

THE NEED FOR REFORM IN ADMINISTRATION*

by Masood Hasan

We want to eat our cake and have it too. We want all the "benefits" of the better organized countries without the sacrifice necessary to "achieve" such benefits. The sacrifice is: making use of the scientific method consciously. To understand the terrific advantages that arise out of the discipline it forces on us and equally, to be aware of its limitations. This can only come through deep knowledge.

So far it appears we are not conditioned to look at both sides of the balance sheet. Even though the totals on both sides are the same we prefer to keep looking at the left hand side ie what we have got, rather than looking at the right hand side and find out where it has all gone.

Evaluation of our utilization of resources (human or financial) provides the best background for directing an effort.

Evaluation is of course, more difficult than one thinks....

Going back to 1854, we find that a Report on the Indian Civil Service (ICS) was written by Macaulay and four others. This document is better known as the Macaulay Report. Recruitment to this service then and now in Pakistan as its successor-in-interest, the Civil Service of Pakistan (C.S.P) continues to keep more or less to the same form as enunciated some 114 years ago! Basically, it was Macaulay's contention:

"That Civil Service wants the best brains, who have read nothing but subjects unrelated to their future careers." In England Lord Fulton and eleven others were charged with the task to "examine the structure, recruitment and management including training of the Home Civil Service and to make recommendations". Since the words "Civil Service" have a special connotation here it is as well to point out that the British Civil Service for purposes of Fulton's Committee excluded Government Employees in the Diplomatic, Industrial Research Councils and the Post Office Establishment. The Post Office was excluded because their salaries were not voted for but paid out of Post Office receipts. All the rest such as Agriculture, Customs and Excise, Inland Revenue, P.W.D., Home etc, were included in their purview.

Within the Civil Service of the U.K, there exists an administrative Class and this may be likened to their counterparts here the CSP Class.

Since we have inherited a number of traditions from our erstwhile rulers it is of interest to note what information and opinion in the U.K has to say about their Administrative Class. For a lot of what is said about them there, applies to us here.

* Pakistan Times, Feb. 02, 1969.

RECOMMENDATION

The Fulton Committee's findings found ready acceptance with the British Government in that its three main recommendations were swiftly accepted ie,

- (a) The creation of an "open" structure in the Home Civil Service eliminating barriers between and amongst the rest and the Administrative Class.
- (b) The setting up of a new Government Service Department with wider functions than what the existing system has. Also that the new department should absorb the existing Civil Service Commission. This is in conformity with the creation of a classless government service as mentioned in (a).
- (c) A Civil Service College should be set-up to provide training courses in administration and management along with a wide range of shorter courses. The college to also have important research functions.

Why was it necessary for such an evaluation to be made by an eminent group of twelve which amongst others, included individuals associated with colleges, industry, management consultancy, government, O&M work, parliamentary secretaries and members of parliament?

The answer, of course, goes back to fact that ever since World War II, social, economic, scientific and technological change is taking place with increasingly alarming rapidity. We are being given progressively lesser and lesser time to react to such change. The whole process is further complicated through the increasingly large size of organisations (both public and private) which have to deal with such change.

WAYS AND MEANS INADEQUATE

Our traditional ways and means of organizing government institutions are totally inadequate. What the Fulton Report says appears to fit our existing "working" model to a T. The main findings read as if the Pakistan problem was being investigated that:

- (a) Emphasis is paid to the "generalist"—the philosophy of the "all-rounder" —for holding dominant positions.
- (b) Inability exists through the Class system of "specialists" such as engineers, accountants, scientists and others of rising to the top.
- (c) Personnel management and career planning were inadequate.
- (d) Too few government employees are skilled managers.
- (e) There are too many sub-classes in the system, each with its own book of rules. This, impedes speedy and efficient work-flow.

Emphasis on (a) to (e) above, has created what Ronald Butt—a "Sunday Times", columnist—says "if one of the more pervasive fashions in contemporary academic thinking about Government were translated into hard terminology, we should speak not of our Civil Servants but Civil Masters" he goes on to say "As more and more areas of social and industrial life come under public administration the Civil Service

becomes predominantly an organisation for management". It is quite clear that because government servants are in business over a very wide range of activities which require special training for special skills ranging from sociological through applicative technology, to the scientific, that lack of such skills leads to them being ill-equipped for the jobs at hand. The most important being that of co-ordination of a host of diverse activities to ensure maximum advantage is being derived out of resources (human or otherwise) committed to a particular job. We must learn to treat "information" as a commodity a surplus or deficit of which can create problems all their own. As a rider it may be added merely putting a specialist at the top in itself will not solve the problem it requires something more. What is this something more?

FUNDAMENTALLY WRONG

When we look at how work-flows (or rather how it does not) it is quite obvious that a lot is fundamentally wrong. It is as if we are wearing medieval knights armour complete with sword and shield to fight against a present day adversary! This boils down to the first pre-requisite of improving a given situation or solving a complex problem ie acceptance of the fact that an objective investigation might provide some clues for improvement. If those in authority are broad-minded enough to accept this basic idea (for it is no more than idea, is it?) then it is possible to apply the use of the scientific method which (as Bronowski says), is harder than you think! It is quite definite any other way will not deliver the goods.

