

How to change the human component*
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THERE can be no doubt that professionalisation of our services will be aided by the creation of the 10 specialisms . . . enumerated in an earlier article. This is because entrants to Government service will perforce have to spend their first seven or more years in one type of functional activity. In so doing they will be aware, as they rise up, of the interlinks with the various other functional specialists at their own level. This is not possible under our existing system of Government service which favours the "rank in-corps" concept.

The main defect in such a system is that the generalist has perforce to keep to himself (or his group) on account of technical innocence and fear of experts. The problem is further aggravated by quick transfers which make it impossible for "administration" to develop an understanding of his job. Lack of commitment makes it possible for the subordinates to play ducks and of drakes with their work---a manner of escape from an outmoded system derived out of the through processes of Macaulay and later, Northcote Trevelyan.

NO PATCH WORK

No longer can we keep on patching the worn-out vehicle of administration. We have changed the tyres, the upholstery, the windshield wipers, the bearings, maybe, the engine itself. Now we have to change the whole chassis. Any more patchwork will only overburden the existing "chakra".

We must recognise that unless the top level of any administration reflects the composition of the rest of the administrative structure, the result will be frustration, which encourages corruption. Have not we had enough of it already? Whilst there has been a lot of criticism of the present elitist administrative system that we have, the real reason for the outburst of such criticism from November 1969 onwards till Martial Law was declared was precisely this lack of recognition, which we must admit is a basic factor in promoting good administration. Putting it in another way: if the majority of top appointment is our Army are from the infantry it is a recognition of the fact that by and large our army is infantry-based.

How can we build up an administrative system which can prevent frustration and yet be efficient enough to serve the public? We must recognize that though there may be extremely simple answers to problems at their lowest level, ie a simple "yes" or a simple "no" only an overall analysis can ensure that we do not confuse the symptoms of our difficulties with the disease our administrative system is suffering from: "Man unlike any other thing/organic or inorganic in the universe, grows beyond his work, walks up the stairs of his concepts, emerges ahead of his accomplishment" (Steinbeck). The "stairs" refers to a completely different way of looking at complex problems, which, as we are now aware, cannot be over-simplified without running the risk of either over-simplifying

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them out of existence or throwing the baby out with the bath water (refer to the four "simple" difficulties of the farmer in the previous article).

In solving problems we must develop approaches that could:

- i) focus attention on a problem at different levels and then relate the levels one to the other. (This means all the relevant connecting links and interactions are made clear, thus facilitating a speedy diagnosis.)
- ii) suggest procedures and generate approaches which are as complex or sophisticated as the problem itself; (that is, if we have to talk to a donkey we must use donkey's language, or it is not of any use using an elephant to kill a fly),
- iii) generate confidence in the approach used; (It is through measurement that we can define the performance of a system. This quantification permits a logical study of what is going on, and we can thus control it.)
- iv) help all those concerned within a system to use a common language for communication, otherwise most surely we will be working at cross-purposes. (This common language uses the commodity called "information" which is the common flux of all activities. Appropriately the skills involved in it have given us a new discipline: information technology.)

Because the approach, more commonly called the "overall or systems approach" is a radical departure from our traditional piecemeal approach, it is not possible to attach it on to the existing system without preparing the system for a change in the first place. This means that we have to prepare the human being for change. This is, of course, the most difficult aspect of coming to terms with the problems we face, as of now. In education and training lies the only hope towards the type of society that most of us visualize, that which is not extreme in any point of view, that which recognizes that there must be social and economic justice for all comprising the system.

It is not correct to dogmatically insist that the political process must be put right first. France, till de Gaulle ushered in the latest French Republic, had over two dozen major political changes since World II. If France did not disintegrate nationally it was on account of a good administrative process which has stood the test of time. It is obvious that the built-in mechanism to ensure self-regulation is a part of the administration is a part of the administrative process and lies in the properly trained human being who oversees the thousands of procedures involved in day-to-day work. This built-in regulator, of course, requires being changed or overhauled and maintained from time to time just like any automatic control mechanism. This "maintenance and "overhauling" is akin to the training process and the change to a transfer from one job to another. But all this requires planning---just as much as the simple process of cooking a meal for the family in the kitchen.

