We have been preoccupied for some time now with the prospect of beginning a new millennium. In fact, I must admit that I speculated about this many years ago. A while back I reread letters exchanged with my wife while I was on sea duty in the Pacific during World War II. In one of them, I mulled over the prospect of living until the year 2000, figuring out to the day how old I would be if I should survive that long, and concluding that it wasn’t likely to happen. By the late 1990s, when it began to appear that I might actually still be around, I must admit that I found the prospect to be exciting, and looked forward with considerable anticipation to January 1, 2000. Indeed, it did turn out to be a milestone date for me and probably for many others in my age bracket, who may have shared my hope of moving into the next millennium.

One nagging problem about all this hoopla was that purists were insisting that the actual new millennium would not start until January 1, 2001. While begrudgingly recognizing that they were probably technically right, I tried not to let this interfere with the significance of that magic number 2000, and for the most part it didn’t. However, this discrepancy did attach more significance to the beginning of 2001, because by then there could no longer be any doubt that we had moved from one millennium into another. Now 2001 is more than two months gone, and we can concentrate on this new millennium without any worry about this being premature.
When I was honored by being invited to deliver the Donald C. Stone lecture at this year’s ASPA national conference, my objective therefore became to consider what I might say about priorities for public administration as we enter the opening years of the last millennium in which any of us are going to be participants.

In doing this, I want to keep in focus the example set by Don Stone as a practitioner of and thinker about public administration in modern society. In the booklet published by ASPA as a tribute to his lifetime of public service, I contributed a remembrance which described Don Stone as “the nearest thing to an all-round Renaissance man to be produced by the public administration community during this century.” Of course, I was referring to the twentieth century. He lived through most of it, from 1903 to 1995, and was active professionally almost to the end of his long life. His influence will undoubtedly extend well into the current century.

Like a multitude of his friends and acquaintances, I have fond personal memories of Don Stone and his wife Alice in addition to appreciating his professional achievements. He was thirteen years older than I, enough of an age differential to keep me from being a contemporary, but not enough to deny me the opportunity to work with and have many fruitful contacts with him for over half a century beginning in the late 1940s. These were concerned mostly with activities of the American Society for Public Administration, the National Academy of Public Administration (NAPA), and the International Institute of Administrative Sciences (IIAS). One of my cherished personal memories of Don came in 1980 at an international gathering in Spain. I had heard for years of his enthusiasm for tennis and skill at the game, which has been my favorite diversion most of my life, but I had never had an opportunity to get on the same court with him. We arranged for two or three matches there, playing both singles and doubles with his wife and others. Don was seventy six year old at the time, but still demonstrated the same zest for tennis as he did for life generally. I treasure that opportunity to have been across the net from him, and am sorry it could not have happened earlier and more often.

Turning back to my theme of priorities for 2001 and beyond, I must start by admitting that I have no grand vision of what they should be. It would be gratifying in a way either to make a ringing pronunciation about a new paradigm for the field of public administration and claim its coming
dominance, or to conclude that we have reached a state of decline or decadence requiring revolutionary
efforts to rescue us from irrelevance.

There are examples of each of these points of view. Convinced and ardent advocates of “new
public management” such as Owen E. Hughes of Australia, applaud his assertion that “the traditional model
of administration is obsolete and has been effectively replaced by a new model of public management.
This change represents a paradigm shift from a bureaucratic model of administration to a market model of
management closely related to that of the private sector. Managerial reforms mean a transformation, not
only of public management, but of the relationships between market and government, government and the
bureaucracy, and bureaucracy and the citizenry.”

Conversely, some “post-modernists” are persuaded that we must turn in a different direct from our
current path, arguing that only a drastic rejection of most features of the recent past can give hope of
achieving a more promising future, one that is still too vague to have an accepted label other the “post”
designation indicating that it needs to be different. Postmodernism is a designation with a variety of
meanings, leading Jeffrey Wasserstrom to describe it as “one of those words whose linguistic career
resembles that of a kitchen sponge,” with a pattern of random and expanding usage that has made it
worthless for most purposes. The problem is partly a semantic one, with the term itself seeming to
challenge the common dictionary meanings of “modern” and “modernism,” defined as contemporary or
pertaining to the recent past. Nevertheless, postmodernism has been utilized to describe trends in a variety
of fields, without consensus as to what designation would be most appropriate to indicate what is
happening. In public administration, the most noteworthy contributions to date are Postmodern Public
Administration: Toward Discourse, by Charles F. Fox and Hugh T. Miller, and The Language of Public
Administration: Bureaucracy, Modernity and Postmodernity, by David John Farmer. Ambiguities aside,
the thrust of this approach is clearly away from rationality as a producer of answers that can be depended
upon, implying that the quest for certainty, in the words of Camilla Stivers, is “not only quixotic but
oppressive.” There are no doubt grounds for skepticism about over optimism as to the possibilities of
success in applying reason to problems of administration, but I am not convinced that doubt must always
replace certainty.
Another continuing theme among those dissatisfied with the current state of affairs is to fret about what Dwight Waldo accurately described years ago, when he pointed out that heterodoxy rather than orthodoxy is a notable feature in the study of public administration. Nicholas Henry reviews the intellectual development of the field under the heading of public administration’s “century in a quandary.” Lennart Lundquist describes recent trends as moving “from order to chaos.” The contrasts between “new public management” and “postmodernism,” with the former representing the most recent urge to develop a science of administration with principles of universal validity, and the latter questioning the utility of such efforts, illustrate again the accuracy of this absence of orthodoxy. I agree with all of these characterizations but, like Waldo, do not view them with apprehension. Instead, such diversity may be a sign of strength rather than weakness. An any rate, this is not something that gives me much concern.

