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Challenging Bureaucratic Elites

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Challenging bureaucratic elites

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Schweik Action Wollongong is named after Jaroslav Hasek's fictional character Schweik (or Svejk), a soldier who created havoc in the Austrian army during World War I by pretending to be extremely stupid.

1. Introduction

The word 'bureaucracy' makes most people think of government -- departments of taxation, welfare, police, you name it. But actually bureaucracies are found everywhere: corporations, churches, the military, trade unions, political parties, schools, hospitals. Most people accept them as a necessary part of life, although they may complain about them. Nobody likes getting caught in bureaucratic regulations, popularly called 'red tape'.

Yet most bureaucracies are pretty new. Several hundred years ago there were hardly any bureaucracies like the familiar ones today. Bureaucracies have gradually become the main way to organise work. Their key characteristics are:

- hierarchy: bosses at the top, workers at the bottom;
- division of labour: different people do different specialised tasks, such as salespeople, secretaries and accountants in a company;
- rules describing the duties of workers;
- standard operating procedures.

Bureaucracies have some good points. Bureaucratic principles allow a certain degree of fairness: everyone is supposed to be treated the same way. There is a procedure to make sure work gets done.

But there are also problems. Many workers in bureaucracies find their work incredibly boring. Because work is segmented, it is hard to know what other people are doing. There is no apparent common social perception.

Bureaucracies can be used for antisocial purposes. Modern warfare is deadly because bureaucracies are so efficient in organising for military purposes, especially the weapons industry and the army but also the mobilisation of entire economies for war. The Nazi genocide was the work of an efficient bureaucracy.

Most of the members of the Nazi bureaucracies just did their jobs.

Considering how important bureaucracies are and the sort of problems they can cause, you'd think there would be plenty of information available about how to challenge them. But there isn't. Lots of researchers have studied how bureaucracies work, but only a few have studied how to change them.

We got onto this topic because we have been investigating nonviolent methods of resistance to aggression and repression. Suppose an aggressor takes over a country, as in the case of the Nazi occupation of Europe. To run the occupied countries, the Nazis often preferred to use the existing administration. In other words, the Nazis got the local bureaucracies to do their work for them, such as collecting taxes and keeping records on the population. This also included sending goods back to Germany, forced labour in Germany, and the arrest of Jews and others. Some of the bureaucrats resisted. Others cooperated. When top bureaucrats serve the cause of oppression, subordinates and outsiders need to know how to challenge them.

But many people would like to challenge the bureaucrats at the top -- what we call bureaucratic elites -- for other reasons. Some elites are corrupt. Some discriminate against particular groups. Some divert the organisation from its proper function. Since in a bureaucratic hierarchy there are 'elites' up and down the ladder, challenges may need to be made anywhere along the hierarchy.

We set out to find some examples of organised and effective grassroots challenges to bureaucratic elites. This was not so easy. Most challenges are unsuccessful. Even the challenges that are successful often just lead to changes in policies or personnel. The bureaucratic structures continue on as before.

We are interested only in challenges that are nonviolent and that are in support of goals such as justice, equality, freedom and liberation inside and outside the bureaucracy. Furthermore, we are interested mainly in challenges mounted from the bottom, especially by workers or clients. This means we haven't considered administrative takeovers or destruction of bureaucracies, corporate buy-outs or military conquest. Nor have we considered struggles between bureaucratic elites inside the same organisation or in different ones.

We did find some good examples. Some are recent and local challenges. We interviewed key individuals to find out the inside story. Most of all, we were interested in lessons about how to wage a successful struggle. We added a few cases documented in articles and books. We decided to include some unsuccessful challenges too. These provide some of the most useful lessons.

In [Section 2](#) we tell a bit about theories of bureaucracy. Since

we're interested in how to challenge bureaucratic elites, most of the theories are not very helpful. There are, though, a few ideas of value, especially the idea that a bureaucracy is similar to an authoritarian political system. Section 3 gives the case studies. In Section 4, we look at nonviolent challenges to authoritarian political systems and the lessons that can be drawn for challenging bureaucracies. Section 5 briefly describes some alternatives to bureaucracy. Section 6 sums up the insights from our analysis.

2. The nature of bureaucracy

What it is

Bureaucracy is a way of organising work based on hierarchy and division of labour. Hierarchy means that some people are officially in positions of power over others. In an army, generals give commands to colonels, colonels give commands to majors, and so on down to privates. Similarly, the chief executive of a company is officially in a position of power over their deputies and so on down to the bottom level of workers.

Division of labour means that different people do different parts of the work. For example, on a traditional assembly line in a car manufacturing plant, one worker might put the same bolts on car after car while others work on windows, fenders, painting and so on. Yet other workers specialise in car design, marketing, cleaning, accounting and so forth.

Hierarchy and division of labour are the key features of bureaucracy. Other characteristic features are standard operating procedures and rules which describe the duties of workers. This results in the familiar 'red tape' encountered by clients of large service bureaucracies. Workers follow detailed regulations, often causing frustrating delays.

A bureaucratic organisation can operate more or less the same irrespective of the identities of individual workers. As long as there is someone who can fill a particular slot and follow orders, operations will continue. Thus in a bureaucracy the workers are replaceable cogs. Each worker or cog does what is required; if one isn't working properly, then it can be replaced by another. No one is essential. Even the top boss can be replaced and things will go on just about the same as before.

Bureaucracies are very common in today's society. Most government bodies are bureaucracies, including government departments, schools, the military and the police. Most large corporations are run bureaucratically, as are most large churches,

political parties and trade unions.

This idea of bureaucracy is somewhat different from the everyday picture, which is usually of a government department such as the tax office. Government departments are indeed good examples of bureaucracy, but so are large corporations. The key is the way work is organised. When an organisation such as a bank changes from government ownership to private ownership or vice versa -- a process called privatisation or nationalisation -- often the actual work done is not affected very much. The bureaucratic structure is left unchanged.

Bureaucracy seems so common that people sometimes think it is the only way to organise work. But there are some other ways. Work is done in families -- cooking, cleaning, shopping, etc. -- but families are not bureaucracies, at least not many of them! Members of families are not replaceable cogs. It matters who is the mother or father, and good work does not usually result in a promotion up the hierarchy! The same applies to some small businesses, where personal relationships take precedence over official lines of authority. Some other nonbureaucratic ways of organising work are feudal estates, a free market of individual workers, and self-managing collectives.

Bureaucracy as a modern phenomenon

Bureaucracies are so common that it is tempting to think that they are inevitable and have always been the standard way of organising work. But actually bureaucracy has only become standard in the past couple of hundred years.

The rise of bureaucracy has been closely linked to the rise of the modern state. The 'state' is a term used to refer to the government and related entities including the military, police, legal system, and the various functions run by the government such as welfare, schools and diplomacy. The foundation of the state is its monopoly over large-scale violence that the state itself claims is legitimate, namely by the military and police, within a particular territory.

States aren't very old. There were some early states, such as the Egyptian and Roman empires, but they were the exception. Most people worked on the land and were largely unaffected by bureaucratic systems. The modern state as we know it really got going in Europe several hundred years ago. War and taxation were primary motivations. In order to obtain revenues for warfare, it was necessary to set up a system to collect taxes, and in order to obtain taxes from unwilling subjects, a military establishment was necessary. To keep track of people and their taxes required detailed record-keeping and people to keep the

records. The work of taxation officials was organised bureaucratically in order to avoid the special interests that would otherwise undermine the effort. Control had to be exercised at the top -- by the rulers, such as a king -- so that money was not siphoned off by intermediaries.

In many ways bureaucracy was a great advance over previous ways of organising work. Individuals such as the rulers of feudal estates could be unfair and cruel, rewarding their favourites and punishing others. Bureaucracy promised to end the personal biases and corruption that were so common in rule by individuals. Bureaucracies were supposed to work fairly. A person who did work well could be promoted, and it was not supposed to depend on family ties and other factors not related to performance.

Even so, it is helpful to remember that bureaucracy developed as a system ideally suited for the state and the military. Bureaucracies allowed a few people at the top to control the work of vast numbers of individuals. The military is the nearest to an 'ideal' bureaucracy, with rigid roles, rules and hierarchy. The military was essential to the rise of the state and vice versa, and both were linked to the rise of bureaucracy.

Needless to say, not all bureaucracies are the same. Patterns of control vary from organisation to organisation and can change. For example, in recent years many corporations in the manufacturing sector have eliminated middle management and introduced sophisticated technology, thus producing a different pattern of control.

Understanding bureaucracy

In most textbooks, bureaucracy is said to be a system of administration, for getting jobs done. The focus then is on how well the system is working, what problems there are, how to improve the performance of managers, how to forge appropriate links with other organisations, and so forth. This perspective is usually uncritical of bureaucracy as a system of organisation. It certainly gives no hints about how workers or clients might challenge bureaucratic elites. Indeed, among the vast number of studies of bureaucracy it is difficult to find more than a few hints for workers or clients on how to confront and change a bureaucratic system. That's one reason why we set out to find out about how to challenge bureaucratic elites.

Deena Weinstein and a few others have developed a perspective on bureaucracy that gives useful insights for challengers. They say that a bureaucracy is similar to a political system. In a bureaucracy, there are ruling groups and opposition groups,

attempts to climb the system and attempts to seize power.

A bureaucracy is *not* like a liberal democratic political system. There are no elections and workers have few civil rights. Rather, a bureaucracy is similar to an authoritarian political system, in which the rulers -- the bureaucratic elites -- have a large degree of unaccountable power and the subjects -- most of the workers -- have few rights and little control over the rulers. Whistleblowers -- employees who speak out in the public interest -- are similar to political dissidents: they are attacked and discredited. Organised challenges to bureaucratic elites are like opposition movements in dictatorships: the elites do everything possible to smash them.

In an authoritarian political system, the rulers can use violence against opponents. Violence is not normally an option for bureaucratic elites, except in the military where deserters and traitors can be arrested and imprisoned or even shot in times of war. Bureaucracy can be seen as a system of authoritarian rule without physical violence. The methods used against challengers include dismissal, demotion, withdrawal of support, harassment and slander. These are not as fearful as killing and imprisonment. But penalties short of physical violence are potent. Many people value their jobs greatly, both for the pay and for self-esteem. The stress of going against the grain and the threat of losing jobs make most people conform.

