

Midterm exam essay

[Business](#), [Company](#)



Based on your reading of the Wilson article and "The Blast in Centralia No. 5," how would you justify the need for and importance of a strong and effective public administrative system in society?

Public administration can be viewed as an academic discipline as well as a process or task. As an academic discipline, public administration is the study of the process of preparing and implementation of government policy as a field of inquiry public administration refers to the scope or nature of people with the fundamental goal of advancing management and government policies that help the government to function. Public administration thus mainly deals with the activities of public officials who are non-elected and is responsible for their conduct.

United States academics and civil servants such as Woodrow Wilson helped to improve civil service reforms since the 1880s. The dissemination of Max Weber's theory of "bureaucracy" there was no much interest in the study of public administration. In order to be strong and effective public administration systems need to be comprised of six pillars. These are:

- human resources
- Policy analysis
- Statistics
- Organizational theory
- ethics
- budgeting

After looking at a brief analysis of what public administration is, it is necessary to look at the events in the case study "the blast in Centralia No 5: a mine disaster that no one stopped". Centralia No 5 is a mine in

Centralia, Illinois owned and operated by Centralia Coal Company, a subsidiary of Bell & Zoller, one of the big six coal operators in Illinois. The blast in Centralia No 5 killed 111 miners in Centralia, Illinois. The events are documented by John Bartlow Martin. In this analysis, Martin tries to bring forth the facts of the blast and reasons behind the disaster.

According to Martin the Centralia no 5 blast had been a catastrophe in waiting for a number of years. First was the fact that the mine was classified as a medium-small mine because it employed up to 250 men and because it produced up to 2000 tons of coal daily. According to Martin, this was not supposed to be the case due to its age.

There is a big difference between public and private administrations but there are some elements they share in common. For instance, the nearness of officers or directors to their job stations is important to enhance the smooth running of activities. In this case, it is clear that no officer or director of Centralia lived in Centralia. Instead, the closest were either in St Louis or in Chicago. This meant that it was hard for these employees to have a look at the increasing levels of coal dust in the mine and recommend rock dusting or any other precautionary measure.

In his analysis of the situation Martin found out that, the following factors had a role to play in the disaster. First Martin claims that Complexities in the administrative framework had a role to play. In this regard, Martin points out that the administrative framework of the Centralia Coal Company was wanting and this complexity hampered quick implementation of recommendations by the mines inspector Driscoll Scanlan. Second, Martin notes that the company's huge emphasis on profits was a contributory factor

to the disaster. Instead of working on the recommendations of Driscoll Scanlan, the company management ignored all these letters because they were unwilling to increase their cost of production or operations by undertaking expensive clean up and rock dusting tasks.

Another factor that both Scanlan and Martin point out is the Inadequacy of state enforcement of mine safety legislation. For more than five years since 1942 Scanlan had regularly presented recommendations to the state on what should be done concerning the state or condition of the Centralia mine No 5. However, none of these recommendations was ever implemented until the disaster happened. According to Martin, it was common for officers in the mining department to stamp these letters but did nothing to follow up and see whether these recommendations were ever implemented.

Martin also realized that there was Complacency in federal officials and mine unions to growing problems within the mine. According to Martin ongoing wrangles between workers unions led to boardroom fights at the expense of workers' rights. As the unions fought, for supremacy and recognition all, these unions forgot their key duty and that is the agitation and fighting for the miners rights. As a result, the miners were left on their own to agitate for their own rights something that at the end of it became very difficult.

Another factor or problem that Martin observes is the Failure of miners to protect themselves from impending danger. According to Martin, the miners at Centralia No 5 were very much aware of the impending danger. However, the miners failed to sprinkle the mine with water to mitigate these dangers. In addition, during the commission's special tour of the mine, the workers failed to show the inspectors where the problem actually was: in the internal

vaults not the main passage to the mines. Such ignorance also contributed to the disaster.

Corruption of inherent administrative enterprises, was another problem that Martin outlines. For instance, Martin observes that many inspectors did their reports in the company offices and rarely visited the mine or had anything to do with the miners. Most of these inspectors spent their field days drinking with company officials and never visited the mines as planned. This ignorance by the inspectors ensured that the mines were neglected leading to an escalation of the danger within the mine.

Ineffectiveness of the administrative structure that miners are dependent on was another contributory factor. From the word go it was clear that the administrative structure was ineffective in dealing with problems associated with this mine among others within the state that were also neglected. This meant that the miners had no way of changing their fate because even if they complained against the state officers these same officers would have to review these claims. This made it difficult for the miners to complain to higher officers within the department of mines and minerals.

Conclusion

Basing our argument on Woodrow Wilson's view of public administration it is clear that, the state of Illinois, the United States government, Centralia Coal Company, United Mineworkers of America, and the miners are all liable or they all contributed in one way or another to the disaster. Although inspectors such as Driscoll Scanlan could have helped in mitigating the disaster, they lacked the power to enforce their recommendations directly.

Thus, they had to depend on corrupt officers who never implemented their recommendations.

Reference

Stillman, R., J. (2009). Public administration: concepts and cases. 9th ed.
Cengage learning.