

**INSTITUTE FOR GOVERNMENT
RESEARCH. THE ALASKIAN
ENGINEERING COMMISSION. ITS
HISTORY, ACTIVITIES AND
ORGANIZATION**

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JOSHUA BERNHARDT

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Washington, D. C.

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To this end, it seeks by the thoroughgoing study and examination of the best administrative practice, public and private, American and foreign, to formulate those principles which lie at the basis of all sound administration, and to determine their proper adaptation to the specific needs of our public administration.

The accomplishment of specific reforms the Institute recognizes to be the task of those who are charged with the responsibility of legislation and administration; but it seeks to assist, by scientific study and research, in laying a solid foundation of information and experience upon which such reforms may be successfully built.

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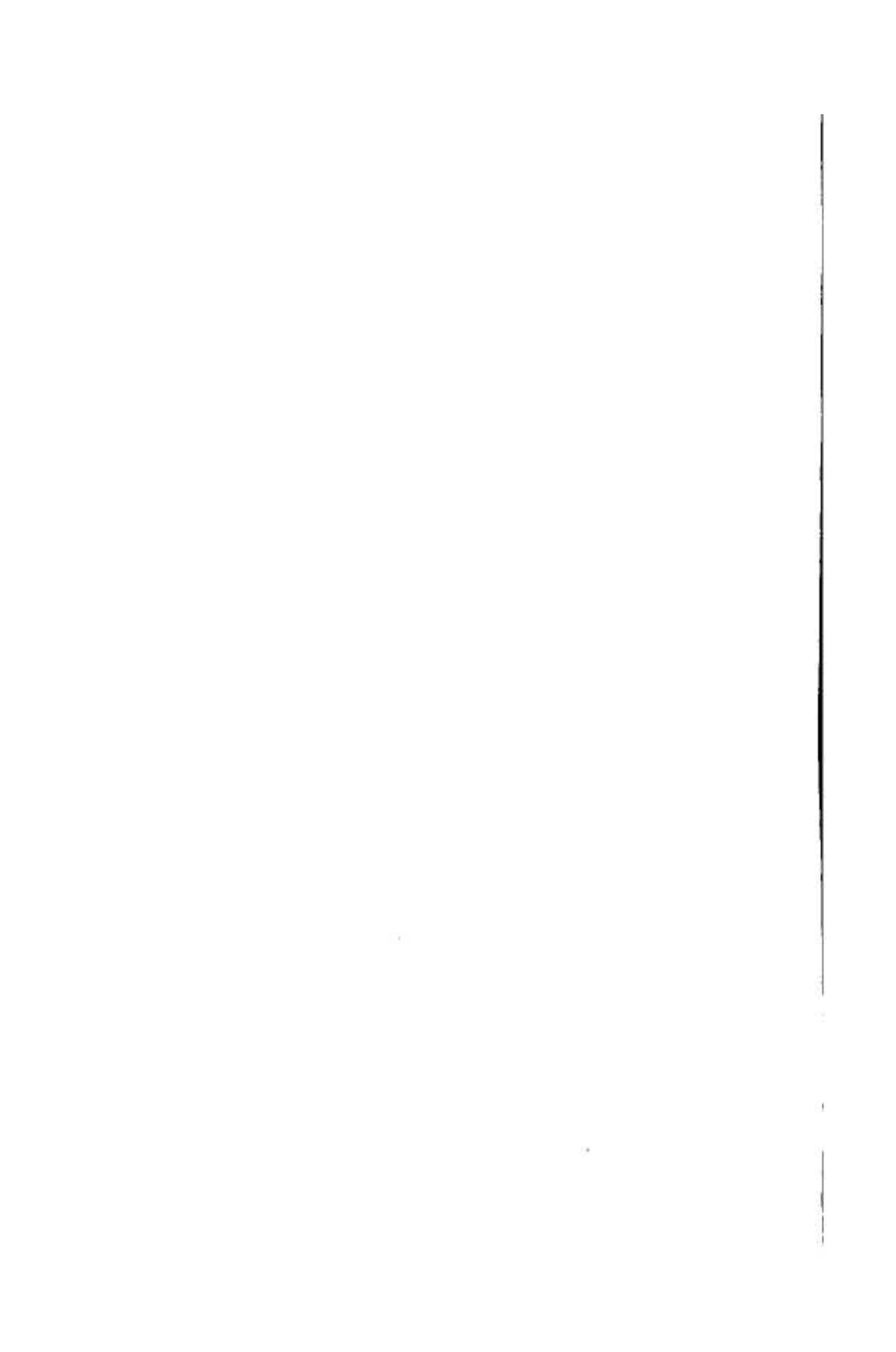
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FOREWORD

The first essential to efficient administration of any enterprise is full knowledge of its present make-up and operation. Without full and complete information before them, as to existing organization, personnel, plant, and methods of operation and control, neither legislators nor administrators can properly perform their functions.

The greater the work, the more varied the activities engaged in, and the more complex the organization employed, and more imperative becomes the necessity that this information shall be available—and available in such a form that it can readily be utilized.

Of all undertakings, none in the United States, and few, if any, in the world, approach in magnitude, complexity, and importance that of the national government of the United States. As President Taft expressed it in his message to Congress of January 17, 1912, in referring to the inquiry being made under his direction into the efficiency and economy of the methods of prosecuting public business, the activities of the national government "are almost as varied as those of the entire business world. The operations of the government affect the interest of every person living within the jurisdiction of the United States. Its organization embraces stations and centers of work located in every city and in many local subdivisions of the country. Its gross expenditures amount to billions annually. Including the personnel of the military and naval establishments, more than half a million persons are required to do the work imposed by law upon the executive branch of the government.

"This vast organization has never been studied in detail as one piece of administrative mechanism. Never have the foundations been laid for a thorough consideration of the relations of all its parts. No comprehensive effort has been made to list its multifarious activities or to group them in such a way as to present a clear picture of what the government is doing. Never has a complete description been given of the agencies through which these activities are performed. At

no time has the attempt been made to study all of these activities and agencies with a view to the assignment of each activity to the agency best fitted for its performance, to the avoidance of duplication of plant and work, to the integration of all administrative agencies of the government, so far as may be practicable, into a unified organization for the most effective and economical dispatch of public business."

To lay the basis for such a comprehensive study of the organization and operations of the national government as President Taft outlined, the Institute for Government Research has undertaken the preparation of a series of monographs, of which the present study is one, giving a detailed description of each of the fifty or more distinct services of the government. These studies are being vigorously prosecuted, and it is hoped that all services of the government will be covered in a comparatively brief space of time. Hereafter, revisions of the monographs will be made from time to time as need arises, to the end that they may, as far as practicable, represent current conditions.

These monographs are all prepared according to a uniform plan. They give: first, the history of the establishment and development of the service; second, its functions, described not in general terms, but by detailing its specific activities; third, its organization for the handling of these activities; fourth, the character of its plant; fifth, a compilation of, or reference to, the laws and regulations governing its operations; sixth, financial statements showing its appropriations, expenditures and other data for a period of years; and finally, a full bibliography of the sources of information, official and private, bearing on the service and its operations.

In the preparation of these monographs the Institute has kept steadily in mind the aim to produce documents that will be of direct value and assistance in the administration of public affairs. To executive officials they offer valuable tools of administration. Through them, such officers can, with a minimum of effort, inform themselves regarding the details, not only of their own services, but of others with whose facilities, activities, and methods it is desirable that they should be familiar. Under present conditions services frequently engage in activities in ignorance of the fact that the work projected has already been done, or is in process of execution by other services. Many cases exist where one service could make effective use of the organization, plant or results of other serv-