Why change bureaucracy?

There are several reasons why it is worthwhile investigating and promoting alternatives to bureaucracy.

Corruption

Many bureaucracies are corrupt. Bribes may have to be paid to get service. Cuts are taken from payments to enrich a few at the top. Appointments are made on the basis of patronage, not merit. The organisation is serving special interests rather than the public.

Corruption is a potential problem with all organisations, not just bureaucracies. The very idea of bureaucracy, operating on the basis of merit and defined rules, is intended to overcome the problems of corruption. But often the bureaucracy simply becomes a way to make corruption more efficient.

Unaccountable power

Bureaucracies are based on inequality of power. Superiors have power over subordinates, and top bureaucrats have power over

everyone. In a system of liberal democracy, government bureaucracies are supposedly accountable to the will of the people via elected officials. But control over actions of bureaucracies by a few officials at the top is difficult. Often it is the top bureaucrats who call the shots.

In the case of corporate bureaucracies, there is no formal control over bureaucratic elites at all. Supposedly, the competitive economic system provides some sort of 'market discipline', but this is often an illusion, especially in the case of large corporations. Government regulators seldom investigate or prosecute abuses by corporate elites. Workers and consumers have a difficult time organising to challenge these bureaucratic elites.

The fundamental problem is that top bureaucrats have a great deal of power over others. Lord Acton said that 'power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely'. There is plenty of evidence to back this up. Even the most idealistic and egalitarian person, when put in a position of great power, is susceptible to corruption -- not necessarily for personal gain, but corruption in the sense of serving those with power and wealth.

Bureaucracy and domination

Because bureaucracies permit a small number of people to control the work of many others, they are ideally designed to oppress people in an efficient manner. The key bureaucracies involved in dictatorships are the military, police and prisons. Indeed, the military, police and prisons are closer to the bureaucratic ideal than just about any other organisations. They are essentially systems based on command. The key to the military is obedience to orders. This, of course, is the opposite of democracy.

In times of war, entire societies are run on military lines. The economy is mobilised for military production, in command fashion. The best description of a liberal democracy in wartime is 'constitutional dictatorship'.

When the war is over, there is no need for massive armies and central control over the economy. But, often, elites are reluctant to relinquish their power. After World War I, British Prime Minister Lloyd George persisted with the highly centralised war cabinet until forced to change due to popular protest. After World War II, allied armies had to be rapidly demobilised because otherwise the soldiers would have revolted. In spite of the collapse of the Soviet threat in the 1990s, western governments have been very slow in cutting back on military expenditure.

Basically, bureaucracies are a convenient tool for domination. That means that when an aggressor or usurper takes over a

society, the easiest way to rule it is by using existing bureaucracies to run things. The people in bureaucracies have been accustomed to obey the rules and their superiors. So all the new ruler has to do is change the directives at the top. If the top bureaucrats are willing to go along with the new regime, that's fine. Otherwise, they can be replaced by people who are willing to obey.

Therefore, in order to be able to resist aggression and oppression, workers in bureaucracies need to know how to resist their bosses. If they only know how to acquiesce, they may become accomplices. Effective disobedience is necessary to defend human rights and values when they are being violated. This was the original idea behind our study of how to challenge bureaucratic elites.

What sort of change?

What does it mean to change bureaucracy? Three answers are change of policy, change of personnel and change in structure.

A change of policy means getting a bureaucracy to do things differently than before. It might mean that a corporation stops (or starts) dumping hazardous waste, that a government education authority introduces a new syllabus, or that a church allows women to become priests. Campaigns to change policies are common and are reported every day. That doesn't mean it is easy to succeed. Most changes of policy are introduced at the top, by bureaucratic elites or by directors of the bureaucracy, such as politicians in the case of state bureaucracies. For workers or clients to change policies can be extremely difficult. Even getting a small pay increase sometimes may require serious action such as a strike.

Another sort of change in bureaucracy is replacement of personnel. When corruption is prevalent, a standard demand is to get rid of the corrupt individuals at the top.

Changing policies or personnel has some effect on a bureaucracy, but that doesn't change the structure: the hierarchy, the division of labour, the standard operating procedures. As long as the bureaucracy is organised the same way, it is likely to continue doing the same sorts of things. A few policies may change and a few individuals may be replaced, but everything is still organised to continue the same sorts of activities. That's why, when citizen protests help to shut down a proposal for a freeway, the government road authority is likely to propose another one. That's why, when top officials are replaced due to a loud campaign, that the new officials often continue to do the same sorts of things. To achieve fundamental change, a change in the structure of the organisation is necessary. However, few campaigns seek to achieve

this. The focus is usually on the surface aspects, the policies and the personnel.

3. Case studies

To illustrate how bureaucratic elites can be challenged, we investigated a range of areas and picked out the following seven case studies. Several of them are local examples, allowing us to interview key participants and gain insights that might otherwise be unreported. In every case we obtained relevant documents. We sent drafts of our accounts to knowledgeable individuals and relied on their comments in making revisions.

These short accounts are not meant to be definitive. In every case there is much more that could be said -- many additional intriguing issues, alternative perspectives, reservations and qualifications. We didn't set out to write detailed histories, but rather just to learn some lessons about how to challenge bureaucratic elites.

Movement for the Ordination of Women

Most churches were and are run by men. For women of a church to demand equal treatment is a profound challenge to the church powerholders, to be resisted at all costs. This has nowhere been more true than in the Sydney Diocese of the Anglican Church, a very conservative and entrenched church bureaucracy. Two of the women who led a challenge to this bureaucracy were Patricia Brennan and Eileen Baldry.

As long as they can remember, the Anglican Church was part of Patricia's and Eileen's lives. They grew up in Sydney through the evangelical era of Billy Graham in the 1960s. The church was for them a way of becoming passionately involved with Christianity. At the same time, it seemed to be the place for asking serious questions. Anglicans have a tradition of intellect. Meetings with other Anglicans were a way to develop the mind, to belong, to find a mission in life. Eileen and Patricia became involved with the Evangelical Union and were closely associated with this group as they worked their way through university.

Eileen and Patricia, among others in their group, went overseas on various forms of mission work in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Patricia became a medical missionary in Africa; Eileen went to Nepal as a teacher in a mission school. They came back with a bittersweet understanding of Christianity, with real questions about the patronising, racist and culturally destructive nature of

what many Christians were doing in other parts of the world. For these women, serious doubts were emerging about the nature of Christianity and the nature of their faith.

Most of all, they wanted to ask questions about the relations of power in the church bureaucracy, a matter quite separate from the teachings of Christ. A key question was the position of women in the church.

When institutions and organisations attempt to justify their behaviour with reasons, but operate politically, they are working on a model of power, not religion. The church operates on a military model. Yet the church promises an independent source of inspiration and power, namely God. Thus, the church has ideological power as well. A third source of power is the idea of the church as a family -- the very best that the social world can offer. Yet within these systems, there is little room for challenging attitudes. Once the women tried to raise issues about the role of women, the male clergy set up barriers to discussion and barriers to change.

The church inoculates members against attitude change. Patricia and Eileen, among other women in the Sydney Diocese, found that their questions were neither listened to nor answered. There was real resistance, both intellectual and emotional, to their need to raise these issues.

In about 1980, some of the clergy -- concerned that the Anglican Church be able to respond to issues raised by the feminist movement -- asked a group of women to discuss the questions of women's liberation and the role of women. At those meetings, the seed was sown to develop a reform group. The women read widely on feminist literature, on the Vietnam war, and other issues of the day. Patricia did a survey of women in the Sydney Diocese which revealed that a far greater number of them than they had previously thought were concerned about the lack of participation by women in the church bureaucracy as well as in the spiritual activities of the church. These were not just radical women; they were women of all political persuasions.

In 1983, at a special meeting, the Movement for the Ordination of Women (MOW) was formed. The first aim in MOW's constitution was to 'move the Anglican Church of Australia to admit women to the ordained ministries of the church'.

Both Patricia and Eileen were founding members of MOW. When it leaked out that a reform group had started, the doors to negotiation rapidly closed. The power of the hierarchy lay in not listening to the women. People opposed to MOW refused to talk to members of the group, and pretended they did not exist. Power lay in the church committees, in the rhetoric of theology, in money, and in the male hierarchy of church positions.

Although not all the women were inspired by feminism, the group developed, through readings and discussion, a language with which the bureaucracy could be challenged. Another vital factor was the realisation that the struggle had a purpose which was passionate, a matter of life and death. If a woman, with her faith and her mission, is not relevant to the church, then who is? The restriction placed on women by the male-dominated church was like a foot placed on someone else's oxygen supply.

MOW used five main strategies to bring about change: education, persuasion, media, demonstrations, and working through the church bureaucracy. Education allowed them to inform: to find arguments from both the literature and from the Bible, and to print and distribute papers. Persuasion became easier after the MOW went national in 1985, and membership grew dramatically. This support was vital. However, rational argument alone wouldn't have got MOW very far.

MOW's most effective allies were the mass media. (The local church media, not surprisingly, mostly supported the church hierarchy.) Their talks, media releases, initiatives and actions regularly received sympathetic coverage. The best sources of favourable coverage were visits by female clergy from overseas.

Demonstrations assisted the media campaign and vice versa. Symbolic actions were vital to MOW's campaign. For example, on an anniversary of Martin Luther's famous challenge to the Catholic Church, MOW put its demands on a church door. This was wonderful symbolism and was lapped up by the media. Patricia thinks they should have been more courageous and *nailed* the demands on the door, just like Martin Luther. Instead, the women, afraid of what people would think if they damaged church property, stuck the demands on with removable gum.

There was a cost that came along with the intense media interest in MOW. The media wanted a single spokesperson, and this usually was Patricia. Yet MOW, which tried to work as a group of equals, contained many talented women. The media's constant focus on a few MOW 'leaders' was therefore a source of internal tension.

