

Cornelius and Fulton Reports : A Comparison*

by Masood Hasan

THE Cornelius Pay and Service Commission was constituted in August, 1959, and completed its Report two years and nine months later. The Fulton Committee was set up in 1966 and its Report was presented to the British Parliament in June, 1968.

The British Government was swift in its reactions. It gave ready acceptance of the Fulton Committee's findings particularly its plea for:

- (a) Creating an "open" structure in the Home Civil Service, eliminating barriers between and amongst the Administrator Class and the rest;
- (b) Creating a new Civil Service department and setting up a Civil Service College to train the Civil Servants to imbibe the new professional approach.

Lord Shackleton was appointed to implement the findings of the Fulton Committee. In fact, the Civil Service College (there will be three of them) is expected to start functioning in early 1970.

What happened to the Cornelius Report is a very different story: it was suppressed and it is only in the past few days that it has been made available for public consumption! It is a tribute to Mr. Cornelius's acumen that, generally, the major conclusions arrived at by his commission anticipated the Fulton Committee by several years—six, to be sure. Imitation, it is said, is the sincerest form of flattery. Let us, therefore, see how similar or dissimilar the findings/recommendations of the Cornelius Commission and Fulton Committee are.

UNIFIED SERVICE

1. The Cornelius Report recommended a 7-tiered unified service structure, Fulton the creation of an "open" unified grading structure and the abolition of the class barriers.
2. Cornelius stated that our present administrative system makes it impossible for all branches of the service to give of their best. Fulton said the present class system hinders the adaptability to the service to new tasks, prevents best use of talent, causes frustration and prevents entry into line management of suitable officers.
3. Cornelius said that the myth that a CSP (Administrative Class) is required for the higher posts in general administration has been exploded. Fulton found the "generalist" or "amateur" unsuited at all levels of the administration and said that the introduction of a classless system in no way impinges upon present principles governing service and that work would be simplified. Flexible use

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of individuals could be made and integration of those officers with varying background of education, training and skill for purposes of resources optimization would be possible.

4. Cornelius recommended the setting up of four Provincial and Central Personnel Management Organisations to ensure proper career planning. Fulton also states that personnel management and career planning are inadequate and suggests measures for their improvement.
5. Cornelius stated that tremendous emphasis should be placed on training so as to improve managerial skills, also that professional bias must be given to functions. The movement of administrators (CSP) from job to job does positive harm to administration. Fulton arrived at the same conclusions and pointed out that a striking feature of the British CSP (Administrative Class) was job mobility involving moves bearing no relation to each other. Further, even though it was commonly assumed that changes took place every 3-5 years, investigations showed an average tenure of 2.7 years.
6. Cornelius viewed with alarm the reservation of certain posts for CSP, particularly those calling for professional competence and commitment to the job.

Fulton Committee found a general lack of commitment leading to seriously adverse consequences as follows:

- (a) Many Administrators have so short a tenure in any job that even the most able of them rarely have time thoroughly to grasp the complex subjects with which they are dealing.
- (b) Without a deep understanding of these subjects, either by experience or training, few of them are in a position to evaluate in any fundamental way the extent to which the policies they are administering are successful. This must inhibit the drive for innovation.
- (c) It produces inefficiency and slows down the administrative process, since an Administrator has to spend so much time familiarizing himself with problems his predecessor may have just mastered. The new man in the job cannot be aware of all the discussions and understanding his predecessor may have had with a firm or a local authority, for example.

UNSTABLE

- (d) Short tenure and frequent hand-overs produce administrative instability and inconsistency since each new incumbent of a post is likely to put a different emphasis on the interpretation of policy. This is particularly serious when the time span of dealing with a problem is much longer than the average time an Administrator is in one post.
- (e) Many administrators are neither able, nor concerned, to establish adequate contact with sources of expert advice either inside or outside the Service or to develop a fruitful relationship with such sources. One officer in a highly technical area said that there was no point in making a great effort to find

what other countries were doing in his particular area of activity—or even to get to know as many British experts on the subject as possible—since he would be in that particular job for only three years at the most. Another example was of the officers dealing with industrial matters who had never visited an industrial firm.

- (f) It wastes the time of specialists (e.g. engineers, planning officers) and supporting staff to have yet another Administrator to introduce them to the problems with which they are jointly concerned, particularly when the Administrator is unfamiliar with the methods and terms of the specialists. A particularly flagrant example was in one area in which specialists were heavily involved, where there had been five different Under-Secretaries and five different Assistant Secretaries to be briefed and introduced in two years.
 - (g) It prevents an Administrator from handling the complete cycle of the policy-making process, analyzing the problem, conducting or supervising or contributing to research into it, or recommending a course of action and modifying policy in the light of results.
- (7) Cornelius stated that whilst certain expertise has to be developed (through training, when not picked up the hard way) in running the administration even the most brilliant “gentleman amateur” (CSP could not make up for lack of detailed professional knowledge, not having had the opportunity in his early years of service to acquire expertise. Fulton states that whilst the traditional skills of the British CSP class in running the Government machine will obviously remain important, the new demands on administrators which are increasing in complexity on account of technical progress, call for additional skills that must remain outside the scope of even the most able generalist.

