

**POLITICS & GOVERNMENT**

lation in committee. As a result, committee authority declined: While only 26 (mostly unsuccessful) amendments to committee-backed appropriations bills were offered on the House floor in 1965, since 1974 the annual number has averaged 100, of which half are adopted.

Cavanagh sees "creeping paralysis" in the House. The obvious remedy: allowing the majority party leadership, particularly the Speaker, to reimpose order. Meanwhile, the House of Representatives is not pulling its full weight in Washington.

### *The Bureaucracy Wins Again*

"Bureaucrats 2, Presidents 0" by Leonard Reed, in *Harper's* (Nov. 1982), Subscription Service Dept., P.O. Box 2620, Boulder, Colo. 80321.

President Jimmy Carter's 1978 Civil Service Reform Act was hailed as a major overhaul of the federal bureaucracy. But Reed, a *Washington Monthly* contributing editor, says the reforms have changed little.

The U.S. Civil Service, established under the 1883 Pendleton Act, has become an increasingly secure haven even for incompetent employees. In 1974, the Supreme Court ruled that federal workers have a "property right" in their jobs and cannot be dismissed without "due process"; dismissals can be appealed through many levels up to a federal appeals court. Although the 1978 law shortened the appeals process, firing "a single goof-off clerk," says Reed, could still take up to two years. In 1976, 3,500 of 2.5 million civil servants were sacked; in 1980, two years after the reform, only 2,632.

The 1978 law also established an Office of Special Counsel to protect "whistle blowers" against reprisals. But since June 1981, it has handled only four cases.

The centerpiece of Carter's 1978 reforms was the establishment of a Senior Executive Service (SES), then composed of 6,000 high-level bureaucrats who gave up tenured positions for what Carter called "the risks and rewards of competitive life." But the risks were never great, Reed contends. Only one SES employee has been dropped for poor performance, and those dismissed are guaranteed regular civil service jobs at their full SES salaries.

The SES salary scale, notes Reed, ranges from \$56,945 to \$67,200 (though temporarily capped at \$58,500), and each year one-fifth of the officials are eligible for bonuses of up to 20 percent. SES executives claim private sector salaries are higher, but in part because of generous federal pension plans, Reed says, few leave the government. Few even transfer from one government agency to another, although one of Carter's goals was to free senior administrators of ties to particular bureaucratic interests by regularly shifting them.

Reform of the bureaucracy is possible, Reed believes. But if Jimmy Carter could not succeed despite making the most determined effort of any President in recent years, he asks, who will?