The fifth strategy was working through the internal bureaucracy, by attempting to join official bodies such as committees, synods, etc. This did not last long -- they were stopped by the Sydney Anglican Church League, which was vehemently opposed to the MOW members. Patricia was in a ballot to become a member of the National Synod, but when the position came up, she was passed over. The Anglican Church League controlled all the committees in the Sydney Diocese, and put out a voting ticket for every Synod. It controlled finance and was very influential over appointments within the church.

The struggle to change the bureaucracy came to a head in 1992, when the National Synod voted to admit women as ministers of the church. Despite last minute actions from the Sydney Diocese representatives to stop a secret ballot, the mood was against the Sydney Diocese and the vote for women's ordination was passed by two votes by the clergy. It is now acceptable, except in the Sydney Diocese, to consider women as equal to men in the church. However, the bureaucratic structure is unchanged, and there is still a long struggle ahead.

The fear of MOW seemed out of all proportion to its message. There seemed to be a fear of something happening to God. It was really a fear of women and what women represent.

On reflection, the women realised the importance of picking a single issue that is potent symbolically (in this case, getting women ordained). None in the group thought at the beginning that ordination was all they were aiming for. The deeper challenge was to the patriarchal nature of the church, not only in decision making and control in management, but also for example in elements of the service.

The bishops were mostly sympathetic to MOW. On the other hand, the clergy (priests) turned out to be more hostile and powerful than expected. They were protecting their power.

It would have been easy for the women to leave the church and start their own reformed church -- and many of their opponents would have welcomed this. Yet, in a voluntary organisation such as the church, to have any chance of success it is absolutely essential for challengers to remain members of the organisation.

MOW did not set out to challenge the actual structure of the church. It aimed to open up access to the positions of authority, not to undermine authority itself. Of course, many male elites of the church did not see the difference, which is why they felt that a challenge to their positions was a challenge to the church itself, and even to God. Questioning the structure of the church is perhaps the next stage of a feminist challenge, which might include feminist theology. But for such a challenge to succeed, it may be helpful for MOW to shut up shop and make room for other initiatives.

Vince Neary versus State Rail

Vince Neary worked for over twenty years as a railway signals engineer, first with the London Transport Authority and then, since 1974, with the State Rail Authority (SRA) in the Australian state of New South Wales (NSW). His career was untroubled until

1987, when he discovered what he believed to be deficiencies in the signalling system used by the SRA. He also discovered corruption in signalling projects for which he was responsible, such as people senior to him engaging consultants and charging their fees to projects for which he was responsible and for which he had no evidence of any work done.

Neary complained first of all to the people responsible for the unsafe signalling practices and for the misappropriation of funds from his project. He was either ignored or ostracised.

In May 1989, Neary complained to the SRA's chief executive, Ross Sayers, who set up a task force. According to Sayers -- many months later -- the task force found no problems. But Sayers refused to reveal the report of the task force.

In February 1990, Neary took his complaint to his local member of state parliament, Nick Greiner, who was the premier of NSW at the time. Greiner referred the issue to Bruce Baird, NSW Minister for Transport. Baird simply replied that investigations by the task force had revealed no problems. Greiner refused to meet with Neary.

In May 1990, Neary complained to the NSW Ombudsman. Taking advice from the SRA, the Ombudsman declined to investigate, saying that the safety issue was being dealt with by the SRA -- a conclusion which Neary disputed.

In August 1990, Neary complained to the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC). In February 1992, ICAC announced plans for a public inquiry into the SRA's treatment of Neary. A few months later ICAC told Neary the inquiry would not be held since it would take too much hearing time.

Also in August 1990, Neary took the issue to the NSW Auditor-General's office, which oversees the finances of government departments. By this time Neary had extensive documentation not only of unsafe signalling practices and suspected corruption but also of SRA attempts to cover up the problems. The person at the Auditor-General's office dealing with Neary's complaint was Dick Dunn. According to Neary, Dunn told him the SRA had failed to supply documents -- in some cases claiming that they were lost -- showing that consultants had done work for the fees paid. Dunn also told Neary that if the SRA did not produce the documents after a formal request, the Auditor-General would probably refer to this in his report to parliament. The next time Neary contacted the Auditor-General's office, he found out that Dunn had been seconded for two years to work for the SRA! According to Dunn, this secondment was at the request of the SRA and the encouragement of the Auditor-General. In November 1992, Neary received a letter from the Auditor-General indicating that the investigations by Dunn and his staff into consultancies revealed

nothing wrong.

In September 1990, Neary used Freedom of Information procedures to obtain a copy of the SRA task force report. The SRA opposed this with every means possible. Neary finally obtained it four years later.

In January 1991, Neary made new complaints about unsafe signalling practices. In response, the SRA commissioned a retired British signalling engineer, Brian Hesketh, to investigate. Hesketh's report, published in May 1991, basically vindicated Neary's concerns.

The more that Neary pressed for consideration of his complaints, the more harassment he encountered in his job. Shortly after release of Hesketh's report, Neary was demoted and directed to undertake clerical duties. He was sent to several psychiatrists for examination, a process that also served as a form of harassment. In May 1992 he was attacked in parliament by Bruce Baird, the Transport Minister. In June, Neary was directed to stay at home on full pay indefinitely. When in November 1992 he declined to accept being relegated to a clerical position, his pay was stopped. He was dismissed from his job in March 1993 for going public with his complaints. He made an appeal against his dismissal to the Transport Appeals Board but was unsuccessful.

The lesson from this saga is that a single principled dissident stands little chance against a powerful bureaucracy. It is only a slight generalisation to say that the official channels can be relied upon *not to work*. Dissidents often hope that there is some authority, somewhere, that will look at the facts and act to serve the public interest. This belief in justice must be rejected. Bureaucracies such as the SRA operate on the basis of power, not justice.

Neary started to have some success only when he was able to tap into alternative sources of power, outside institutional channels. He made contact with the organisation Whistleblowers Australia and became a board member. He wrote an informative 26-page report documenting his allegations and his experiences. He made contact with a few sympathetic politicians. In October 1993, the Ombudsman recommended that an independent technical assessment be made into SRA signalling practices. The media gave prominent coverage to this development and to Neary's treatment.

In August 1995, Neary reached a settlement with the SRA, obtaining some compensation. Part of the settlement was that he not reveal the terms of the settlement itself. Furthermore, no action was taken against SRA officials responsible for the problems Neary reported or against those who victimised him for his whistleblowing. On the other hand, on the day after Neary's settlement, it was announced that there would be a public inquiry

into the SRA by the NSW Auditor-General, dealing with corruption, harassment, fraud, mismanagement and safety.

[After reading this publication, Chris Wheeler, Deputy Ombudsman, wrote to us in May 1997 pointing out that although it was technically correct that the NSW Ombudsman had declined to investigate (in 1990), this did not "accurately reflect the work done by this Office in response to various complaints made to Mr Neary." The Ombudsman's Office in October 1993 made a 40-page special report to Parliament about Neary's allegations. It recommended setting up a full public inquiry since it did not have the resources to carry out a full investigation. Its preliminary (but nevertheless fairly detailed) investigation showed that Neary's complaints warranted an independent technical assessment. The report also noted the SRA's reprisals against Neary and pointed to a flaw in the proposed whistleblowers protection bill, namely that "the Bill does not enable the Ombudsman to investigate a public authority's victimisation of a whistleblower."]

The Vatican versus the Modernists

At the very end of the 1800s, the Roman Catholic Church was confronted within its ranks by a 'modernist movement'. It was led by a small number of scholars, especially Alfred Loisy, a French priest who published a key book in 1903. The central organiser was Friedrich von Hügel, an English lay scholar, who brought members together through a vigorous correspondence, visits and conferences. Journals were also important in mobilising the movement.

Some critics questioned the Bible's story of creation, others the Pope's authority. Loisy said that the church hierarchy existed for the sake of the church membership, not vice versa. But what united the modernists was not particular claims but a general approach to doctrine and dogma. The modernists proposed that critical methods of inquiry could be used to search for truth within the Catholic framework. Thus they questioned the idea of dogma as conventionally asserted by the Vatican. As the movement developed, wider agendas of reform of the church hierarchy became more important.

The church hierarchy attacked the modernists in a variety of ways. It put modernist writings on the long-established *Index of Prohibited Books*, issued official condemnations, set up a committee in each diocese to watch out for suspicious activities and people, insisted that clergy take an antimodernist oath, set up a secret international coordinating body (the *Sapinière*) to report on suspected heresy to the Vatican, hindered the careers of possible opponents, and excommunicated leading dissidents.

These measures were effective, and the movement was dead by 1909.

But this isn't all there is to the story. The Vatican actually needed the movement to exist.

In the 1800s, the power and authority of the church were in decline. The power of governments was increasing, especially in France since the French Revolution, at the expense of the church. Modern science was growing in persuasiveness, and sometimes it was used to challenge theological dogma, notably in the case of Darwin's theory of evolution. Social movements and doctrines, from liberalism to socialism and feminism, asserted the power of individual choice and collective action against the dictates of established authority. As well, for at least a century there had been vigorous movements against the authority of the church, which symbolised undemocratic regimes. These developments were a part of a 'modernist' challenge to the church hierarchy.

But the Vatican could do little about social change outside the church. So it responded by mobilising its internal authority, for example by establishing the principle that the Pope is infallible and mounting campaigns against heresy. These attacks against internal dissent, by creating an enemy, served to mobilise support and to maintain the authority of the church hierarchy.

This focus on dissenters actually fostered the formation of the modernist movement within the church. For example, denunciations of individuals and the listings on the *Index of Prohibited Books* drew the attention of modernist leaders to like-minded thinkers. Ironically, the modernist movement then provided a method for the church hierarchy to strengthen itself: the campaign against heresy highlighted common values and built up bonds through action against the inside enemy.

The Vatican responded to the decline of the church's external power and authority by asserting its control internally. The modernists were challengers to the Catholic church's bureaucratic elite, but they ended up being a means for cementing the power of the elite. The lesson for challengers is to be aware that attacks on challengers may be part of a larger process of mobilisation of internal control. But even if they are aware of it, what can they do about it? This is not an easy question to answer!

