

# Government Reform a Big Order

GOV. NIGH has announced he will appoint a 40-member bipartisan commission to recommend reforms in state government.

This could turn out to be his most constructive administrative act if it succeeds in eliminating unneeded governmental functions, combines others, reduces waste and saves tax money.

That is a big order, rarely accomplished. It seems to be politically repugnant even to consider doing any of those things. Politicians always seek more power, which comes from expanding government and spending more tax money to influence more people.

A political analysis published in The Sunday Oklahoman Nov. 8, 1981, by John Greiner, capitol news writer, began:

"The federal government may be shrinking somewhat under the Reagan administration, but Oklahomans soon may see Sooner State government grow in response, a state official says."

Any citizen may visit the capitol complex and count the buildings filled with employees but he may be

unable to determine whether their work is essential or a proper function of the state.

Nigh's apparent move to reform government to benefit the public has many precedents, a few of which succeeded in part and many that fizzled for lack of leadership to overcome political power.

One of the more notable was the Hoover Commission during the Truman administration. Headed by Former President Herbert Hoover, it made many constructive suggestions, but vote-conscious congressmen and entrenched bureaucrats strangled most of them.

While he was governor of Oklahoma, Sen. David Boren tried vainly to reduce the numerous boards, commissions and agencies of state government. Most have few essential functions but it is possible there are more of them now than during Boren's term.

While Raymond Gary was governor in the 1950s, this writer served on a state water policy study committee. It consisted of legislators and representatives of water users and was headed by Dr. Lloyd E.

Church of Wilburton, a long-time conservationist.

Those of us not in government wanted to consolidate the five or six overlapping water pollution functions into one agency. The only way we could get any constructive water policies accepted by the legislators was to leave the pollution "pork barrels" alone.

An article in the January Reader's Digest describes the work of a team of 252 businessmen appointed to study state government while Ronald Reagan was governor of California. Of their 2,200 suggestions, he implemented 1,600, saving nearly \$200 million annually.

After he became president, Reagan undertook a similar project, headed by Industrialist J. Peter Grace. This task force has made 2,287 recommendations. If all are adopted taxpayers could realize a \$300 billion windfall in three years.

"The waste is unbelievable," Grace said. Recent news items about how state money is spent gives the impression that "the waste is unbelievable" here, too. Can we afford it?