

1

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I must express my gratefulness for your having elected me the President of this Institute. Jawaharlal ji was great in any field of activity he worked and with which he associated himself. He was a versatile person and I need not mention the great contribution he made to this country to the cause of freedom during pre-Independence days, and also in the post-Independence period. He has really made India what it is today since we achieved freedom and it was only just and proper that he should have been the President of this Institute.

All of you, or at least quite a few, who may be closely associated with administration, must be knowing much more than myself, so far as administration or administrative matters are concerned. I have some experience of administration, in the sense that I have functioned as a Minister for a number of years, both in a State as well as at the Centre. Still I cannot claim to know much about it. I am still a layman, and to speak in the presence of experts is always awkward and embarrassing. But sometimes

I feel that a layman in power, in holding a political office, is not much of a risk.

I had heard of democrats, autocrats, aristocrats, but a new word "technocrats" has come up and it has assumed some importance. I hope I am not impertinent when I say that if a technocrat were to hold office it might be much more dangerous than if a layman like me holds this office or the office of a Minister, because an expert if he gets to power thinks that he knows everything about that subject. Generally, I hope I am not making a very general statement which should hurt anybody: I am really thinking aloud and I have some practical experience—I feel that some of the experts, who have held political office, have worked as Ministers, have functioned very ably. They are undoubtedly very able men. They examine everything, or every matter concerning their department or their subject with the utmost accuracy. These things are perfectly all right, but the real secret of the success of an administrator or of a Minister does not merely lie in dissecting certain problems ably and in a very astute manner.

What is important is that a Minister should have his finger on the pulse of the country. He should be in a position to know about the thinking, the approach, the attitude and the mind of the people. And as I said, if a technocrat believes what he thinks is all right, he need not bother as to what other people or what the public may have to say. I, therefore, said that a layman may be sometimes better.

Generally, in the UK it is felt that a person or, for example, a doctor need not be Minister of Health; or an engineer should not be made Minister-in-charge of Works and Housing. As I said from my own experience, I also feel that this principle is good. A Minister is normally in office in our country for five years. If he makes good it is all right. If he does not, naturally he should be shifted to some other department or some other Ministry. But a five-year period is a fairly long period to judge a man, whether he is an expert or a non-expert.

I would, therefore, suggest that your Institute might as well examine this problem. Of course, there can be no hard and fast

rule about all these matters, but the problem perhaps does deserve some consideration.

I do not want to say much about our Central and State Secretariats. A good deal has already been said and constant attention is being paid to the streamlining of the administration, to cut delays and to make the departments more effective and efficient. I know you have all been pondering over this subject, either in the conferences or in the study groups you have set up. But perhaps most important thing at the present moment is to consider how our district administration could be made more responsive, and how it could be more efficient and effective. The Central Secretariat or the State Secretariats, well, they are there to guide the district administrators. They form the policies, and they have also to supervise how these are being implemented. But the important point is what kind of administrators are those who are in charge of implementation ? How are they trying to implement the programmes and policies of the Government? Even if our Central and State Secretariats are good or efficient, the people may not be really benefited. The people judge us by what they get in the villages, by what they get in their cities, the kind of response and sympathy they get from the administrator, whether the administrators are quick enough to deal with their problems, and whether they get replies to their letters and complaints in a reasonable period. These are apparently small things but we could really attach the highest importance to them.

I have, in particular, two things in mind. In the first place, we have our developmental activities in the States. I am not referring to big industrial projects or the heavy industrial projects and other similar projects. Of course, it is essential that in regard to such projects and the public sector industries, we should have the necessary technical personnel, and there are many other aspects also of this problem which have to be attended to. I shall not go into that, but refer to small minor development works in the districts; whether it is the construction of a panchayat-ghar or of a well, or of giving electricity to the tube-wells or of digging small channels from the main canal: these may appear small things but they are very important in the present context.

I had been to two villages this morning, about 60 to 70 miles from Delhi. I was touched to hear from the people a number of their difficulties which could be easily solved by our district authorities. But at the present moment, unfortunately our best officers have come over to the Secretariat, it may be the State Secretariat or the Central Secretariat. Our districts are being manned by young officers. Being young is all right, and is good. But that is not enough. There should be some experience and maturity before an officer takes over as District Magistrate or Collector of a district. The work of the District Collector is exceedingly important and needs tact, balance, as well as drive and push.