Les Kurtz, author of a study of this conflict, thinks that there are two lessons for challengers. 'First, efforts to increase internal control may well backfire, especially in earlier stages of the movement. Earlier repression of the movement helps to provoke additional opposition and a sympathetic response from supporters. Second, most conflicts move quickly to questions of authority that obscure the original issues raised by dissidents. The real modernist crisis concerned the authority of the Vatican

hierarchy. Although it may be impossible to avoid the negative aspects of such conflicts, one way to minimise adverse fallout is to focus on Gandhi's advice to separate the doer from the deed so that elites are clearly informed that they are not being attacked personally.'

Prison reform in New South Wales

The colony of New South Wales was founded in 1788 as a penal settlement for British convicts. The early decades of white invasion and colonisation of Australia were marked by harsh brutality against both Aborigines and white convicts.

Some of this brutality persisted two centuries later in the state's prison system. It was much more a system of punishment than rehabilitation. Conditions were appalling: disgusting food, freezing or roasting temperatures, removal of personal belongings, no work, long periods confined to cells. Then there was the violence. Many prisoners were beaten by prison officers for little or no reason. At Grafton Gaol, in northern NSW, where 'intractable' prisoners were sent, up to the late 1970s new arrivals were systematically and brutally bashed by warders, often for days.

As a result of these conditions, in the 1970s there were protests and riots by prisoners. In one such revolt, Bathurst Gaol was burnt down in 1974.

These 'disturbances' led the NSW government to set up a royal commission -- with strong powers of investigation -- to study the problem and recommend changes. The royal commission recognised the brutality and inhumanity of the NSW prison system and made numerous recommendations aimed at bringing conditions in line with standard enlightened practice in Europe and North America.

Instead of ignoring the report, which is the fate of most such reports, the government acted on it. It accepted almost all the recommendations. To implement the report, it appointed a five-member Corrective Services Commission, headed by Tony Vinson, a reform-minded outsider.

The reform agenda of the Commission was supported warmly by almost all of the prisoners. But it was also opposed, particularly by the Prison Officers' Union. The prison officers of the 'old guard' were adamantly opposed to any change that would reduce their privileges or their power over prisoners. They opposed any penalties for unlawful beatings by prison officers in the past, and many wished to continue with their brutal methods.

Vinson found that it was impossible to make significant changes

by simply issuing directives, since they were often simply not followed. Simple requests to build recreation facilities were delayed for months. So he had to follow up with personal inspections himself.

Old guard prison officers aimed to get rid of Vinson and maintain the status quo. On several occasions they went on strike, causing a crisis in staffing of the prisons. In these strikes, the prisoners were helpless victims, being placed under intolerable conditions which they often tolerated because they supported the reform efforts. Vinson also won the support of most prison supervisory staff, who put in valiant efforts to maintain prison operations, as did the police, who were called in on some occasions.

However, old guard prison officers also had another source of support: the mass media. Most newspapers, radio and television channels presented the strikes and other disturbances as a crisis in 'law and order' and as evidence that the tough policies of earlier years were needed. They portrayed every escape from prison as a critical danger to the public and every improvement in conditions as pandering to dangerous criminals who should be punished. Only a minority of editors and journalists understood and communicated the sensible findings of the royal commission that humane treatment of prisoners -- and the reduced use of prisons generally -- actually reduced dangers to the public.

There were also prison officers who supported the reform agenda. But they were often given a difficult time by the entrenched members of the old guard.

If the NSW government had remained solidly behind the Corrective Services Commission, the reform process might have proceeded. But the disruptive actions by the prison officers and the enormous media attention to the disturbances put pressure on the government in the period before an election. About two years after Vinson's appointment, the government minister in charge of prisons withdrew support from him. This made Vinson's task virtually impossible, and eventually he resigned. The prison officers had won their battle to maintain a repressive prison system.

The establishment of the Corrective Services Commission was a courageous but ultimately unsuccessful attempt to reform the prison bureaucracy from the top. The Commission implemented many specific improvements, eliminating many of the worst excesses of the previous era. From the point of view of prison activists -- including many prisoners -- the Commission went in the correct general direction but made a number of mistakes. But even full support from one group, namely the prisoners, would not have been enough to bring about lasting structural change in the prison bureaucracy without support from the general public.

The Dutch soldiers' movement

The Netherlands is an affluent country with a population of 15 million and a tradition of toleration for dissent. In the 1960s, a number of social movements arose throughout the industrialised world, including the Netherlands. In this atmosphere, one soldier from the large conscript force in the Dutch military said, 'Why not have a trade union of soldiers?' The idea was raised at a meeting, and gained support not only from other conscripts but also from officers, who welcomed unionisation of conscripts as an adjunct to the officers' union push for better pay and conditions. Even the head of the armed forces was supportive. The union, with the acronym VVDM, was founded in 1966 and quickly gained a substantial membership.

In the early years VVDM was a 'tame' union. Many of its demands were met quickly. For example, soldiers received an increase in pay and were allowed to wear civilian clothes while off duty. Soon, though, rank-and-file activism increased outside VVDM, and the union's leaders were caught between new activists and commanders who wanted radical demands to be damped down. Locals chapters of the union were set up, and VVDM became more democratic.

In 1967, a smaller and more radical organisation, BVD, was set up by conscientious objectors. Its members also included serving soldiers, recent veterans and activist women. In 1968-1969 the BVD decided to become more active among conscripts and to push VVDM towards more radical action. For many years afterwards it continued to prod VVDM towards stronger stands.

In 1970 a VVDM activist, Henk Van der Horst, announced that he would no longer salute anyone. He was sentenced to 8 months' imprisonment, a harsh sentence by Dutch standards. This caused an outcry. VVDM took up the cause. They used a variety of tactics, such as holding a 'national saluting day', in which soldiers saluted everyone regardless of rank, including civilians, in order to make fun of the regulations. Eventually, in 1973 a new government applied pressure on the Ministry of Defence, which changed the regulations so that saluting became optional.

Another radical demand -- for soldiers -- was to wear their hair as they desired. A campaign developed to challenge compulsory haircuts. In 1971 Rinus Wehrmann, a new conscript, refused to have a haircut and was given two years in prison by a military court. This sentence triggered massive protest, with petitions and rallies. Civilians also added their voices. The government quickly backed down. Wehrmann was released from prison and haircut regulations were modified.

The struggles over salutes and hair were about symbols of discipline and command. After the soldiers' hair victory, military commanders and the Ministry of Defence began to attack the developing soldiers' movement by censoring its publications. This led to a series of struggles, including some large demonstrations of conscripts. Eventually the government worked out a compromise, limiting the censorship powers of local commanders. It was another victory for the soldiers' movement.

As well as dealing with issues of freedom of expression, VVDM campaigned vigorously for better pay and conditions. The climax of the initial campaign was on 14 February 1974, when 8000 soldiers -- nearly one fifth of all conscripts -- from around the country joined a demonstration at Utrecht. This campaign led to improvements which gave Dutch conscripts salaries almost as high as the minimum civilian wage, making them among the highest in the world.

VVDM forged links in several directions. It worked with Dutch civilian trade unions and also with soldiers' unions in other countries. The Netherlands is not the only country to have a union of soldiers. In fact, since 1965 there have been soldiers' movements in every country where the standard of living is high and where there is a substantial number of conscripts as a proportion of the civilian population -- countries including Switzerland, Sweden, US, Germany, Denmark, Norway and France. Yet even by comparison with these other countries, the Dutch soldiers' movement was exceptionally successful.

All was not easy, though. Military commanders started using the tactic of preventing VVDM organisers from gaining access to new conscripts, by making requirements for long periods of duty. Another challenge was the setting up of an association for conscripts, the AVNM, which was more conservative than VVDM. However, AVNM, after gaining support, gradually became more activist in order to maintain its membership.

After the mid 1970s, it became more difficult for VVDM to make further gains. The society-wide activist impulse from the 1960s was waning. Also, VVDM had been so successful that there was less remaining to be gained. In 1979, the government lowered the conscription age from 20 to 18; older conscripts -- such as those who had finished university studies before undertaking their military obligation -- were commonly the most active in the union, so the lowered entry age reduced activism. In addition, the length of service was reduced from 16 to 14 months and conscientious objection was made easier, both of which weakened the potential for soldier activism. VVDM's membership declined.

Nevertheless, the movement continued its activism in the 1980s and 1990s. It joined the huge protests against nuclear weapons in Europe and supported conscripts who refused guard duty at sites

thought to contain nuclear weapons. VVDM opposed military bans on posters in soldiers' rooms. It took action against the violence within the military, especially violence ('hazing') against new conscripts by officers and older conscripts. It has pushed for an end to wasted time, when conscripts have nothing to do; in 1993 the Minister of Defence introduced 'efficiency leave', allowing commanders to send conscripts home when there is no work for them to do.

In 1992, VVDM decided to oppose conscription altogether. It now believes that support for democratic principles among Dutch professional soldiers is sufficiently strong so that conscripts are not needed to safeguard democracy in the military.

[In 1993, the Dutch government decided to phase out conscription. The last conscripts left the army in August 1996.]

The Dutch soldiers' movement has had an enormous impact. Its gains have included dramatic increases in salary, much greater freedom of expression and a considerable relaxation in arbitrary military discipline -- discipline that is not necessary for military efficiency. Dutch soldiers are acknowledged to be very effective when it comes to military performance, such as getting tanks into the field. But greater democracy in the military helps only some sorts of military effectiveness, such as in resisting foreign aggression. A democratic military is not so effective in repressing the local population or fighting an aggressive war. A democratic military will do a good job when the soldiers believe in the cause, but not otherwise. This is the best argument of all for supporting soldiers' movements.

The Australia Card

In the early 1980s, there was considerable publicity and concern in Australia about people and companies who evaded tax. In 1985 at a national meeting to discuss tax, a few individuals suggested the use of identity cards to reduce tax avoidance. Senior bureaucrats in several government departments saw this as an opportunity to achieve an objective they had had in mind for some time.

