A. Tupper, “The Contested Terrain of Canadian Public Administration in Canada’s Third Century,” *Journal of Canadian Studies* Vol. 35, no. 4 (Winter 2001)

**Overview**

The paper examines the impact of NPM on Cdn public service – arguing that the principles by which the public service operates changed dramatically in the 1980s and 1990s. Canadian governments have adopted NPM as they struggle to balance budgets, but robust finances are no panacea – and the continuing debate about the role of government will generate demands for continuing administrative reform. Tupper speculates that the public service will continue to face instability as the advent of “post-deficit politics” as characterized by budget surpluses in gov’ts and changing public demands may lead to further reforms of the public service

**NPM Definition:** a complex brew of political, economic and managerial claims. It asserts that to be effective democratic civil services require radical restructuring, new priorities, and much greater attention to efficient service delivery. The Weberian administrative state is seen as an inefficient relic of past times

* a new vocabulary dominates NPM – includes stakeholders, customers and clients of gov’t agencies, performance indicators, business plans, and vision statements

**History of NPM**

* 1960s saw public service become more controversial
* Glassco Commission recommendations included introduction of modern management techniques
* A more general concern about the capacity of civil servants to shape policy, and the growth of bureaucratic discretion/power worried those concerned about accountability of governments, rights of citizens, etc. One particular fear was that after decades of Liberal rule, that the civil service had in essence become an ally of the Liberal party. Claims that the bureaucracy was neutral was met with skepticism
* Response of administrative changes was piecemeal

**NPM Revolution**

* Occurred in the 1980s and 90s
* Key tenets of NPM:
  + Steering not rowing
  + Managing for results
  + Measuring results
  + Citizen responsiveness
  + Employee empowerment
* First major principle of NPM – “steering not rowing” – this means that gov’ts must be structured so that politicians are able to establish basic priorities, and the delivery of the services need not necessarily be undertaken by gov’ts themselves
* Idea that gov’ts are ill-prepared to deliver public services generated an “alternative service delivery” movement in Canada – alternatives include PPP, contracting out, and co-production
* Arguably, Employee Empowerment has been a pretty spectacular failure. Notion of civil service empowerment (and the decentralization of power) stands in stark contrast to strong centralization of authority over financial matters and policy characterized by Cdn gov’ts in 1990s. Moreover, the nature of public employment has changed over past decades – many civil servants now work on contracts and no longer enjoy tenure
* One perspective on NPM is to view it as the handmaiden of neo-liberalism – which can be taken 2 ways:
  + Can see NPM as a smokescreen – a justifying ideology for the radical cutback of the welfare state
  + OR as a complex balancing of social and economic forces
* NPM is kind a jack-of-all trades theoretical premise for reforms in the public service

**Implications**

* Tupper then moves to some of the normative questions put forward by NPM
* NPM argued to raise 2 major concerns:
  + Heavy reliance on non-governmental agencies for service delivery is worrisome, as gov’ts naively assume that ‘not-for-profits’ can serve as a ‘second social safety net’
  + It downplays the civil service’s policy advisory role – sees civil service as a source of managerial expertise and not policy power
* NPM also disrupts the accountability framework (a la Sanford Borins) – alternative service delivery has generated a system of governance (not just a service delivery network) with no clear rules or policies

**Future of the Civil Service**

* Tupper predicts that “in the new millennium, new programmes will be launched and existing ones refurbished in a radically reformed administrative structure that is the handmaiden of expenditure restraint”
* Speaks of “post-deficit politics”

Take-away: Boy was he wrong.