Unfortunately, I have noticed that there had been frequent transfers of District Collectors. The average is about one year, sometimes eight or six months. Unless a District Collector is in his post in a district for at least three or four years, he will not be able to produce much results. If there is any special complaint against a District Collector, certainly he may be transferred or removed or any other action taken. But these frequent transfers are not good at all. Besides, the District Collector must have at least six to seven years of service. Even this period, to my mind, is a short one. However, in these changing times, and after the partition, as you know, we have been short of mature and senior officers. We have, therefore, to depend upon our younger officers to hold the charge of districts, but it would be better if they have had at least six to seven years of experience, either as Deputy Collectors or in some other capacity.

I was referring, as I said, to two important matters—first, the developmental activities in the district, and the second, procurement and distribution of foodgrains. These two things are very important. In regard to developmental activities, the difficulty at the present moment is that there is no proper coordination. Formerly the District Collector used to be the coordinating authority. He was in overall charge of every activity in the district. The District Collector is there, but there are also, at the district level, officers of different departments, like PWD agriculture, co-operation, education, etc. There is also someone in charge of the community development

work. These different units function in a district, but they are not under the direct control or supervision of District Collector. They have their direct connections with the respective heads of departments sitting in the State Secretariat, or in some cases with the departmental officers at the divisional level. The result is that there is no proper co-ordination.

I have from time to time met a number of District Officers belonging to different departments, and whenever I put any question to anyone of them, he said: "Well, Sir, I shall have to consult Lucknow" or "I am referring the matter to the head of the department". This is not good. There must be one person, one officer at the district to co-ordinate and advice on all matters requiring immediate decision. Of course, officers will not come out openly with their opinions. They talk to me freely when I talk to them alone. But they will not be able to do it in the presence of L.P. Singh, the Home Secretary, who is sitting in front of me. It is essential that we should study the problems and difficulties of the district authorities or district administration. But it is more important that there should be better co-ordination between the work of the irrigation, or housing, or community development, or any other work which is being done in the district. There should be some kind of a committee or at least the District Collector should sit once in a month with the officers of all these departments for ensuring proper co-ordination. He should discuss with them, see their performance, give his advice and try to solve their individual difficulties *vis-a-vis* the different departments in the district. This is very important.

I know of a few commissioners. Commissioners can be very useful. They are associated with district administration. But I am not quite sure if they are playing an effective role. This also deserves our consideration and I think it is matter for study by this Institute.

The second important matter I wish to draw your attention to is the procurement or purchase of foodgrains, and also their distribution. I have waited for quite some time, and thought that things might improve. But I feel that unless Government takes some positive and effective steps soon, our people will have to

face difficulties in the months to come. I do not want to create any scare. Very soon the new harvest of rice will be coming into the market. In fact, some kind of coarse rice has already arriving. But still from January onwards till the new wheat crop comes into the market, which is sometimes towards the end of April or in the beginning of May, there may be difficult time for us. Of course, we have to depend on imports and we shall be getting wheat regularly from the USA. In spite of that, it is essential that our machinery should be geared up to meet any emergency that may arise. But without waiting for an emergency to arise, I should feel that we should move in the direction of the Government going into the market to purchase rice or other cereals, as well as to see that the distribution is properly made and everyone gets at least enough to eat, at a reasonable price. As I said, I know all of you fully realise that this is a matter of the highest importance. But here, again, district authority comes into the picture. Whether our officers in the district will do their job well is the real point. I am not complaining. They have done well generally. Our services, especially the IAS, or other services, have done fairly well. As administrators they may be strong, but I might say that they lack the human touch. I do not know much about other countries, but, here, I feel our administration is still lacking in human touch. I have been elected to Parliament from Allahabad and I might try to be more considerate to my electorate, but in Meerut and Muzaffarnagar where I went this morning that is not necessary. The people think they can talk to a Minister or the Prime Minister, but it is not that easy to talk over and discuss a matter with the District Magistrate and the Commissioner or the Collector. This kind of feeling must vanish. But, perhaps, this does not mean that the administrator should not keep himself somewhat aloof from the people. I can appreciate that. The politician need not and should not do that. The administrator has in a way to keep himself somewhat aloof. It is good also. But what is important is that he must have a human and sympathetic approach; and our people in India for some years to come will not easily take 'no', unless you try to convince them, or at least talk to them for some time. So, after a few years it is just possible that our people might come to know that once an administrator has said 'no' it is 'no' and , it

would be 'no'. But at the present moment, by and large, our people are not educated enough, and they do not want to take a 'no'. They feel that their difficulties must be removed, no matter whether they are right or wrong. That is the atmosphere and our authorities have to be much more responsible and careful.

