittees to take care of some special tasks, by making more of the materials utilized by the government available for the parliament, by improving the possibilities for organizing committee meetings e.g. during the plenum sessions or during the holiday season etc.

As the reform of the constitution in its entirety has turned out to be politically difficult to accomplish, one should urgently concentrate on the development of the committee system as a kind of technical partial reform.

On the Structural Analysis of Political and Administrative Systems and on the Uses of Elite Data in this Analysis

by Ilkka Heiskanen, Eva Hänninen, Erkki Johanson and Ritva Mitchell

The paper aims on the conceptual level at the explication of the basic premises and the research perspectives of a certain type of structural analysis of political and administrative systems. The perspective advocated is strongly application oriented and aims at analyzing and evaluating both the formal internal structures of the systems and also their informal structural properties, i.e. their position within broader societal structures and their ties with the institutions and organizations that form these structures. Special attention is

paid to the relationship of elite studies with this type of structural analysis and to the uses of elite data in actual empirical structural research.

The paper first explicates the general premises of the advocated research perspectives and enumerates the reasons for engaging in this kind of research. A general paradigm starting from the control theoretical premises and defining the structures in terms of institutional and organizational ties within and between the controlling and controlled systems is first outlined. Using the paradigm the importance of the structural factors is indicated. The narrow control theoretical perspective is then broadened by the idea of the multiplication of the systems levels and by heuristic interpretation of the general structural properties of the society as structural properties of a very high level diffuse »controlling system». It is, however, suggested that in actual analysis of political and administrative systems the structural properties of the society should be preferably interpreted in terms of the theories of sectoral/class coalitions or clashes and then used as contextual specifiers in the analysis of »partial» political and administrative systems carried out within application oriented controller-controllee designs.

The paper suggests that elite analyses can offer valuable insights and data for this type of structural analysis. Elite data can be used to map the informal institutional and organizational ties that bind together the controlling and controlled systems and influence the efficiency of the controlling actions. But the data can be also used on the empirical level to deliniate controlling and controlled systems (in case of multi-unit multi-level relations). It can be also used to define the broader structural properties of the whole society within the framework of the sectoral/class coalitions and clashes. This kind of uses of elite data also helps elite analyses to get out from the simplistic narrow perspective of viewing the elite groups only as special priviledged leisure class or corrupters of democratic processes.

The paper analyzes also some major theoretical approaches that have helped to formulate the advocated research perspective and that can be applied and further developed within it. Special attention is paid to those approaches — especially John Rawls' analysis of distributive justice — that can be used to elaborate the value criteria for the evaluation of the structural characteristics of political and administrative systems.

In the final part of the paper two examples of empirical research designs for the structural analysis are presented. The first of them focuses on the public economic policies and the structural factors facilitating or hindering them. As an illustration empirical data on the Finnish business elite of the 1970's is presented. The second research design focuses on the analysis of the articulation structure (institutions and organizations mediating the public interests of the population to the decision-makers and administrators involved in production and distribution of public goods). As an illustration empirical data on the Finnish cultural elite of the 1960's and 1970's are presented.

In conclusion the practical application value of the type of research advocated is further discussed. It is suggested that besides mere critical and evaluative functions, the research results will also serve more »technocratically oriented» planning and designing of the structures of political and administrative systems.

New Political Economy — Political Economy?

by Kyösti Pekonen

In this article we mean by the new political economy a theory which had its origin in the United States in the beginning of 1950's. Perhaps the best known proponents of the tradition are economists such as Anthony Downs, Mancur Olson, Gordon Tullock and James Buchanan.

In the article we are trying to show that individualism is — and in what way it is — the most important principle of the new political economy. It should be pointed out that the concept of new political economy is misleading because the theory is basically individualistic: it does not study the relationship between politics and economics in the sense that these sectors could be separated from each other and that these sectors would have their own relative independence. Another main problem is the question concerning the public interest: how the advocates of the new political economy understand it? According to the commonly adopted view, collective goods are characterized by the property that all members of a society have equal access to them. Is this view of the public interest compatible with the interpretation of the new political economy?