The idea was that every Australian would have a unique identification number. It would be used for taxation, national health insurance, welfare payments and potentially many other purposes. The Health Insurance Commission was to administer the system because it had the most developed computing expertise. Data on everyone in the country would be held in a central databank. As well, it was proposed that every Australian would have an identification card, which the government called

the 'Australia Card'.

After being quickly developed by a committee with members from several government departments, the scheme was backed by the government. At first it was included among several other taxation measures and did not receive much attention. Because it was portrayed as a means to stop cheating on tax and welfare payments, most people supported it initially.

A few individuals made significant criticisms. For example, prominent judge Michael Kirby warned about the implications for civil liberties. Information systems academic Roger Clarke wrote several critical assessments, pointing out the possibility for invasion of privacy due to the collation of data about individuals from different aspects of their lives. He pointed out that an identity number system would have little impact on tax revenues or cheating on welfare payments. Sophisticated criminals could easily beat the system. What the identity card system would do best of all was increase the power of government bureaucrats over the lives of ordinary Australians.

The Australian Labor Party held government federally. Although Labor had a majority of seats in the House of Representatives, in the Senate it did not. The government was determined to press ahead with the Australia Card, but the opposition parties in the Senate used their power to set up a parliamentary committee to investigate the proposal. The majority of the committee opposed the Card, but the government pressed ahead anyway on the basis of a minority report. The Australia Card bill was twice passed in the House and twice rejected in the Senate, at which time one Labor Senator voted against the legislation and resigned from the Labor Party. The Labor government used the repeated rejection in the Senate as the basis for calling a general election in 1987, which it won. This meant it could call a joint meeting of the House and Senate and pass the legislation.

While the government pressed ahead resolutely, popular opinion moved against the Australia Card. Civil liberties groups took strong stands against it, and civil liberties arguments became more and more prominent. Members of the public began writing letters. Newspapers were inundated with letters. It was by far the biggest issue in the country, with 80 to 90 percent of correspondents opposed to the card. There were numerous petitions to parliament against the scheme, with a greater total number of signatories on this issue than any other in Australia's history. The media, which at first had generally favoured the card, gradually became more opposed.

In September 1987, as the government moved towards passing the Australia Card Bill, popular opposition escalated. The Australian Privacy Foundation was set up. Among its founding members were prominent personalities such as pop star Peter Garrett and

cricketer Greg Chappell. There were rallies in several parts of the country, bringing together unlikely allies, including civil libertarians, left-wing trade unionists and conservative bankers and industrialists. There were demonstrations in several cities. In Western Australia, an anti-card rally attracted tens of thousands, the largest number since the protests against the Vietnam war. Many individuals, in their letters to newspapers, announced their intention to refuse to cooperate with the scheme.

All this pressure began to cause cracks in the government's ranks. Many Labor parliamentarians privately pressured the Prime Minister to withdraw the legislation.

Ewart Smith was a retired public servant (government bureaucrat) with long experience in the law and legislation. The mounting concerns stimulated him to investigate and then to join the chorus of opposition by writing letters. He also closely inspected the proposed legislation and found a technical feature that no one else had noticed. Even if the legislation was passed, the Act's commencement date had to be passed separately, and the government would have been unable to get it through the Senate. Smith pointed this out to members of the parliamentary opposition, who raised the matter in parliament to the disbelief of the government. Smith's assessment was supported by other legal experts. The government took the opportunity to withdraw the legislation. It was never reintroduced.

Around the country, many people had tremendous satisfaction and relief at the defeat of the Australia Card proposal. Ewart Smith was hailed as a hero. On the other hand, it was perhaps unfortunate that the proposal was defeated in this way. If the Australia Card had become law, almost certainly there would have been civil disobedience and an escalating struggle, which would have mobilised the population even more effectively in defence of privacy protection and civil liberties.

What it couldn't achieve directly, the government achieved indirectly. In 1988, the government expanded the uses of the existing tax file number system. Every taxpayer is assigned a unique number. People are not obliged to state the number to employers, but if they don't, tax is withheld at the highest rate -- a strong incentive to provide the number. When introducing the enhanced tax file number scheme, the government promised that it would be used *only* for taxation purposes. Yet within two years it was being used for nearly every payment of pensions or benefits by any Australian government agency, with the sort of meshing of computer databases that critics of the Australia Card had warned about. In other words, the tax file number is really an identity number. The measures that have been implemented go a long way towards achieving what the senior bureaucrats set out to do, except that there is no actual card.

The Australia Card was a potent symbol. At first it was a symbol of the government's attack on tax avoidance. But, due to the efforts of many individuals and groups, it became the symbol of government snooping into the lives of Australians. The campaign against the Australia Card was an amazing success, especially in bringing together people from different parts of the political spectrum. The campaign also attracted a range of experts, including Ewart Smith.

Although the campaign was diverse, it never penetrated the government bureaucracies. Therefore, the same bureaucratic pressures for comparing computer databases remained. Furthermore, the campaign did not create a strong continuing organisational base. It was, perhaps, too successful too soon. When the symbol of what it opposed was removed, the campaign dissolved. The enhanced tax file number scheme was introduced without much controversy.

Women versus a steel company

BHP is Australia's largest company. It began its operations in iron and steel but has since diversified, especially into other minerals. But steel remains a key part of the BHP enterprise, which controls almost all production in Australia.

BHP's largest steelworks is located south of Sydney at Port Kembla, a part of Wollongong, a city with approximately a quarter of a million people. In the 1970s, over 20,000 workers were employed at the steelworks, and there was a job for nearly any man who applied. But for women the situation was different. Very few were hired, while most were put on a waiting list. In 1980, the men's waiting list had only a few dozen names, while the women's had 2000. The reason was that BHP refused to hire women except for traditionally female jobs such as cleaning and typing.

In the early 1970s, some women protested against BHP's hiring practices, taking action such as chaining themselves to the gates at the steelworks. But this initiative fizzled out without any immediate change.

The trigger for a new campaign came from the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), then a small left-wing party with a Trotskyist orientation. (Today it is known as the Democratic Socialist Party.) During a period in the late 1970s known as the 'turn to industry', SWP members were encouraged to get jobs in industry. In Wollongong the obvious place was the steelworks. Male members of the SWP had no trouble getting jobs at BHP, but the female members -- about half a dozen of them -- were rejected.

As a result, the SWP decided to launch a political campaign, 'jobs

for women'. Publicity for the campaign led to participation of other women who had been denied jobs at the Port Kembla steelworks, until they numbered 34 altogether. The campaign organisers approached the key union covering the jobs they sought, the Federated Ironworkers Association, and gained its support. They also obtained support from the women's movement and left-wing activists.

Although SWP activists were the key driving force throughout most of the campaign, they played down their SWP affiliations, instead emphasising that it was a women's campaign. Indeed, only a few of the 34 women were SWP members. It should be mentioned that Wollongong, a working-class town, has a long tradition of left-wing working-class activism. Both the SWP and the Communist Party of Australia have had a greater public presence and respectability in Wollongong than in most other parts of Australia.

Most of the 34 women were migrants to Australia from non-English-speaking countries. Their campaign was thus one of a small disadvantaged group against a powerful transnational corporation. But the women had one great advantage. BHP's reputation was important to it, and it had blatantly discriminated against women for years. The women's publicity campaign -- aided by the SWP's national network -- was a severe embarrassment to BHP management.

The women produced an information pamphlet, had it translated into several relevant languages, and circulated it to BHP employees. For two days and nights in July 1980 the women set up a 'tent embassy' outside the gates of the steelworks. They circulated a petition and gained the signatures of more than 2000 male steelworkers. They set up a picket at the steelworks and organised a march. Through these actions they gained enormous support. For BHP it was incredibly bad publicity.

The women's campaign helped spur along the official procedures, in which the state counsellor for equal opportunity met with representatives of BHP and the union to conciliate. In November 1980 BHP agreed to hire all 34 women. Once they were hired, the campaign slowed down, even though there were many other women who had been and were still denied jobs. Nevertheless, by mid 1981 there was a second group of women organising to get jobs following the success of the 34.

In the early 1980s, an economic recession hit Australia. By the middle of 1981, BHP stopped hiring new workers. Soon it began planning retrenchments. In the middle of 1982, the women reactivated their campaign because they were afraid that the seniority principle would see them lose their jobs first. They argued that their seniority should date from when they first tried to get jobs at BHP, or at least from 1977, when equal employment

opportunity legislation took effect. Most of the 34 women lost their jobs in late 1982 or 1983, along with thousands of men.

The women's campaign was started up again, with publicity and building of support from trade unions, women's groups and others. This time, though, much of the effort was channelled into legal action. One reason for this is that the women were seeking a lot more than jobs alone, including monetary compensation. The court challenge aimed at overturning entrenched discriminatory practice. But the case moved at glacial speed.

The women raised a lot of money but it was not enough to pay for legal costs. They applied for 'legal aid' (government-funded legal support), but it was denied by the state government. So they mounted a campaign to obtain legal aid, which finally succeeded two years later.

Now represented by lawyers before the Equal Opportunity Tribunal, the women presented their case and, in September 1985, won! They were awarded damages of over one million dollars (an average of about $30,000 each). BHP appealed, first to the state appeal court and then to the High Court, the highest court in the country. BHP lost the appeals but the process took nearly four years.

After the success of the 34 women in 1989, another court action was begun, this time with 238 women who alleged discrimination by BHP. It was a class action, arguing that they were in the same 'class' as the original 34 women. The case was run by the Public Interest Advocacy Centre. An out-of-court settlement was reached in 1994. Eventually some 700 women received payments from BHP, though in many cases the amount was much less than the losses they had incurred due to discrimination.

The campaign definitely changed BHP's hiring practices. The company has allowed women into 'traditionally male' jobs. BHP now presents itself as an equal opportunity employer. But there haven't been many new jobs. The operation is now much more capital-intensive. With new technology, steel production is higher than ever but total employment at the Port Kembla steelworks is now less than 7000, a third of what it had been before.