To sum up my judgment about the current state of affairs in public administration, I must confess that I am an optimist, convinced that progress has been made in our study and understanding of the administrative process, with different investigators using different methods, but with the overall result that we are better off now than when I was starting out several decades ago.

II

Having passed up the kinds of opportunities I have mentioned for assessing the present and envisioning the future, what kind of priorities do I have in mind for this new century?

To start with, they will not be brand new priorities. Rather, my intention is to focus on a trio of priorities from the past that seem to me merit renewed attention during the near future. Choosing certain emphases rather than others is not intended to indicate that those passed over are unimportant and can be forgotten, but only reflect a judgment that currently they are less critical.

In narrowing the field of choice, I will as a practical matter be selecting from among the wide range of objectives that Don Stone pursued during his productive career. As I have already indicated, at different stages of his life Don frequently shifted gears. He was not only remarkable successful in moving
the public administration community on the course and at the speed that he deemed appropriate for the moment, but he was also adept at redirection when he thought that was called for by changing circumstances. Without reciting in detailed order the sequence of his priorities, I can summarize by saying that he started as a young man working in the field of local and state affairs, and after exerting major efforts at almost every level of government and administration during subsequent stages of his career, returned to this same emphasis toward the end.

III

Since each of us has his or her own preferences and possibly prejudices, my own selection for priority number one will be no surprise to those familiar with what I have been writing and teaching about for half a century or more. It is that we need to be less parochial in our focus and place more stress on understanding government and public administration outside the limited boundaries of American experience. In other words, we should give more attention to comparative and international administration. This is a message that Fred Riggs and I, among others, have been preaching most of our careers, with only limited success.

Commentaries on the history of public administration as a field of study in this country concur that during most of the twentieth century the orientation was primarily national, concentrating on the past experience and future needs of the United States and only incidentally concerned with cross-national comparisons or with the administrative problems of international agencies.

As both Riggs and I have pointed out, there are numerous examples of a recurrent tendency among major contributors to American public administration to show knowledge of and interest in non-national administrative experiences, but these occurred for the most part either relatively early or fairly recently. Active American statesmen during the formative period late in the eighteenth century, such the authors of *The Federalist* (Alexander Hamilton, John Jay, and James Madison) were pioneer comparativists in the sense that they brought their knowledge of other governmental systems to bear as they analyzed American institutions. In the decades that followed, there were numerous instances
of administrative changes based on borrowing from experience abroad, with civil service reform inspired by the British example as perhaps the most important example. Woodrow Wilson, in his famous 1887 essay and in other writings, made it clear that he regarded comparative knowledge to be indispensable for systematic progress in the study and practice of public administration, and that up to that time Americans had contributed very little to administrative science.

Later in the nineteenth century, after Wilson, what Riggs calls a “counter-tradition” replaced these tendencies to examine foreign administrative experience for the benefit of American administrative practice. With some conspicuous exceptions, from the beginning until the middle of the twentieth century, American public administration was introspective rather than outward-looking in searching for knowledge and trying to improve administrative practices.

Spurred on by some initiatives during the decade of the 1940s, what became known the “comparative administration movement” began to take shape during the 1950s and peaked during the 1960s with the formation of the Comparative Administration Group (CAG) under the leadership of Fred Riggs. Despite the accomplishments during intervening years, which cannot be reviewed here in any detail, I believe it is accurate to assert that, as we enter this new century and new millennium, parochialism continues to be the dominant perspective. That is the reason that I advocate a renewed and more active effort to broaden our horizons and place more stress on studying and understanding public administration in non-American settings.

