In May, 1883, two major events took place. One was totally unnoticed and the other was of minor notice but with great ramifications. The first event was a Saturn-Pluto conjunction at 29 Taurus. This event was unnoticed because Pluto was not discovered until 1930, and astronomers and astrologers were unaware of its significance. The second event was the report on regulations by the first federal civil service commission, changing forever the structure of the government bureaucracy.

In recent years, the federal bureaucracy has come under attack as “the Deep State”, also derisively known as “the Swamp.” At other times, the bureaucracy has been regarded as corrupt, incompetent, and even malevolent. Ronald Reagan derided the system by saying, “The most frightening words are, ‘I’m from the government, and I’m here to help.’” The mindset was created that government workers were overpaid, underworked, and busily plotting to take away freedoms from average citizens.

Such a mentality was not always the case, and through the conjunctions of Saturn and Pluto, we can see how the “Deep State” has changed over the years. The original intention of the Founding Fathers was that government offices would be filled by qualified men who would be allowed to do their work based on their talents as lawyers, engineers, soldiers, etc. The first six presidents did not have much inclination to change government employees. A postmaster appointed under the Washington administration might have continued to hold the job through the John Quincy Adams administration.

This all changed with the coming of the Jackson administration in 1829, which proclaimed the new policy of “To the Victor belong the Spoils.” Old-time government employees were turned out, and government jobs were given to political hacks that had supported the winning candidate. The result of this system was that every change of government brought about a change in the bureaucracy, with thousands of office seekers storming the White House and government offices to get plum positions. The worst outcome of this system was the employment of incompetent functionaries. This was seen during the Civil War when the most incompetent Union generals achieved their positions of leadership because of political connections, which brought about their defeats by more competent Southern generals.

By the 1870’s, the corruption of the Spoils System was so apparent, an active movement started for civil service reform, whereby government offices would be attained by qualified men through competitive examination. In January, 1883, President Chester A. Arthur signed the Civil Service Act of 1883, and by May the civil service commission was releasing the first regulations, just in time for the
Saturn-Pluto conjunction, which was exact on May 22, 1883. Astrologers have argued about the birth date of the United States (July 4, 1776, July 2, 1776, or even June 21, 1788 when New Hampshire ratified the Constitution and put it into effect.) Is it possible that May 22, 1883 could mark the birthday of the “Deep State?”

Setting the chart for Noon in Washington D.C., the Saturn-Pluto conjunction falls in the Ninth House of Legal Matters. Adding to the Sagittarian influence, the Saturn-Pluto conjunction is also conjunct Chiron, the wounded healer. This is significant because like Chiron, the federal bureaucracy has taken its share of wounds, but it has also been regarded as a repository of wisdom. Federal agencies have provided the answers to problems in all technical fields. In spite of the abuse, the public understands the needs for having a reliable source.

In the 1883 chart, there is a stellium in Taurus, which is the sign of ownership. In the matter of civil service, the question has been, “Who owns the government bureaucracy?” Under the Spoils System, the bureaucracy was owned by politicians who would direct the policies and planning for their own gain. Under the Civil Service Act, the ownership of the bureaucracy would theoretically be by the people, who would provide the money and resources to keep the government functioning. Venus, the ruler of Taurus, is semi-sixtule the Saturn-Pluto-Chiron conjunction, emphasizing the matter of control. The bureaucracy would work for everyone, and not just one political faction.

The Sun in the 1883 chart is squaring Vesta, asteroid of hearth and home, as well as the Ascendant. There might have been times when government planning seemed to be working against personal security. Construction of dams and other building projects have moved families from land settled for generations. The most extreme example would be seen in 1942, when thousands of Tennessee residents were uprooted to make way for the building of the atomic research city, Oak Ridge.

With the Sun semi-sixtule Juno, there would still be some political influence in helping civil service candidates get their jobs. Jupiter semi-sixtule the Sun could stand for business influence in certain matters. With the Moon opposing the Sun, there were times when some people in government agencies would demonstrate their incompetence through their connections. The worst example was in 2005, during the Hurricane Katrina crisis, when FEMA was under the control of “Brownie”, a political hack whose expertise was in training horses, and who only became manager of the agency through political connections. It was obvious as people were drowning and help was not coming, that “Brownie” knew nothing about how to handle the disaster.