The campaign was remarkable in that a group with a double disadvantage -- women, most of whom were from non-English speaking countries -- succeeded against a rich and powerful company. One key element in the campaign was gaining support from key groups, including the trade unions and male steelworkers. Many male BHP workers supported the campaign, especially those who had wives who wanted work. The other key element was publicity. The political climate in the country as a whole was favourable, with equal opportunity legislation on the books. The campaign had the advantage of being a group

operation. The women supported each other, and between them they had many relevant skills.

The involvement of the SWP was crucial, although this was never widely known. Nevertheless, the SWP wasn't a perfect vehicle for the campaign since the level of involvement by individual members varied.

Undoubtedly BHP is still a male-dominated company. But the entrenched and virulent resistance to women in 'male jobs' has been greatly weakened. Most of all, the women's campaign showed that it is possible to win against a corporate giant.

4. Nonviolent action against authoritarian states

We described earlier the idea that bureaucracies are similar to authoritarian states. This suggests that lessons about how to challenge bureaucratic elites might be learned by studying nonviolent challenges to authoritarian states. If nonviolent methods work against dictatorships, then the same methods might be used in bureaucracies.

Why nonviolent action, rather than violence, against bureaucratic elites? There are several reasons. Most bureaucracies maintain control without regular resort to violence. (The military and police are partial exceptions.) The struggles within bureaucracies are, in practice, struggles without physical violence. Therefore, an understanding of nonviolent action is likely to be helpful.

Violence tends to alienate potential supporters. It encourages secrecy and dependence on commanders and thus clashes with the aim of participation and democracy. Terrorism or guerrilla warfare against top figures in churches, corporations and government departments is likely to create a wave of sympathy for those who are attacked and thus be totally counterproductive.

Gene Sharp, the leading researcher on nonviolent action, identified 198 different *types* of nonviolent action and provided examples of each one. Sharp divides the methods of nonviolent action into three categories: symbolic actions, noncooperation, and intervention and alternative institutions.

Symbolic actions include:

- formal statements (speeches, letters, petitions);
- slogans, leaflets, banners;
- rallies, protest marches, vigils, pickets;
- wearing of symbols of opposition (such as the paper clips

worn by Norwegian civilians during the Nazi occupation);
- meetings, teach-ins.

Noncooperation includes:

- social boycott, stay-at-home;
- boycotts by consumers, workers, traders; embargoes;
- strikes, bans, working-to-rule, reporting 'sick';
- refusal to pay tax or debts, withdrawal of bank deposits;
- boycotts of government institutions;
- disobedience, evasions and delays;
- mock incapability ('misunderstandings', 'mistakes').

Intervention and alternative institutions include:

- fasts;
- sit-ins, nonviolent obstruction and occupation;
- destruction of information and records;
- establishment of parallel institutions for government, media, transport, welfare, health and education.

Nonviolent action has been used to promote social justice, as in some of the campaigns led by Gandhi in India and the US civil rights movement. There are also several examples of spontaneous use of nonviolent action against military aggression, military coups, and repressive governments:

- Collapse of a military coup in Germany in 1920;
- German resistance to the French and Belgian occupation of the Ruhr in 1923;
- Toppling of ten dictatorships in Central/South America, 1931-1961;
- Nonviolent resistance to Nazi occupation of Europe, 1939-1943;
- Collapse of a military coup in the French army in Algeria in 1961;
- Czechoslovak resistance to the Soviet invasion in 1968;
- Toppling of the repressive Iranian government in 1978-79;
- Toppling of the Marcos regime in the Philippines in 1986;
- Palestinian intifada, a resistance to Israeli rule from 1987-93;
- Collapse of Eastern European communist regimes in 1989.

Nonviolent action against a repressive government is based on the principle that no regime -- whether a democracy or military dictatorship -- can survive without the passive support or nonresistance of a large proportion of the population. In other words, all societies are built on consent, cooperation and obedience. Nonviolent action can systematically disrupt this consent, cooperation and obedience and replace it by noncooperation and disobedience.

This has obvious applications to bureaucracies. If, in a business corporation or a government body, large numbers of workers refuse to carry out instructions, set up their own communications systems and mobilise supporters from the outside, then top officials can do little about it.

This idea applies to military forces themselves. If only a few soldiers refuse orders, they can be arrested or shot: discipline can be maintained. But if large numbers refuse to cooperate, an army cannot function.

What about ruthless invaders who just keep killing people at the least hint of resistance? What can be done to stop a programme of total extermination? How can nonviolent action possibly work against repressive regimes?

Real-life dictatorships are not as all-powerful as might be imagined. Under the brutal military regimes in Argentina and Chile, many individuals continued to openly express opposition in the workplace, in public protests and in the media. Protests have shaken the harsh regimes in South Korea and Burma. If nonviolent resistance could be prepared for and expanded, then dictatorships would be difficult to sustain.

Repression is less likely if the ruler is dependent in some way on the nonviolent resisters. This might be economic dependence; it could be the influence of family members who know people in the resistance; or it could be a sense of ethnic or cultural identity. If there is a dependency relationship, then the ruler will encounter great obstacles if severe repression is used. But if there isn't some direct or indirect connection between the two sides, then even a fairly benevolent ruler may do really nasty things. Dependency, not attitude, is the key.

The methods and tactics of nonviolent resistance need to be specially chosen if repression is harsh. More use can be made of quiet 'mistakes' in carrying out tasks and 'misunderstandings' of orders. Preparation in advance is crucial for things such as shutting down factories, protecting dissidents, providing food and shelter for survival, maintaining communications and exposing repression to the world. When support for the resistance becomes widespread, open defiance becomes possible.

There is much more that could be said about the dynamics of nonviolent action and many examples that could be given about how it operates. We give here two examples of nonviolent action against authoritarian regimes: the nonviolent challenges to the dictatorship in El Salvador in 1944 and in East Germany in 1989. Since these dictatorships have similarities to bureaucracies, these cases provide some insight into what is required for a successful challenge to bureaucratic elites.

El Salvador, 1944

Maximiliano Hernández Martínez became the dictator of El Salvador in 1931. Although he introduced some valuable reforms, he ruthlessly crushed political opposition. In 1932, an armed uprising was brutally put down by the military.

Opposition developed in 1943, with leaflets and petitions. The government responded with increased censorship, arrests and other controls. The opposition was stimulated by US government rhetoric of a fight for freedom and democracy against Nazism. Also important was outrage over constitutional changes allowing Martínez to serve a further six-year term as president.

On 2 April 1944, there was a military revolt, which was repressed harshly. This helped to trigger a nonviolent insurrection. University students took the lead and organised a student strike, which spread to high schools. Over a period of a few weeks, physicians and business people joined the strike, until virtually the entire country was at a standstill, including government offices, banks and railways. This was essentially a stay-at-home strike, which cut most services.

Police shot at some boys, killing one. As a result, large crowds surged onto the streets. On 8 May, Martínez agreed to resign, and he left the country three days later.

The military was not used to crush the insurrection. The unreliability of the soldiers had been shown by the 2 April revolt. The officer corps, which was loyal to Martínez, did not risk using the army against the population.

While the nonviolent action of the people was enough to bring down Martínez, it was not effective in ensuring a transition to a nonrepressive society. There was a military coup later in 1944. The years since have seen continued oppression of El Salvadoran people.

In Guatemala a few weeks later in 1944, stimulated by the example of El Salvador, the government was also toppled by nonviolent insurrection. In addition to these two cases, between 1931 and 1961 eight other Central/South American presidents were ousted by nonviolent insurrection.

The case of El Salvador illustrates that even in a police state there are opportunities for effective nonviolent resistance, although of course at a risk. A seemingly innocuous leaflet can be a very significant form of defiance. Wider noncooperation can be triggered by the process of open resistance, via strikes and further leaflets. If nothing is done by the government, others are

emboldened to join in; repressive steps, on the other hand, can cause outrage and an expansion of resistance.

The nonviolence of the insurrection was important to its success. By contrast, the 1932 armed revolt was a fiasco. The *campesinos* (small farmers) killed about 100 soldiers, leading the military to retaliate with mass executions of perhaps 10,000 people.

This case illustrates the importance of making a link between nonviolent resistance to repression and a 'positive programme' to create alternative institutions. Being *against* repression is not enough -- action *for* a different system is also necessary.

These lessons apply directly to the problem of challenging a bureaucratic elite. It is important that the climate for a challenge be appropriate. Then it is necessary for some individuals or groups to take the lead, such as the students in El Salvador. The methods used must be things that everyone can do, such as going on strike, working to rule or systematic noncooperation with particular orders. Finally, even a victory against the existing elites is likely to be short-lived -- new problems are likely to appear with new bosses -- unless some alternative structure can be established.

East Germany, 1989

After World War II, East Germany became a separate country, ruled by the Communist Party and under the domination of the Soviet Union. The East German government developed a powerful apparatus for controlling the population. Favours were given to those who supported the regime, while secret police spied on possible opponents. There were opponents, but any public protest was put down brutally, such as the demonstrations and strikes in 1953.

Real opportunities for change only came in the late 1980s. The Soviet Union, under Mikhail Gorbachev, introduced a number of reforms. One change was that Eastern European regimes could no longer rely on Soviet troops to intervene in their support. As well, reform processes were under way elsewhere in Eastern Europe. Nevertheless, the East German government appeared to be a powerful opponent: it retained troops, weapons and a pervasive system of surveillance.

Two processes were crucial in causing the collapse of the East German regime: emigration and public protests. In 1961, the East German government built a wall along the borders with West Germany in order to prevent emigration to the west. In May 1989, the 'iron curtain' between east and west was breached when the Hungarian government pulled down the physical barrier between Hungary and Austria. This allowed Hungarians to emigrate. East

Germans could leave too, simply by taking a trip to Hungary. On 11 September, Hungary officially opened its border with Austria. Some 15,000 East Germans emigrated within three days. The massive exodus hurt the East German government seriously, reducing its legitimacy.

Public protests also developed very quickly. Rallies in the streets of East German cities began with a small number of people. Within weeks, tens of thousands and then hundreds of thousands were participating. The combination of massive rallies and continued emigration of 10,000 people per day led the entire East German government to resign in November 1989. The Berlin Wall was dismantled. In 1990, free elections were held for the first time.