I do not mean that we have to start from scratch. Indeed, we are considerably better off than we were when Riggs and others in the Comparative Administration Group (CAG) launched their campaign early in the 1960s to focus more effort on comparative studies. The relevant literature, produced in this country and by colleagues elsewhere, is impressive when contrasted to what was available then. Academic courses treating comparative and international administration are now common instead of being rarities. Professional associations provide much more support and encouragement now than earlier. Let me cite a few examples. The American Society for Public Administration has for over a quarter century sponsored the Section on International and Comparative Administration (SICA) as the focal point for this effort. SICA has had its ups and downs over the years, depending on the degree of interest and backing provided by the current ASPA leadership, and the vigor and enthusiasm of those directing SICA affairs. Recently
ASPA as the parent organization has been more supportive, and SICA is currently benefiting from the initiatives and programs of several successive devoted chairpersons, including Derick Brinkerhoff, Jos Raadschelders, Richard Stillman, and Donald Klingner, who has taken over during this conference. The results are evident in ASPA publications and programs. At the international level, over the years most interest has been shown by the International Institute of Administrative Sciences (IIAS), with headquarters in Brussels, and its affiliate, the International Association of Schools and Institutes of Administration (IASIA). Here again, Don Stone’s legacy is prominent. He was mainly responsible for the creation of IASIA and served as its president during several of its formative years. IASIA continues to be active and influential, as shown by the plans for its annual conference, to be held this coming July in Athens, in conjunction with the IIAS Twenty-fifth International Congress of Administrative Sciences. The conference theme is “Governance and Public Administration in the 21st Century: New Trends and New Techniques: Implications for Education and Training.” The general rapporteur is from the University of Malta, and the chairmen of the working groups and project directors come from a broad array of countries, including France, Australia, Hong Kong, Great Britain, Canada, the Netherlands, Egypt, South Africa, Saudi Arabia, and the United States. This conference promises to contribute significantly, as the announcement anticipates, to our knowledge of “the nature and effects of globalisation on governance in the opening decade of the twenty-first century.”

These are encouraging signs, and I want to acknowledge them. Now, I would like to turn to what, in my view, is the greatest deficiency at present in dealing with this priority. This has to do with our curricula in graduate programs in public administration and public affairs. There is usually no assurance that degree recipients will be exposed in any depth to materials concerning comparative or international administration. Most programs do offer courses on these subjects, but they are usually electives which can be chosen or bypassed by individual students at their discretion. Most of the required courses concentrate on the American scene at some level, giving little or no attention to experience elsewhere. My preference, of course, would be to include comparative course work in the core curriculum. If that is not done, then there should be a systematic effort to introduce a comparative dimension in the other courses. Naturally, the primary emphasis in education for public administration will be on the administrative system of the country where the education is offered. However, my impression is that most cases elsewhere there is more
emphasis than in the United States on exposing students preparing for careers in the public service to at least rudimentary instruction about comparative experience. This deserves attention from the leadership of the National Association of Schools of Public Administration and Public Affairs (NASPAA). It would respond to the most serious current gap in giving attention to this priority.

IV

My next selection for priority has been receiving increasing attention in many quarters, for what seem to me important and pressing reasons. It is that the time has come again to focus on deficiencies in our public service and to seek remedies for these shortcomings. The United States was markedly slow compared to countries such as France and Germany in moving from a spoils system to professionalism in its civil service. The excesses in operation of the spoils system during the middle part of the nineteenth century finally led to a movement for civil service reform which drew heavily on earlier precedents from Great Britain, with important adaptations to meet American circumstances. The outcome was the Pendleton Act of 1883, which still remains the legislative base for our system of public service. Although civil service reform has been a recurring theme since, there have been no major changes since those made in 1978 during the Carter administration.

Meanwhile, pressures to take another look at the existing system have been increasing as problems multiply, leading to a number of analyses of deficiencies and proposals for reform. Leading examples from the past include the 1989 National Commission on the Public Service report on Leadership for America: Rebuilding the Public Service; and Civil Service Reform: Building a Government That Works, by Donald Kettl and several associates, published in 1996. During the last couple of years several conferences of experts have been convened and have issued reports on their findings. Several of these are reviewed in a useful recent publication of the PricewaterhouseCoopers Endowment for the Business of Government. Edited by Mark A. Abramson, it is titled Toward a 21st Century Public Service: Reports from Four Forums. These included two conferences of the Federal Leadership Summit, sponsored by several organizations (including ASPA and NAPA), the Wye River Forum sponsored by Syracuse University, and the Belmont Forum, which focused on the diplomatic service.
I can only touch on the particulars of these reports. They show considerable consensus on what
the primary problems are. These include increasing difficulty in competing for talent in a more and more
competitive marketplace, an impending major exodus in the next few years because of retirements in an
aging work force, the existence of multiple employment systems instead of a unified merit system for the
federal public service, diminished performance capacity in an era of growing complexity of demands on
human resources, and insufficient attention to training and development of human capital.