APATHY

It is very significant to note that, according to a hand-out issued by the Services Reorganisation Committee, no politicians or political party had any views to offer on the reorganization of services. Do they feel all is well with the administrative process? Do they feel it is not but do not have the time to point out the flaws? Or is it that they feel—as in the past—that the administration will be bent in the direction they wish without regard to the common weal? We must recognize these symptoms (as allies) and come to the conclusion that we must attempt to put right what we can, as quickly as we can.

It is most vitally important that if we are to prevent or at least make more difficult, the bending of administration to serve personal interests (of both the politician and the administrator) we must, without delay, reorganize the structure of our administration.

The first requirement is the unification of the services—a democratic concept—which permits both of equality and equality of opportunity.

The second requirement is to work out the problems regarding the timing of interim changes for the present Government servants comprising the administrative system. Whether One Unit becomes three or four or five units makes not the slightest difference to this.

TRAINING

The third requirement which should start “as of yesterday” is to start the training of officers at all levels so as to familiarize them with the new concepts developed for dealing with complex situations. Use donkey’s language to talk to a donkey but where the problems are complex (though on the face of it, simple) our work methods must be equally sophisticated to be effective. Try killing an elephant with a fly!

If we, on the civil side of administration (as opposed to defence side), can take the trouble of studying the importance paid to training for defence personnel we should be shocked into the realisation as to what precious little we are doing (theoretically) and what fraction of the precious little we are making use of practically (evaluation). If we find this effort too much then let us look at what has happened in the more developed countries of the world. The conclusion is inescapably the same. And that is the value placed on the human being as the single most important factor in achieving the objectives of any organisation. But it takes training, more training, and yet more training, to get anywhere.

Training (which is allied to Education and Planning) is the means for improving efficiency in the application of knowledge. And this is a continuous process, for we are not learning right from the first day of our mortal lives to the last. And knowledge has no trade mark stamped on it that it is “made in France”, “made in the USA” or “made in Japan”. Let us make ourselves aware of the fund of knowledge available (a truly Islamic concept) in the world today which can assist us in the production of techniques, suited to our own local genius that can help us to solve the apparently simple problems that we are faced with.

IDEAS & PRACTICE

It is only when there is a flow of ideas from theory to practice that we can find out how well theory can assist application. It is also true that theory can only improve if practice informs it of the difficulties that it has faced in application. It is this "beneficent" circle which can break the vicious circle of increasing frustration that we are faced with today.

Put a 1,000 individuals per annum at all levels (our top-most have not as yet achieved a state of perfect knowledge) through a training programme under pressure for two months each. The programmes to be tailored to suit the level in the hierarchy being training or oriented. In five years, 5,000 individuals will have been exposed to new ideas and concepts and, equally important, must have been assisted in the application of the concepts imparted during training. It is out of these individuals that a few, say 50 to 60, will rise way above others. This is the elite, based on merit, in whom the administrative salvation of our country will lie. There is nothing to prevent us from going ahead with such a scheme of things independently of the political process. After all, have we not had our children educated when there was no political activity? To argue that the political process must be put right first and then the administrative, is working in series and we do not, amongst other things, have the luxury of time to wait indefinitely. We must attack our problems from all points of view at the same time and that is the essence of resolving complexity in a practical fashion. It is no use going through the motions of locking the stable after the horse has bolted.

MERIT ONLY

This also means that in order to develop a macro-understanding we have to develop the inter-disciplinary approach in which all those focusing on a problem do so on the basis of a hierarchy of merit. This will help to create an attitude of how it is possible to get the most for what we are putting in. And this attitude is very much more important than putting the cart before the horse when we try to pare costs piecemeal in an effort to balance a budget, instead of taking an overall view in the first place.

Such an attitude—which can be helped to be brought about through suitable training and thereafter assistance in the application of new ideas—also helps to discipline our thinking. Let us always remember that discipline without imagination is sterile and, of course, imagination without discipline is chaos.

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