

The Reign of the Unelected

Bureaucrats are running the country like communists. You will not like that.

Words by Jim Beers. Illustration by John Bardwell.

James Comey, Andrew McCabe, Peter Strzok and Lisa Paige are unelected FBI bureaucrats whose names are now household words. They clearly hate (the correct word) our president, his policies, and those who elected him. They used their government positions to write and selectively enforce the regulations to impose their personal views on the rest of us. Reports of their scurrilous activities are constantly modified in the media with soothing words that they are not like the “thousands of proud FBI agents” in our midst, but are they? Or is this just the latest exposé of an unseen malady rampant throughout the federal workforce?

President Trump is busy, we are told, “draining the swamp” in Washington. As someone retired from a federal natural-resources career, I would like to share a few thoughts about “the swamp” and those millions of bureaucrats who call it home.

I was a U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS) bureaucrat for more than 30 years. I transferred to Washington after stints in North Dakota, Minnesota, Nebraska and New York City. When I arrived, Congress was passing a procession of wildlife laws expanding federal authority exponentially and my agency was writing thousands of “new” regulations for all

the new laws. My agency, with a long history of managing and sustainably using wildlife in cooperation with state governments, was (in hindsight) remaking itself into a bureaucracy that was as opposed to its historic role and traditional duties as communism was to capitalism. Like the U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management, FWS management was to become wildlife protection; forest management was to become wilderness; range management was to become justification for government land closures throughout the West; and current levels of funding and manpower were, mistakenly, expected to expand exponentially forever.

Congress then passed a law to give federal hiring and promotion preferences to designated racial groups and women. Increased bonuses and promotions were awarded to federal bureaucrats who exceeded goals despite the paucity of qualified candidates. Consequently, hiring and promotion requirements were significantly reduced.

Simultaneously, enormously rich non-government organizations (aka NGOs) began insinuating themselves into the resource agencies as new bureaucrats and lobbyists for a “take no prisoners” approach to the new authorities: to take property with-

out compensation; eliminate hunting, fishing, trapping, tree cutting, grazing, rural communities; and to get “more” bureaucrats and “bigger” budgets. Hiring and promoting using diminished requirements mixed with “new wave” philosophies created ideologue bureaucrats who corrupted both the agencies and the universities competing for lucrative federal grants.

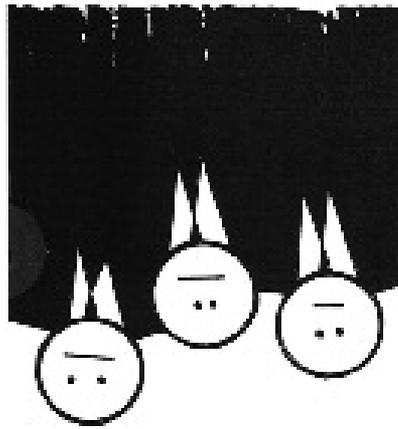
President Carter was all in for this. President Reagan tried to take it on to no avail (think Jim Watt and the Sagebrush Rebellion). President G.H.W. Bush stayed in the mold of those late 1960s to early 1970s Republicans and fostered a public persona as a lover of “the environment” and always “gave more” to “it.” President Clinton let “his” bureaucrats steal millions from excise taxes with impunity to do things that Congress had refused to either authorize or fund. Upon verification of the theft by a Government Accounting Office audit before a House Committee on Natural Resources (HCNR) in 1999, those bureaucrats responsible went unpunished and on to director of the agency and high-paying lobbying jobs after retirement. President G.W. Bush, like his dad, “loved” the environment by increasing land purchases and closures, increasing budgets,

and even providing sanctuary to one of the administrators involved in the theft mentioned above as he waited for a Democrat administration to return and reward him. President Obama, like his predecessors back to Nixon (except Reagan), gave carte blanche to bigger budgets and continued diminishment of natural-resource management and use, whose advocates by now were looked upon by the bureaucracy like supporters of a monarchy.