It is easy to show that methodological individualism has its origin in the political economy. This means that individuals are viewed as the basic elements determining the action of both individuals and groups. The decision-making of the individuals should form the basis for the analysis of the public sector; the preferences of the individuals should, as far as possible, determine the final decision of what kind and how many collective goods the public sector is to produce. In other words, the proponents of this tradition think that welfare can be analyzed only in terms of the action, voting and preferences of individuals.

What, then, does the term »economy» mean in this context? First of all we must notice that the new political economy is a theory of rational behavior rather than a theory of material goods. For example, Olson states that an economic theory is in fact a theory of rational behavior and that it, therefore, is applicable to political science. In Olson's definition the economy is no longer a clearly defined sector in human and social life. The proponents of the theory tend to make economics a general science of human behavior. The economic starting point of the new political economy is manifested by the fact that the notions characterizing the exchange relationship of a free market economy and the terminology of the neoclassical economics are applied to politics. Politics is viewed as a relationship between a seller and a buyer where the exchange benefits both parties: both the seller's and buyer's interests are realized in the process of free exchange. In terms of politics this alludes to the idea that instead of the exchange of goods we study the exchange taking place in the elections. People exchange their votes for some benefit they are likely to get in the form of collective goods.

The central concept of rational behavior in the neoclassical economics is that of maximizing one's own interest. Maximizing one's own interest applies to public economy in as far as the elected representatives seek also their own interest — they realize their own interest by delivering collective goods. The voters maximize their own interests by voting for those candidates who are probably going to promote the voter's interest. So public interest is not a quality of a material good and the realization of public interest cannot be achieved by producing some particular goods in accordance with the public interest, because producing and receiving collective goods is based on maximizing one's own interest. The advocates of the new political economy think that public interest becomes meaningful in terms of the operation of the rules of decision making only. Everything else is based on an individual's own interest. This idea is not compatible with the classical interpretation of the public interest. While, for example, Hegel maintained that egoism and selfishness are the operative motives in a civil society only, the proponents of the new political economy tend to define even the state on the basis of egoism. They conceive the whole society (state and civil society) as a civil society. Thus, in the new political economy it is quite inconceivable that the public interest could be reflected by the qualities of collective goods.

The French System of Government, and what we can learn from it?

by Veli Merikoski

There is a close resemblance between the governmental systems of Finland and France. In both countries the constitution is based on the principles of strong presidential and parliamentary power, forming thus a mixture of the presidential system and the system of rationalized parliamentarism.

The problem of how to establish the principle of democratic responsibility in this kind of mixed system is equally important in both Finland and France. The fact that the president is elected by popular vote is not sufficient to satisfy the requirement of political responsibility, characteristic of democracy. Losing one's political position is to be the sanction of this responsibility, and there should be a way of putting this sanction into practice while the president is in office. But in neither country are there any constitutional procedures — analogous with the vote of confidence in the parliamentary system — by which either the people or parliament could force the president to resign. In France attempts have been made to fill the existing gap in the system of responsibilities; by referendum, governmental strike, impeachment of treason, and by a construction in which the president considers the result of the National Assembly election to be a vote of confidence. On inspection all these procedures turned out to be unsatisfactory. The same applies to the proposal to modify the constitution to the effect that the president could be forced to resign by referendum.

The conclusion of the comparison between the mixed systems of Finland and France is the fact that the insufficiences in democratic control over presidential power cannot be overcome by piecemeal reforms. The French Left has constantly been striving at normal parliamentarism, away from the present, somewhat authoritarian regime. Correspondingly, the best way to rehabilitate the Finnish system of government is to adopt the system of normal parliamentarism whereby the president is made dependent on the opinion of the cabinet members. As the cabinet is politically responsible to parliament, and parliament to the people, the democratic system of responsibilities will materialize also in the president's use of power. To save democracy, a constitutional reform is needed in Finland.