The role of Saturn-Pluto in the development of the “Deep State” can be seen through the pattern of conjunctions through the 20th Century. Saturn rules the “status quo” such as bureaucracy and tedious jobs. Pluto rules hidden matters, like top secrets and investigation. At first, these did not have much of an influence in the bureaucracy, but through the further conjunctions of Saturn-Pluto we can see how the “Deep State” has grown from about 20,000 workers to more than two million workers.

The next big change for the bureaucracy came with the Saturn-Pluto conjunction at Zero Cancer in May, 1915, less than two weeks after the sinking of the Lusitania. This action would bring about war fever in the United States. Before, the foreign policy had been one of isolationism and neutrality in regard to the conflict of World War 1. With the sinking of the Lusitania, an anti-German hysteria swept across the nation. President Woodrow Wilson managed to stall the entry into the war, but by 1917 the American role in the conflict was inevitable.
World War 1 brought an increase of federal power, particularly with the military. A Draft was started, and millions of men were mobilized for the war effort. This brought an increase in the bureaucracy to watch over the changes. One of the new government lawyers was a young man named John Edgar Hoover, who began compiling lists of subversives, anarchists, and anyone with politics to the left of Hoover. The lists were good for picking out German sympathizers and labor troublemakers who might hurt the war effort. After the war, prosecutions of suspected “Communists” were promoted thanks to Hoover’s filing system. By 1924, Hoover was promoted to head the Bureau of Investigation, which would later be renamed the Federal Bureau of Investigation and become Hoover’s private empire for law enforcement and political intimidation.

The next Saturn-Pluto conjunction took place at 13 Leo on August 10, 1947, a few days before the independence of India, and about two weeks after the creation of the Central Intelligence Agency. The agency was put together out of the various intelligence departments used during World War II, ostensibly to coordinate the information coming in to the government. Over the years, the members of the agency would be derided as “Spooks”, and there would be charges that the agency was conducting its own secret foreign policies. Revelations in the 1970’s showed there had been failed assassination attempts against Fidel Castro. There were worries that the agency might have been involved in the Kennedy assassinations and the killings of other prominent figures. Most disturbing were stories that came out about James Jesus Angleton, the head of counter-intelligence, who may have harmed the agency with his paranoia regarding defecting Russian agents.

Further worries came about in the 1980’s, with the rise of a secret government after the Saturn-Pluto conjunction on November 7, 1982 at 27 Libra. Just after this conjunction, Leonid Brezhnev died, marking the beginning of the end for Soviet power. His geriatric successors could not live long enough to maintain power, and the control passed to the younger Mikhail Gorbachev. In American politics, the Democrats retained control of the House in the mid-term elections, and they passed an appropriations bill which included the Boland Amendment. This outlawed the use of funds for helping Nicaraguans rebels, whose human rights violations had shocked the world.

Because of the Boland Amendment, Colonel Oliver North set up a secret government in the White House basement, utilizing funds from arms sales to Iran to send supplies to the Nicaraguan Contras. The whole operation was exposed when a CIA pilot was shot down, and the paper trail went all...
the way back to Oliver North. Rather than try to worm out of it, Colonel North admitted to what he was doing. He managed to escape prison on a legal technicality. However, the Iran Contra scandal made people wonder what other sort of secret operations were being handled by the Deep State.

Which brings us to the current situation of the Deep State, and the Saturn-Pluto conjunction on Jan. 12 at 22 Capricorn. This conjunction is joined by the Sun, Mercury, and Ceres adding to the intensity. It may be a time of soul searching for the members of the Deep State. Mercury might remind them why the federal bureaucracy was created. Ceres may bring about the feelings of nurturing and the fact that they should be helping the people. The Sun may arouse new pride and a resolution to stand firm against attacks. The 2020 conjunction is in a wide trine with the 1883 conjunction, and this may bring a reminder about the vision of the government agencies, that they should not be servile to political factions and not run by cronyism.

It should be pointed out that in the chart of a certain person with the initials DJT, the 1883 conjunction is squaring his Ascendant, Mars, and Part of Fortune. Add to that the 2020 Saturn-Pluto conjunction is opposing his natal Saturn-Venus conjunction, and you have an unhappy individual whose power is being challenged, and who will be unloved and rejected to the point he will not be able to run for dog catcher. Whatever deficiencies the federal bureaucracy may have had in the past, its efforts in the coming years maybe more respected as people realize its meritorious service and the need to have intelligent people running government agencies.

—Thomas Canfield