

JOKE, PHILOSOPHY

SOME OBSERVATIONS ABOUT SCIENCE ADMINISTRATION

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I've witnessed an ongoing expansion of science administration personnel at local, national, and international levels. What's more concerning is that this administration is becoming increasingly disconnected from the day-to-day realities at the laboratory bench. This phenomenon is commonly referred to as [Parkinson's Law](#), first elucidated 1955 by [C. Northcote Parkinson](#) (not to be confused with [James Parkinson](#)).

In any public administrative department not actually at war a staff increase may be expected to follow this formula:

$$x = \frac{2k^m + p}{n}$$

where k is the number of staff seeking promotion through the appointment of subordinates; p represents the difference between the ages of appointment and retirement; m is the number of man hours devoted to answering minutes within the department; and n is the number of effective units being administered. Then x will be the number of new staff required each year.

In summary, employees like to talk to each other in the administration office, they want more subordinates (and not competitors from the lab) while even little work is expanded to fill the time available for its completion.

After Parkinson, the annual increase in staff, regardless of variations in workload, ranges from 5.2% to 6.6%. He even goes so far as to claim that core tasks could be completely eliminated without the administration shrinking as a result.

Parkinson formulated this in the 1950s. In modern administrations, new terms have been introduced, such as Controlling, New Management Models, business indicators, etc. Often, the proportion of staff in these areas of work increases, while for the actual core tasks, staff remains stagnant or even decreases.

