

'Regulating the Public Sector: Towards a New Paradigm for Governing Governments'

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From his earliest publications, Christopher Hood's remarkably varied oeuvre of research outputs, combined interests in control with concerns to develop classifications and frameworks for understanding which address the entire set of possible mechanisms of implementation. His work has always exhibited a dissatisfaction with the merely theoretical, which has frequently led him into large-scale empirical projects. The work has always been playful - neologisms and epigrammatic titles are amongst his many calling cards. The commitment to theorising changes in the management of public administration and interest in rich empirical discovery are exemplified in projects which involve counting phenomena and attempting to understanding the significance in changes in the underlying numbers. If the ideas behind his joint work with Andrew Dunsire on *Bureaumerics* (1981) did not ever become entirely mainstream the path that was plotted in that research has led on to substantial empirical and theoretical contributions linking ideas of control and culture to changes both in public management and the nascent field of regulation. Christopher's own wry reflections on the shelf-life and impact of his ideas are also a particular pleasure.

Coming to Christopher's work from that nascent field of regulation, I see the influence of his delving into the field of cybernetics, the science of control systems as a key underpinning of his contribution. Working with Andrew Dunsire on the application of cybernetics to the field of public management, they followed on from Stafford Beer's influential work on management. Problems of public management are identified as problems of control which engage both the potential and the *Limits of Administration* (the latter being the title of Christopher's first book in 1976). This analysis found immense influence when applied to forms of public governance which were, increasingly, been seen to involve external, arms-length oversight by reference to rules. Whilst regulatory scholars had long noted the tendency to introduce new norms or standards without an appropriate set of mechanisms for enforcing or implementing the norms, Christopher's work in *The Tools of Government* (1983) and later *The Government of Risk* (2001) now constitutes a standard analytical frame for identifying viable systems of regulation or control as comprising some norm, rule or standard, some mechanism of feedback or monitoring, and the means to correct deviations from the norm through enforcement or other methods.

Not only does this cybernetics -informed approach offer much to the analysis of formal regulatory regimes, often comprising dedicated agencies, and monitoring and enforcement powers, but it has also assisted scholars and policy makers in seeing that many alternative modes of control operate (whether set in place by government or not) and are available to address core public policy concerns. With formal regulatory regimes the identification of the 'cybernetic trio of detectors, directors and effectors' has supported analyses which demonstrate the frequency with which the functions are split between different forms of organisation (legislatures, ministries, agencies, courts, self-regulatory and standards bodies, and so on). On this view the kind of comprehensive US agency, combining all the elements of a control system in a single body is the exception rather than the norm. This observation in turn has implications for the limits of regulation since, for example, legislatures, agencies and courts, each charged with administering different elements of the control system, are unlikely to exhibit similar rationalities in respect of the objectives of a regulatory regime.

The potential for combining the concerns of public management with those of regulation is perhaps best demonstrated in Christopher's collaborative research on the regulation of the public sector in national and comparative projects undertaken at LSE in the late 1990s and early noughties. Turning to the variety in the modes of control Christopher's creativity had led him to examine the range of viable ways of government from the perspective of the grid-group cultural theory developed by

Mary Douglas his highly influential book *The Art of the State* (1998). This same framework was applied to the project of identifying the range of regulators of public sector bodies, examining their growth trajectories and their methods of regulation by reference to distinct ways of life based in hierarchy, egalitarianism, individualism and fatalism. The first three of these ways of life map broadly onto well accepted governance modes rooted in public and the legal, social and the community based, and competition and market-based controls respectively. In this body of work Christopher asserted that fatalism also mapped onto a mode of control which he referred to as 'contrived randomness', under-deployed but capable of being observed in many systems involving, for example, the random reassignment of tax officials and snap inspections of regulated facilities such as schools and prisons.

The immense contribution to public management and to regulation of this aspect of Christopher's work cannot be briefly described. He was a central figure in establishing the interdisciplinary MSc Programme in Regulation at LSE in 1996 and through both research and teaching facilitated the reading across between social legal and political science approaches to regulation which significantly enriched both sub-fields. Even as the ink was drying on the outputs from the national study of regulation inside government, the channels to government established within the ESRC Whitehall programme, of which it formed part, contributed to a recognition that it was not only businesses that could be subjected to unnecessary red tape. A Public Sector Team was established within the better regulation apparatus of the Cabinet Office charged with addressing excessive regulation of such public sector activities as policing and education and this innovation was noted within the OECD's advice to governments on the parameters of better regulation programmes.

Christopher's intellectual ambition and scale of activity have sometimes appeared to be driven by concerns that he and those around him could always do better. I recall a meeting of a research group some years ago at which it was suggested that we should not be too concerned about driving forward publications with undue haste and Christopher chipped in 'but I might have a thin year' and I remember thinking that it must have been a very long time ago that Christopher Hood last had 'a thin year'.