SPECIALISTS

- (8) Cornelius strongly criticizes the generalist (amateur) approach and brings out the relationship between the technically qualified (specialists) and the Administrative Class (Generalists) and the keen sense of frustration on account of having to accept inferior status. Fulton like-wise finds the “generalists approach” as totally inadequate at all levels of the British Home Central Service and states:
- (a) on the question of financial control, administrators do not have the technical competence properly to challenge the specialists except on obvious or relatively trivial points. This was for the most part also true when the administrators raised non-financial matters;
 - (b) delays and inefficiencies result from dividing the responsibilities for making many decisions between specialists and administrators. Misunderstanding arise, papers are sent to and fro for clarification, time is occupied by explanations;
 - (c) under present circumstances there is a waste of specialists time since administrators change jobs more frequently than specialists. Thus specialists

find themselves having to explain the technical background to newly arrived administrators;

- (d) in industry, managers with specialists background are very often entrusted with the expenditure of funds without having their decisions under continuous scrutiny by laymen. There is no evidence that this leads to unwarranted expenditure. Indeed, cost control is an aspect of the training of architects, engineers, etc;
- (e) there is no evidence to suggest that specialists are unsuited to the role of policy makers in their own field. Indeed, as indicated earlier, accounts are very heavily involved in policy formulation in industry and engineers are also prominent in the policy areas of large companies. There is also no evidence to suggest that specialists cannot quickly assimilate the necessary knowledge of the working of the government machine;
- (f) the specialists strongly objected to the subordinate status that the relationship implied. In particular they were prevented from exercising the full range of responsibilities normally associated with their professions and exercised by their counterparts in industry. This is a deterrent to future recruitment of top class professionals.
- (g) In a joint or parallel hierarchy, no single individual has clear management responsibility.

PROMOTIONS

- 9. Cornelius points out that on account of the number of jobs available for CSPs being chronically greater than the availability of CSPs, promotion takes place willy-nilly. Fulton states that: "the tasks of making the best use of manpower and encouraging the full development of an individual's potential are frustrated and complicated by the system of class hierarchies. In practice most Civil Servants cannot look forward to a career in the Service—they have a career in a class in the Service and in most cases within a Department. The number of higher posts in a particular class in a particular Department is the major parameter for career planning; variations in departmental structure can and do result in considerably differences in prospects. Class-to-class promotions, treasury pools, etc, all help to ease this restriction, but their total effect is arbitrary and marginal. Because of the "stuffy" connotation of the word "Establishment" it is recommended that some other name be given."

Rigid and prolific compartmentalization in the services leads to the setting up of cumbersome organizational forms, prevents the best use of individual talent, contributes to the inequality of promotion prospects, causes frustration and resentment, and impedes the entry into wider management of these best fitted for it.

- (10) Cornelius mentions that different specialized services—such as Land Revenue-cum-Excise and Taxation, Judicial, Social Welfare-cum-Local Self-Government Services – should be set up. Fulton suggests two broad groups of administrative jobs in different departments concerned with

- subject matters that are essentially economic and financial and a second broad group of administrative jobs where the basis is essentially social.
- (11) Just as Cornelius recommends an initial training period of a minimum of five and a maximum of seven years to the "basic officer" class. Fulton says that during the early part of a man's career, he should remain within a special field for which he is qualified; he should move between jobs but usually within the area of his specialization, the basic principle of career management should be progressive development within a special field and between related fields of activity.
 - (12) Cornelius suggests that the early years of an officer's tenure be on a contractual basis. Fulton says, most persons would enter the service when young with the expectation, though not the guarantee, of making the service their life time career.

MODERNISATION

- (13) Cornelius in several places states the necessity of utilizing recent developments so as to be in tune with the times, that improved means or organizational control should be instituted in the light of present day knowledge. Fulton mentions that:
Management control techniques in the Civil Service are mainly based on the requirements of public accountability and most of the emphasis has been on control systems designed to prevent error. More positive concepts of management control—setting standards of performance for individuals or groups, expressing these in terms of budgets, ratios, indices of efficiency or jobs to be done by a certain time and monitoring achievement against them—has made very little headway in the Service. In some areas, statistics are carefully maintained for the number of cases handled, the contracts negotiated, the benefits issued, but these are used for record purposes or for broad guidance on trends in the volume of work rather than for the measurement of efficiency.
Generally glaring was the contrast between the development in some areas of advanced techniques of considerable sophistication and the virtual isolation of other parts of the Service from current debates on management concepts and techniques. In these latter areas, the lack of awareness of modern management methods seemed to spring in part from the generalist philosophy and its associated lack of recognition of the value of expertise. A particular manifestation which calls for special comment is the low status accorded to specialists such as accountants and engineers.

Of course, Fulton had several advantages normally available in a quicker developing country than what we would find in a slower developing country such as ours. Of course there have been significant developments in the science of co-ordination within the last few years which the Cornelius Commission could not consider. But let the happenings of the last few months of 1968 and first few months of 1969 instil a sense of

urgency in us to bring our derailed administration back to a track that will lead us to better and more efficient ways of maintaining continuity. What else is administration mean for?

FOREISGHT

One cannot but feel that the foresight of Justice Cornelius deserves the highest praise and admiration. If we had acted in 1962 with the same promptitude and dispatch and in the same fashion as the British Government showed in respect of Fulton's findings we may never have found ourselves in the mess we got ourself into. Perhaps the country and our people have paid dearly for this lapse. However, six years is still not too late in the lifetime of a nation to change and adapt to change which must be forced upon us whether we like it or not.

The vigour and dispatch with which the present administration has been tackling vital national issues eg education and labour policies, gives us the strong expectation that administrative reforms suggested by Justice Cornelius and several others and now powerfully supported by Fulton's findings—backed by masses of validated data and management consultancy studies (7 volumes) will result in administrative reform being pushed through (long overdue as it is) vested interests notwithstanding.

/Cornelius