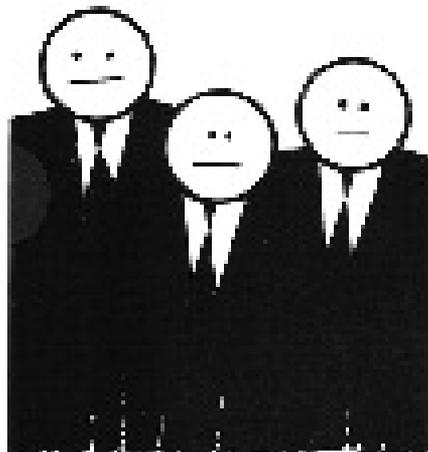
What would anyone with common sense think the result of all this is after 50 years? Would you speak of the theft of millions as involving only a few leaders and not the “thousands of proud U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service employees”? Much of the stolen money was distributed to top managers who had no right to the funds but kept quiet. Do you think anyone in the FWS, USFS or BLM thinks anyone ever gets in trouble for anything? Have these “new” bureaucrats not been hiring and creating clones of their personal values and policies? By the time Reagan was president, coffee chatter amongst wildlife bureaucrats exposed a deep hatred of him because he would “take away our authority,” “stop more land acquisition,” and “cut our budgets and pay.” Many of them came to mind as I followed the Strzok/Paige/McCabe memo reports.

Two years after my retirement, the General Accounting Office changed its name to the General “Accountability” Office. The reason? Female and minority CPAs in any numbers were not interested in bureaucracy so the history/sociology/English/et al. graduates being hired after accounting job requirements were lowered could not conduct *audits* but they could create *accountability* reports that could be whatever the bureaucrat wanted. In 1999, when I testified before the HCNR about the theft of millions, a GAO audit backed me up. Imagine today if some GAO urban studies’ major was asked to back me up: the perpetrators would not only still skate free, but the whole sordid affair would have never seen the light of day, much less the publicity of an open House hearing!

So, I am supposed to be “shocked” like Claude Raines in “Casablanca” because Lois Lerner, an IRS bureaucrat, denied conservative groups the same government benefits she shoveled out to progressive groups like coal into a steamship boiler? Or that her boss John Koskinen refused to turn over documents demanded by Congress and then, like the last Democrat presidential candidate, reported that they had been lost in a computer glitch?



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Am I supposed to nod solemnly when assured that the ATF bureaucrats knew nothing about Fast and Furious or that no State Department bureaucrats knew anything about the Benghazi debacle and nonrescue? That when no supporting documentation or explanation to Congress is provided, I quietly listen to how none of that has anything to do with the “thousands of proud bureaucrats—blah, blah, blah” in the State or Treasury departments?

The FBI is no different than any other federal agency. Rewarding bureaucratic devotion to the whims of the powerful, along with no real accountability, were developments noted by all bureaucrats. To disregard or deny this fact is to hide your head in the sand about a very important factor. The current federal bureaucracy is made up of our family members, friends and neighbors; to disparage them as a group is not my intent. My intent is to identify what must change.

When you see FBI cells spending work time hating us and scheming how they can run the country; when you see a government accounting function morphed into an “accountability” bureaucracy; when you see a firearms bureaucracy become a gun-smuggling/anti-gun bureaucracy; when you see wildlife bureaucrats steal millions to do what Congress prohibited; when you see a Forest Service supervisor close down ranches because she thinks government land “shouldn’t be grazed” or a rancher imprisoned as his cattle are shot over a land-use dispute or another rancher ambushed and killed by government bureaucrats for protesting unjust federal treatment by occupying a rural federal office, don’t assume it is an isolated incident by a small group of bureaucrats.

It takes more than throwing out pages of regulations that the next bunch can simply reissue. It takes more than “putting the right guy at the top.” It takes more than giving a rural Alaskan village access to medical help across a “wilderness” or reducing quadrennial presidential “gifts” of rural land takings for urban support. It takes changes or repeal of certain laws plus reformation of a bureaucracy workforce that has evolved in 50 short years into an abomination that threatens to destroy everything we hold dear. ■

Jim Beers has a bachelor’s degree in wildlife resources from Utah State and a master’s degree in public administration from the University of Northern Colorado. He lives in Eagan, Minn., with his wife, Casey.