Home > Would you blame a cockerel for crowing? A bureaucrat for empire building?

Would you blame a cockerel for crowing? A bureaucrat for empire building? [1]

Written by Tim Worstall [2] | Tuesday 16 July 2013

This criticism seems entirely misplaced to me: we should no more be blaming Baroness Ashton for this behaviour than we should be for a tree whispering in the wind or a cockerel <u>crowing at dawn</u> [3]:

EU foreign affairs chief Baroness Ashton has been criticised for seeking to "expand her empire" at a time when other EU agencies are having their budgets cut.

This is simply what bureaucracies do: the aim and point of all bureaucrats.

As the late great <u>C. Northcote Parkinson [4]</u> pointed out a bureaucracy does not exist to actualy do anything. There are no tasks by which it can be measured, no metrics that allow us to decide whether they've all been good little diplomats or not. Therefore the only institutional goal of any such bureaucracy will be to increase the inputs available to it. More money allocated in the budget, more staff hired, these become the measures by which it definies its own success. This is how the Royal Navy ends up with more Admirals than ships, more desk bound pen pushers in their £1,000 chairs than soldiers or seamen who do the fighting.

To complain of this behaviour is no more effective than a parp in a thunderstorm. The only way that one can prevent a bureaucracy from doing this is not to have the bureaucracy in the first place.

The European External Action Service, the EU's much-criticised diplomatic corps, already has 141 embassies or delegations across the world.

Now that it has been invented, now that a budget has been allocated, I confidently look forward to the day when it has more ambassadors than there are countries to be an Ambassador to. It will inevitably happen, assuming that it hasn't already.

Parkinson really was correct: the only way to stop the metastatisation of a bureaucracy is to cut it out of the body politic entirely.

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- [1] http://www.adamsmith.org/blog/tax-spending/would-you-blame-a-cockerel-for-crowing-a-bureaucrat-for-empire-building
- [2] http://www.adamsmith.org/taxonomy/term/5778
- [3] http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/eu/10178701/Baroness-Ashton-under-fire-for-seeking-to-expand-her-empire.html
- [4] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/C._Northcote_Parkinson

- [5] http://disqus.com/?ref_noscript
- [6] http://disqus.com