For example, we have immediately to go into the market to purchase paddy. How do we do that work? The Central Government will be setting up the Foodgrains Corporation. There will be no compulsion involved in its purchases. There will be no procurement. Prices are being fixed and they have been announced so far as paddy is concerned. If the Government has complete monopoly, the task becomes easier. But that would hardly be possible. The private man will also be there to purchase paddy from the cultivators, and government servants or their agents will also be there to purchase it from the kisans. There will be competition. The man who will deal with the kisans in the best manner possible will surely succeed. The prices will remain the same. Even the trader or wholesaler will not be able to purchase grain at a higher price. If he does it stealthily well, I am thinking of very positive and deterrent action in that regard. We are prepared to give every opportunity to the private traders to function. But if they fail in that, Government will have to move a stage further. But at the present moment they are also there. Government will also be in the market or in the villages, and our officers will be on test on how well we do our work.

If we were to have some kind of rationing in bigger cities, it will be a difficult task with regard to distribution. I feel that the cities must have rationing. I think on these lines, because if we do not introduce that kind of scheme the poorer sections of our community might be sometimes faced with a very difficult situation. Since last one week, the position has improved and bettered in the villages I went to this morning. I had direct talks with the kisans. At one place I did not make any speech but put a number of questions to them, and found that a week before there were some people who did not get enough from our fair price shops. They had serious complaints. I conceded that we had to provide enough foodgrains to fair price shops and explained what our

difficulty really was, namely, we must have adequate stocks. We were getting all these stocks from foreign countries. But how long were we going to depend on them? The farmers must produce more. The Government would try to find the necessary foodgrains for the interim period. And I asked the villagers what they were going to do with their Rabi crops—their paddy? Would they sell it to the Government or to a trader who might come and offer a bit more. If to the latter, it will become difficult for the Government to cope with the problem. They greatly appreciated when I explained these things to them.

In regard to distribution of foodgrains, I said, I am not one of those who are very much enamoured of controls and rationing, because there is a lurking fear in me that these might lead to corruption. But one has to choose the more appropriate remedy. The lesser evil has to be preferred and it seems to me that in the matter of distribution, we will have to introduce some kind of a positive and definite scheme as early as possible. I do not want to say finally anything on it because in another three days we shall be discussing this problem with Chief Ministers. All the Chief Ministers are coming here to attend the meeting of the National Development Council and we shall have a full and frank discussion with them and then take the final decision.

I have referred to this general problem as it is connected with district administration. It is very important that we should pay special attention to the problem and present-day deficiencies in district administration. I might suggest that the Indian Institute of Public Administration should be in a position to make an objective study of the working of district administration and to make concrete suggestions for improvement. The Institute could make a selected study of the work of two branches in any administrative Ministry, selected *ad hoc*; how subordinate offices, one located in New Delhi, another in Bombay or Calcutta, or any other State; three departments of State Government selected *ad hoc*, one of a State Government reportedly well run, such as Madras or Maharashtra, second, of another State Government like West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar—I must add UP also; and then two district administrations, two community development blocks, and two

village-level organisations. The study need not be very elaborate or formal, nor need perhaps any questionnaires be issued. The method would be for a compact team of two or three persons to visit these departments, organisations, etc., and to talk freely and frankly to the people concerned. As I said just now when people are given an opportunity to talk they do so more freely. I have made this suggestion and I hope it will receive your consideration.

It has become a common thing for us to criticise the administration. Everyone has to say something against the administration and the administrators. Well, to me at least, it does not give any pleasure. The fact of the matter is, it has to be realised that our administration, with all its defects and lapses, has functioned admirably well in the most difficult period of our history. I am referring to the partition days in particular. During that partition period, the leaders were beset with innumerable difficulties and our administration helped to establish stability in the country. It is often said that the Army is a great stabilising force. It is, no doubt, true. But I feel that the administration and the administrators play a very important role in producing stability in the country and I must express my highest appreciation for our administrators who have functioned during the last 14/15 years; their contribution has been most valuable. When I spoke about streamlining the administration, or I referred to the district administration, I did not mean merely to criticise them. But even for a moment, none of us should take things in a complacent way, neither Ministers nor the officers nor the administrators. Everyone has always to consider how to improve things, how to improve matters and if there is proper self-analysis, introspection, and review, I have no doubt that it will lead to improvement and betterment of the administration, which will ultimately give relief to the people. That is the most important thing.