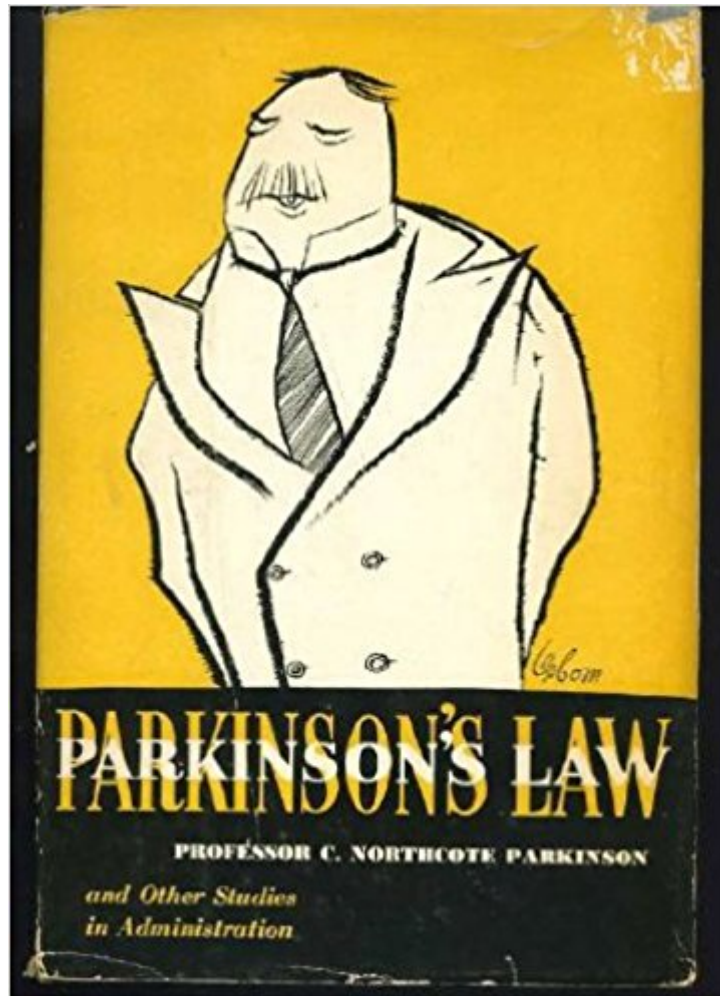




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Parkinson's Law, And Other Studies In Administration



Synopsis

Parkinson's Law, and Other Studies in Administration [Hardcover] 1957

Book Information

Hardcover: 113 pages

Publisher: Houghton Mifflin (T) (October 1957)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0395080681

ISBN-13: 978-0395080689

Product Dimensions: 8.1 x 5.6 x 1 inches

Shipping Weight: 12.8 ounces

Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 stars Â Â See all reviewsÂ (58 customer reviews)

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Customer Reviews

I first received a copy of "Parkinson's Law" from a retired three-star general. Since that time, I've seen copies on the shelves of almost every powerful person I know, from professors and deans to lawyers and businesspeople. Based on this wide-spread popularity, I can safely conclude that C. Northcote Parkinson has written something that transcends his time and profession to become a true classic. He has written, in short, the definitive work on bureaucracy. Chapter one contains the titular law, which is frequently misquoted. The actual law gives a mathematical formula for how fast an office will grow, simply by observing that every bureaucrat will demand two subordinates at certain times. Parkinson backs this up with analysis of various British government bodies. The Colonial Office, for instance, more than doubled in size even as the number of colonies was shrinking. This is a rock-solid rule, as far as I can tell, and particularly relevant to an America where we somehow spend \$728 billion despite having fewer actual soldiers than at any time in the past sixty years. Chapter three famously looks at budget meetings. The conclusion is that up to a certain point, committees will spend more time on items that cost less. Some trivially small item, such as coffee, is easily understood, so every committee member has an opinion about it. On the other hand, nobody really understands expensive items such as reactors, so nobody has much to say about them. This is a phenomenon which I've seen arising in real life time and time again. Chapter four is perhaps the most fascinating and devastatingly accurate one in the book. The hypothesis is

that whenever an organization builds a fancy new headquarters, its time is up.

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