The combination of exit (emigration) and voice (public protest) was enough to undermine the repressive East German state. Many of those who emigrated were key workers. East German industry, transport and services were soon in deep trouble. More importantly, massive emigration exposed the government's claim that East Germany was on the road to being an ideal communist state. The rallies were also essential in exposing the lack of support for the government. With such a show of popular opposition, government leaders did not dare to use force against the population, for fear that troops would not obey and that violence would only increase the opposition. Because the protests were entirely nonviolent, there was no convenient pretext for attacking the protesters. Furthermore, the nonviolence of the protests made it much easier for more and more people to join in.

A number of existing conditions made the collapse of the East German regime possible. First, it had only limited support from the population. Second, its outside support (Soviet military backing) was withdrawn. Third, people were able to exit to an attractive alternative (West Germany). Fourth, there were individuals and groups willing to challenge the government openly.

The East German revolution of 1989 provides lessons for challenging oppressive bureaucracies. After all, East Germany was like a giant bureaucracy, run by the communist party elite and controlling all people's lives. To challenge a powerful, oppressive bureaucracy by using the combined effects of exit and voice requires that:

- the bureaucratic elites have only limited support;
- the bureaucracy is not backed by another, more powerful group (such as corporate elites who are backed by governments);
- there is an attractive alternative source of employment or economic security;
- there are members of the bureaucracy who are willing to

organise open protests.

Social defence

If an entire system of nonviolent action could be planned and prepared in advance, a society could defend itself nonviolently against aggression or repression. This is called social defence, which can be defined as nonviolent community resistance to aggression as an alternative to military defence. It is also called nonviolent defence, civilian-based defence and civilian defence.

As well as nonviolent action against aggressors, such as strikes, fraternisation and setting up alternative institutions, there are also offensive measures to be taken, such as communications to undermine international and domestic support for the aggression. Social defence does *not* mean just sitting there and accepting whatever the aggressor inflicts.

Since social defence is based on popular participation, it removes the dependence on a professional defence force. The nonviolent methods used against a foreign aggressor can also be used against local military forces that try to take power.

No society has ever systematically organised itself for social defence. The historical examples of nonviolent action against repressive governments provide many clues for building a successful social defence system. Here we look only at the relationship between social defence and bureaucracy. Imagine a society that has developed a system of social defence. What should bureaucrats do when confronted by a ruthless ruler? Should they resign? Should they stay in their positions and try to protect their subordinates and clients as much as possible? The answers to such questions are difficult, especially because they have almost never been asked or discussed. Some insights are available from the experience in the Netherlands during the Nazi occupation.

Netherlands bureaucracies under the Nazis

by Mary Cawte

An occupier relies on bureaucracies for the successful administration of the territory, and obviously so does the occupied population. A bureaucrat who disobeys overtly may be dismissed and replaced by a collaborator, with unfortunate consequences for the population. Cooperation may further the war aims of the enemy and cause suffering to the population. While opportunities exist for Schweikism and resistance, bureaucrats taking this course work on a slippery slope of collaboration in order to

preserve these opportunities.

Postwar trials of those accused of collaboration are loaded with difficult questions and moral dilemmas. In truth, civil servants were working in a moral minefield, a situation made even more problematic by their training and traditions, and by the putative effect of the Hague International Convention setting out the rights and responsibilities of both sides in the event of a military occupation.

In 1937 the Dutch government prepared a set of rather vague secret instructions for their civil servants in the event of a military occupation, assuming that the occupier would respect the Hague International Convention. On 10 May 1940 German troops invaded the Netherlands. On 13 May the Queen and the Cabinet escaped to England and later proclaimed their London government-in-exile the legal administration. The Secretaries General (the permanent heads of government departments) were left to make their individual decisions whether or not to remain in office and serve the Germans. The Directives of 1937 had advised them to continue working if that served the Dutch population, but to resign if such service was outweighed by the benefit to the enemy.

On 13 May Hitler issued a decree establishing a German civil government, and appointed a High Commissioner to supervise existing Dutch administration. When the Secretaries General decided in June to stay on, most of their subordinates did so also. The High Commissioner was well satisfied, aware that the introduction of rationing and security regulations and the transfer of resources to Germany would be much easier if issued over the signatures of the Secretaries General. At the same time he assumed the right to issue laws by decree, and many such decrees were issued. At first, while German power remained largely unchallenged, these decrees were effective. Increasingly, however, they were sabotaged directly or indirectly by patriotic officials, the Resistance and the general population.

The German administration soon began discharging 'unreliable' officials. (In November approximately 2500 Jewish officials were dismissed.) As too few 'reliable' Nazis had the necessary technical and administrative qualifications, complete nazification of the bureaucracy was not feasible. By September 1943, however, the High Commissioner had replaced eight out of eleven provincial commissioners and the mayors of all major cities. Their powers were greatly expanded, moreover, taking over the legislative functions of the former elected municipal and provincial councils.

Sooner or later, most of the Secretaries General, facing demands to which they could not agree, resigned or were removed. Of the eleven serving in 1940, only three remained at the end of 1943. Those who did serve to the end of the occupation in 1945 faced

postwar commissions of inquiry which judged that too often civil servants had been overly cautious and had assisted the enemy rather than the general population.

In his defence, the Head of the Department of Internal Affairs, described as 'a conservative civil servant with a limited horizon', argued that he had been told in May 1940 to remain in office and received no orders to the contrary, and that he collaborated to a degree in order not to be replaced by a National Socialist. He resented criticisms by the government-in-exile and attacks by the Resistance. He claimed that in return for cooperation he obtained a number of concessions, supported patriotic mayors, delayed or weakened certain German measures (such as a proposed loyalty declaration by all government officials), and often forced Germans to do their own dirty work. Although he collaborated with Germany's labour draft, he tried to decrease the numbers actually drafted. Certainly after 1943 his attitude changed in response to harsher German policies (as indeed did the attitude of most of the population), and he refused to sign the order instituting a new rationing system because he realised it was designed to catch people in hiding. In 1944, after an attempt to assassinate him, he himself went into hiding.

The Secretary General of the Departments of Agriculture and Fisheries and of Commerce Industry and Shipping also remained in office. 'An intelligent and capable official', he attempted to prevent the complete collapse of the Dutch economy. Although he realised that the German administration would use Dutch resources to the fullest possible extent, he managed to convince himself that 'political problems should not play any part in the economic administration of the country'. During the occupation he was attacked by both the underground press and the government-in-exile. After the liberation he was suspended from office because of his collaboration and eventually given an honourable dismissal. Later he was regarded rather more favourably, as it was judged that he 'played his cards close to his chest and stubbornly and consistently followed a line of conduct which he believed best served the interests of the population and the prospects of postwar survival of the Netherlands as an economically and socially viable state'.

The Acting Secretary General of the Department of Social Affairs (appointed after his predecessor resigned in 1940) was prompted by human and patriotic motives, and wanted to preserve public health, to maintain social welfare and prevent hunger, disease and death as far as possible. Having decided that he could do some good by remaining in office, he then had to compromise more and more, becoming 'one of the most submissive and collaborating non-Nazi Secretaries General'. He was designated 'Number One Bootlicker' by the underground press.

The mayors of small towns, who were in charge of local police forces (distinct from the German police apparatus), population records and rationing offices, were in a particularly difficult position. They had to cooperate enough to retain office but not enough to lose people's confidence. At first, compromise enabled them to cover for administrative sabotage by others, but later when it involved cooperation in the pursuit of people in hiding, compromise became impossible. Many mayors, and in some cases entire police units, went underground.

In 1943, the resistance published an underground 'Commentary on the 1937 Directives', to make them more specific, and more importantly to stiffen bureaucratic resistance. The Commentary urged strict non-compliance, even in the face of dismissal, and emphasised that the government-in-exile remained the legal government. Bureaucrats were individually responsible and would be legally accountable after liberation. Endorsing the Commentary, the Prime Minister stated further that bureaucrats had no right to their own interpretations. And while the National-Socialist Secretary General of Justice assured them that they could plead duress in the event of an Allied victory, the underground press warned that they could plead duress only if personally threatened by 'disproportionately severe punishment'.

The Directives, however, had not been intended to organise administrative resistance, but to adapt the administration to occupation under the terms of the Hague International Convention. The content was vague and not very useful in a situation without precedent. And when in 1942 the Dutch Supreme Court had an historic opportunity to give an opinion on whether a particular German decree conformed to the Hague Convention, it could not reach agreement and did not issue a judgement.

One underground pamphlet of 1943, attacking bureaucrats who remained in office because they thought 'they could do more good' that way, argued that any compromise or expediency was wrong; decisions could be based only on the inherent right or wrong of a given situation. Unfortunately, government officials did not seem to have a common set of values, apart from a traditional sense of duty and a respect for bureaucratic process and efficiency.

The conduct of the bureaucrats has been scrutinised, assessed and reassessed from various viewpoints during and after the occupation. The questions remain. What should they have done? What could they have done? What would you have done?

5. Alternatives to bureaucracy

There are quite a few possible alternatives to bureaucracy as a way of organising work. The important thing from our point of view is alternatives that avoid the central problems of bureaucracy: unaccountable power and domination.

Local autonomy

Running things on a smaller scale is one way to limit the power of bureaucratic elites. Instead of an organisation to deal with a population of millions, there might be many organisations each dealing with populations of thousands. In smaller organisations, personal relationships and face-to-face dealings reduce the effect of hierarchy and the division of labour.

For example, consider a school system being administered by a central bureaucracy, as in the state of New South Wales. The syllabus for hundreds of schools is decided at the top. This gives key directors and officials a vast amount of power to influence what children are taught. If decisions about the school curriculum are decentralised, with each school making decisions about syllabus and staffing, then central domination is reduced.

With decentralisation there is, of course, the problem of local abuses of power. But at least there may be the opportunity for wider public participation in decision-making. Yet another stage of decentralisation would be to provide generous support for alternative schools, home schooling and learning by doing. Ending compulsory schooling entirely would reduce the power of educational bureaucracies. Whether or not one agrees with such alternatives, this example illustrates how local autonomy can undermine the power of bureaucratic elites.