Since government activity in the lesser developed countries (LDCs) is effectively larger in magnitude than similar effort in the developed countries (DCs) it follows: that any increase in operational efficiency at government level in the LDCs means more than what it does in the DCs.

It is quite obvious if one were to make a list of the tasks performed by the administrators that a number of job segments can be quantified (defined). This is precisely what was done by the Management Consultants Group of the Fulton Committee in their investigations of the Administrative Class of the British Civil Service. It was found possible to list out of a number of job segments. Having listed them it is then possible to apply modern managerial evaluative techniques with profit. True, it is never possible to get rid of the traditional administrative (managerial) skills required in the exercise of authority but it was increasingly observed that a new type of executive is required to handle complexity (in organized activity) on account of size. This amounts to more and more specialized training requirements. Unfortunately, we do not have enough of this in Pakistan. The half-life period of knowledge has been estimated at 10 years, which means after 10 years only 50% of what we learnt is relevant after another 10 years only 25%.

We can be quite sure that the practical work methods to deal with such complexity must be of an even measure of sophistication to be effective ie talk to a donkey in donkeys language. We can be equally sure that such complexity will continue to grow and that the cultural environment surrounding organisations will play an increasingly

significant role in shaping their future policies. The complex relationships between the manager (executive) and society will be brought into sharper relief with the inroads modern technology is making into our lives today. Modern know-how whether it be in administration, health, education, transport or planning has created the need to mobilize larger and larger resources to achieve economically viable results in most fields. This is resulting in greater and greater specialization, which calls for more efficient means of coordinating scattered brilliant effort and it is precisely this problem that the Fulton Report highlights when it says: before it is possible for any individual to go in for "general management" or policy making at a higher level it is necessary for an individual to enter service at a low level and to then develop expertise in a function (personnel, cost accounting, procurement, maintenance, planning, production or stock control etc.) Having achieved a high level of competence in a particular function the individual is ready after that to move into general management. But not before going through courses to broaden his sights. The reason for such thinking is clear if we attempt to reconstruct the successful career of a specialist. At each level, starting from the lowest he is in contact with other functional specialists and as he rises up the organizational tree he keeps on shedding more and more direct work and controls more through increasingly statistical work. An understanding, first hand, of such happenings lays the proper infrastructure in the human being as a logical stepping stone to higher responsibilities involving policy.

There is no evidence to suggest specialists cannot quickly assimilate the necessary knowledge of the working of the government machine, provided they are given such a chance. However, it is quite clear that the new demands made on Administrators calling for "new additional skills must remain outside the scope of even the most able generalist". This means when taking on an employee, one must look for qualifications broadly relevant to their future work.

Some of the problems we are faced with today is the result of short tenure and frequent handovers which are conducive towards administrative instability. This becomes particularly serious where the time span of dealing with a problem is longer than the time an Administrator is in the post. This prevents the Administrator from handling the complete cycle of the policy-making process. This is also wasteful wherein specialists (accountants, engineers or planning officers) with their supporting staff have to induct yet another Administrator in, to find by the time has the "feel" of it he is ready for a move once again!

A major assessment has to be made of the ways and means as to how work flows. As mentioned before, size breeds complexity, this implies directly that any assessment achieves precious little unless, firstly those in authority genuinely feel that an objective look around is a good thing and secondly those individuals directly concerned with the area under examination are actively associated in the enquiry process.

The first condition mentioned above removes administrative obstacles that appear from time to time in the course of such an examination, the second condition ensures

the throwing up of ideas in an atmosphere conducive to innovation. It is not possible to overestimate the necessity of creating such an environmental infrastructure for purposes of improvement. Let us learn from the lessons learnt the hard way in the West. If we do not hear more of and about such happenings please remember no organisation or individual anywhere in the world wishes to advertise their failures. But they are there. One must look hard enough and many a time read between the lines!

We will do well to harken to the necessity of being flexible enough to alter those organisations structures where it is quite obvious that they are defeating the very objectives they were set up for in the first place. And let it not be said that to change is against our way of life. It is not. New knowledge in order to justify itself must be applied, otherwise, it is sterile. And let it not be said that changing our ways of doing things is a bad thing. Are we concerned with the "ways" or are we concerned with solving a problem with the best tools available at the time when we are faced with it?

The traditionalist seeks the easy way out ie do not alter the status quo. It is as if he has a patent medicine ready dispensed for ailments "made to conform to the cure." Life is not so simple as that. Each disease must be identified with man's best ally-- symptoms. And having done so a proper prescription be made out to effect a cure. Given conditions as they exist today it cannot work out in any other fashion. It is no use, preserving outmoded, antediluvian institutions because they look good, they must make way for the new. The new must be built on an understanding why we are where we are. As a former Secretary (Lovett) of the U.S.A. said "Good judgement is usually the result of experience, and experience is frequently the result of bad judgement".

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