As might be expected, there is less agreement on how to respond, beyond acknowledgment that
the need for action is urgent. Among the most common suggestions are that there should be a more
comprehensive recruitment strategy, that stress should be put on improving the level of top leadership, that
a more effective program for retaining employees is needed, and that greater flexibility should be provided
to individual agencies in managing their human resources.

The Abramson report calls on the new administration in Washington to initiate dramatic reform
efforts, supporting the specific recommendation of the Federal Leadership Summit that the President
should appoint an individual to take a leadership role “in examining and developing solutions to the current
crisis in public service.”

One reason I have picked this as a priority issue is that I am not aware of any indication by the
Bush administration or in Congress that this problem is receiving the kind of attention urged by the sources
I have referred to. The more the public administration community can do to focus our national leadership
on this issue the better.

The third priority on my list for special attention is a renewed campaign for a closer interface
between academics and practitioners in public administration. This again is not a new problem, but is one
that has received plenty of attention in the past, with mixed results. The difficulties in this relationship are
obvious, as is the necessity of a close interconnection. Academics in public administration are primarily
interested in observing and analyzing the actions taken by practitioners. Practitioners in turn should benefit
from the advice given them by academics. Easy communication and understanding between the two
groups nevertheless faces obstacles. Practitioners often are unable to convey to academics clear indications
as to the basis for their actions, particularly through contributions to professional journals. Too often attempts by academics to be of help to practitioners are put in language that is unfamiliar and difficult to comprehend. The gap is often wide between these two groups, even though they have interdependent interests.

The American Society for Public Administration has had a long standing interest in this problem, using as its main tool the ASPA journal, *Public Administration Review*. PAR has frequently in the past addressed this issue. Just during 2000, Chester Newland had an article suggesting that the history of PAR has been one of a struggle for connectedness between academics and practitioners, and later in the year there was a report on the “Building Bridges Tour” undertaken a few months earlier by Larry Terry, editor in chief, Camilla Stivers, associate editor, and Larry Luton, book review editor, which focused on how PAR could best serve both practitioners and academics. One of the typical comments from participants in their consultations was this: “The history of ASPA and PAR is a history of struggle over how to bring academics and practitioners together.”

The editors’ response includes a recognition of the importance of addressing “big issues,” and several specific suggestions for better serving both academics and practitioners. These include means by which academics and practitioners can be encouraged to comments on each other’s work, and introduction of a new feature called “The Reflective Practitioner.” They promise to continue serving both groups, even though in some sense it is an impossible job.

I applaud these commitments and suggestions, and want only to add one comment that is not included in this report. It is recognition of the contribution to this problem that can be made by individuals whose careers combine substantial experience in both the academic and practitioner roles. I am convinced that more encouragement for this kind of career planning and more recognition of case examples of such careers would be helpful. We have some such biographical reports, but not enough.

Here once more we must keep in mind the career of Don Stone. He is an exemplar for the blending of the academic and practitioner roles. After undergraduate work at Colgate and graduate study at Syracuse, his first job was as an intern to the city manager of Cincinnati. He followed this with two years of additional graduate studies in government and public law at Columbia. Then came over two decades of public service, first with the International City Management Association and the Public Administration
Service at 1313 E. 60th Street in Chicago, then in Washington with the Works Progress Administration, the Bureau of the Budget, as a member of the U.S. delegations to the United Nations Preparatory Commission and engaged in drafting the charter for the U. N. Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and then as director of administration to the Economic Cooperation Administration responsible for the Marshall Plan. Then came two more decades as an administrator in higher education, when he served as president of Springfield College and then as founding dean of the Graduate School of Public and International Affairs at the University of Pittsburgh. Toward the end of his career he became a professor of public administration at Carnegie-Mellon University, and off-campus was founding director of the Coalition to Improve Management in State and Local Government.

Few individuals can match this record. I think of Luther Gulick somewhat earlier than Stone and Harold Seidman currently as having other illustrative careers of this kind. More examples should be encouraged.

VI

In concluding these remarks about priorities for the near future, I want to acknowledge the sixty year plus record of the American Society for Public Administration in providing a vehicle for identifying and promoting past priorities in public administration, and to encourage ASPA’s current and future leadership to continue concentrating on this important responsibility. With Mary Hamilton as executive director, and the prospect of a succession of outstanding presidents such as Marc Holzer, Daniel Ahern, Glen Cope, and Walter Broadnax, I am confident that this will happen. This if fortunate, because no other professional society can substitute for ASPA is such a role.
ENDNOTES


iv (University, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1995).


x (Lexington, MA: Lexington Press).


xv For an example, see the section “Leaders of Public Administration” (dealing mostly with the careers of Luther Gulick and Marshall Dimock) in *Public Administration Review* 50, No. 6 (November/December 1990): 599-621.