Workers' control

An autonomous work group is a group of say 4 to 12 workers -- typically at a shop floor level -- who collectively decide on how their job will be done and how the tasks will be divided up or rotated. Sometimes such groups develop spontaneously, as in the case of coal mining in Britain prior to mechanisation and at the shopfloor level in many heavy industries. There have also been diverse planned experiments with autonomous work groups. In most cases the technical as well as the social aspects of the work are reorganised, and so this alternative is sometimes referred to as socio-technical design.

The experience with autonomous work groups has been highly successful. No one is forced to join a work group, but for those who do, job satisfaction, creativity and initiative almost invariably increase. In addition, productivity is maintained and usually increased. Because of greater job satisfaction, turnover, absenteeism and sabotage are reduced.

To take only one of many possible examples, in an experiment at a pulp mill in Norway, work was reorganised so that skills were upgraded and job rotation was introduced in a limited form. The results included improvement in quality and costs of production, better communication and teamwork between operators, and many suggestions from the workers for technical improvements.

The key point here is that autonomous work groups reduce the power of bureaucratic elites. Improvements in productivity and satisfaction are a bonus. But these improvements also demonstrate an important point. Bureaucratic systems are not more efficient. The main reason they continue is that those at the top would rather keep their power than experiment with participatory alternatives.

When workers themselves decide what tasks they will do and how they will carry them out, this is called workers' control or workers' self-management. Instead of operating using hierarchy, self-management involves a rough equality of power. This doesn't mean that everyone does the same thing, but that workers decide themselves what division of labour is appropriate. (What is called 'industrial democracy', by contrast, is usually much more limited, typically involving worker representation on management structures. This doesn't necessarily reduce the power of bureaucratic elites.)

A slight generalisation from workers' control is worker-community control. As well as workers, relevant members of the community are involved in deciding what work should be done. For example, in setting up transport systems, all members of the community are potentially affected and could be involved in decision-making. Thus development of alternatives to bureaucracies quickly leads to the wider issue of participatory democracy.

Participatory democracy

An autonomous work group can make decisions through face-to-face discussions. But what about the larger scale, when there are hundreds or thousands of workers? Some sort of system for collective decision-making is needed. There are several models. A familiar one is voting, whether directly on policy issues as in a referendum or for representatives or delegates.

Another model is consensus, using formal procedures for seeking agreements, proposing alternatives, making objections and reaching agreement. Consensus methods can work well for smallish groups but have difficulty when groups are large or there are fundamental differences in values.

A little-tried method is random selection, as in selection of juries

for trials. Instead of selecting decision-makers by appointment or voting, they would be selected by lot from volunteers, with procedures to ensure balance between men and women, etc. The advantage of random selection is that those chosen have no special mandate -- such as skills, experience or popularity -- and thus are far less likely to gain unaccountable power. Experiments in the United States and Germany have shown that randomly selected groups of citizens can do an excellent job dealing with complex and contentious issues, showing both commitment to the task and a great deal of common sense. Random selection has been used occasionally in industry for setting up decision-making groups.

Combining random selection and local groups to deal with particular functions gives a possible alternative to representative democracy. This alternative has been called 'demarchy'.

Different goals

The best alternative to some bureaucracies would be to get rid of them altogether. Spy agencies are used more to contain the population than to resist outside enemies, and could be abolished with no great loss to the rest of the population. Military forces could be replaced by nonviolent community resistance, as described in Section 4.

Bureaucracies are so dominant and so familiar that most people do not think about the possibility of alternatives. There are many possible alternatives, but they all need further investigation and experimentation. Many of the alternatives need to be modified, adapted or fine-tuned in order to be really effective -- just as bureaucracies have had to be over many decades. The main point is that there *are* alternatives.

6. Lessons

Based on our investigations, we have the following comments concerning the task of challenging bureaucratic elites.

It is extremely difficult to change bureaucracies.

Most bureaucratic elites, however corrupt they may be, are never challenged. Bureaucratic elites have enormous power to squash opponents, for example the way the Vatican crushed the Modernists. If we had wanted to, we could have listed case after case of failed challenges. Our case studies are not a representative cross-section of challenges, since we have included a good number of successes.

The challenges that are made usually aim to change policies or personnel, not the structure of bureaucracy itself. The campaign against the Australia Card didn't aim to change the Australian government bureaucracies. It had success in stopping the proposed identity card, but the government's basic goal was achieved through other means.

Sometimes, though, a campaign to change a policy can lead to changes in the bureaucracy. The women's campaign against BHP hiring practices led to a degree of change in the company, namely a less anti-women working environment. This was a significant change, even if the basic hierarchical relationships remained.

To change bureaucracies, a collective challenge is needed.

A lone whistleblower like Vince Neary has little chance of success. Speaking the truth is seldom a good strategy just on its own. It's also necessary to mobilise other supporters on the inside or outside.

The idea that bureaucracies are similar to authoritarian states is a useful one. To challenge an authoritarian state requires a careful strategy. Building support is crucial. Courageous individuals are needed to make open challenges, but these have to be planned in ways that build further support. Some of the methods that can be used in mounting a challenge are: careful documentation of problems; holding discussions and meetings; circulating leaflets and publishing letters and articles; liaising with the media; building links with outside groups; and using a variety of methods of nonviolent action, from rallies to pickets and occupations.

The Dutch soldiers' movement carried out its campaigns effectively. By organising a union and operating collectively, the movement accomplished much more than any number of isolated protesters could have. A military bureaucracy is very similar indeed to an authoritarian state, but even states can be toppled through nonviolent action.

To have any chance of achieving lasting change, it is vitally important to have an alternative.

Most challenges to bureaucratic elites do not even imagine the possibility that there are alternatives to bureaucratic systems, hence they are unlikely to lead to lasting change.

Struggles to change bureaucracy are usually lengthy.

The Movement for the Ordination of Women took ten years to change the official policy of the Anglican Church in Australia, and even that is not enough to transform the male-dominated power

structure. Attempts to reform prison structures may require decades and there is the constant danger of a reversion to traditional hierarchical systems.

Is it a good idea for activists to make plans for years or decades? Certainly it helps for some to have a long-term vision. But how many people would join a campaign that was expected to last years? Most people get involved with the idea of a quick victory, and some of them then become committed through their experiences. How to build a long-term campaign is a difficult challenge. Bureaucracies by their nature have the long-term commitment of workers, especially the elites. It is far easier to go along with the prevailing way of doing things rather than constantly pushing for change.

A key to change is legitimacy.

If citizens withdraw support, even the most oppressive regime will collapse. Bureaucracies are similarly vulnerable. But just saying 'withdraw support' is inadequate. The question is how. Challengers need to understand, through analysis or experience, how the bureaucracy maintains loyalty, how communication systems operate, how links are made with other organisations, how power is exercised against dissent, how people's beliefs and commitments are forged. Not easy! Furthermore, just understanding how the system operates is not enough. It's necessary to know what actions will bring about change.

There's a great need for study of the process of bureaucratic change from the grassroots, of experimentation with alternative ways of organising work, and of testing out various ways of probing and challenging bureaucracies.

Even just raising the idea that bureaucracy is not the only way of organising work is significant. The idea of democratic alternatives to bureaucracies, not just policy or personnel change within bureaucratic structures, needs to be put on the agenda of activists pushing for a more participatory society.
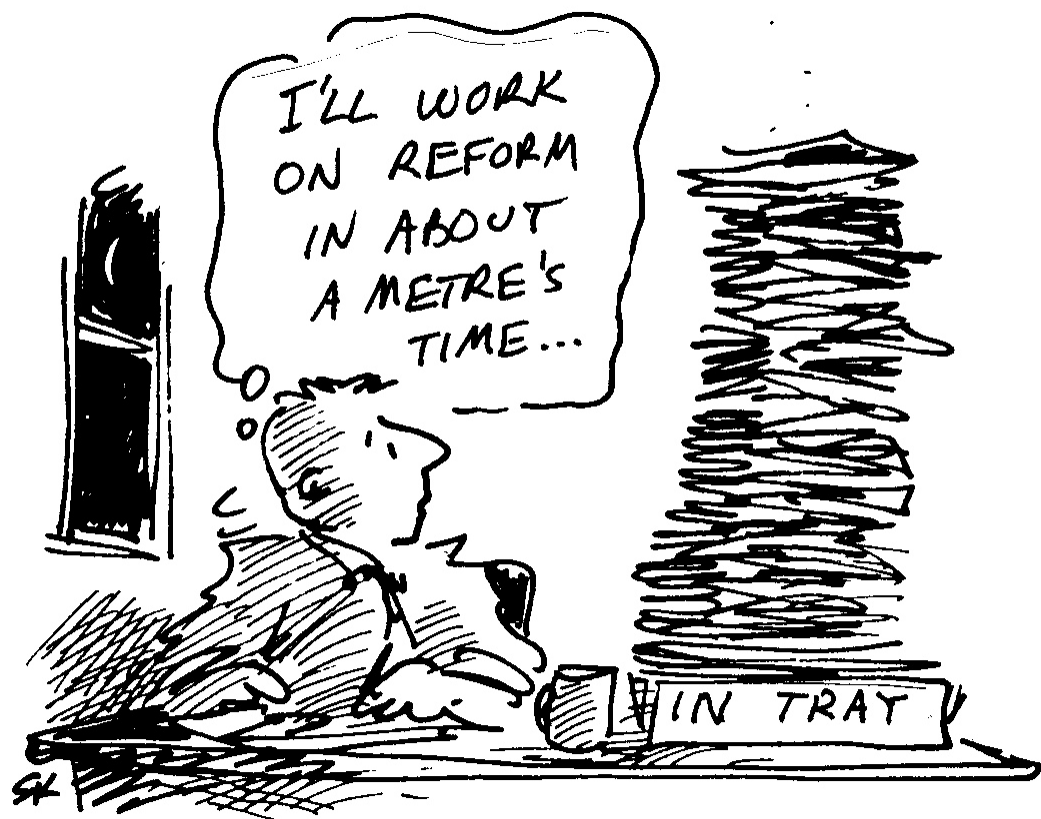
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