

of the Indian State will endure, whatever may be the futuristic wave of Indian politics. The massive permanency of that characteristic of the Indian State is a legacy of the 19th century to modern India. When India had not evolved, unlike the Mandirinate system of China, a body of permanent officialdom, there were frequent collapses of bureaucratic machinery. This was one of the main reasons for the short duration of great Empires, for the frequent revolts of outlying provinces resulting in break-away independent states. Even the highly centralized Moghul Empire did not escape this Indian fate. The British rectified this deficiency by injecting into the administrative system a strong dose of centralization, buttressed by a hierarchy of permanent officialdom. Thereby the foundations of the administration coming down from the days of Chandra Gupta Maurya were strengthened and reinforced. The administering state, governed democratically is one of the principal pillars of India's unity.

4

GOOD GOVERNMENT: THE ADMINISTRATIVE MALAISE AND CONNECTED ISSUES

S.G. BARVE

I

I am grateful to the Institute of Public Administration for inviting me to talk on the subject of 'Good Government'. In the present-day Indian conditions good government has an importance all its own. Just at present, after seventeen years of independence, we seem to be engaged all over the country on a ceaseless interrogation of achievements and short-comings of governmental policies.

The tasks of economic development are proving to be more involved and painstaking and the rewards more eluding than some of us had reckoned for. The ancient wrongs of poverty, unemployment and want continue to persist. Even as some people harbored extravagant hopes of the ushering at once of a new heaven on earth with the advent of freedom, so are they now correspondingly frustrated and disenchanted at the persistence of these ancient ills. There is much querying, disillusionment, anger and frustration and even a search for scapegoats.

Lectures delivered on 24 and 25 September, 1964

A few preliminary and largely self-evident observations are called for in order to settle the framework of this discussion.

First of all, let us be clear about the nature of the journey involved in a country's progress from a backward poverty-stricken subsistence economy towards growth and a full-fledged development of its resources and man-power potentialities.

There is such a thing as the 'strategy of development' apart from 'the tactics', that is to say, the day-to-day problems of a growing economy. In a particular year agricultural production may be hit by the notorious vagaries of the Indian monsoon – still a very dominant factor India's agricultural economy and likely to remain so for several years in spite of the spread of irrigation and flood control measures. Population is always an unpredictable but inexorable denominator in our economic equation. It may grow faster than the planners had allowed for, as indeed it did in the last decade, and upset all the nicely balanced arithmetic of planned improvement. Out exports may receive a windfall bonus or get hit in the international markets due to fluctuations in world factors outside our control. There would be a corresponding incidence on our chronically precarious foreign-exchange position. Lastly, unforeseen preremptory exigencies like defence commitments may impose constraints on our development outlays.

In the long voyage to the goal of national economic viability, we are bound to meet with several such squalls and even tempests as well as occasional spells of fair wind, slowing us down or speeding us on. To cope with this situation, it is necessary that we should have the strength and stability to ride out the high seas and squalls while pressing steadily on the course indicated by our long-term bearings.

With a view further to defining the perspective of this discussion let us look at the backdrop to the problem of good government in India. While each one of the issues merely listed herein is big and important enough to merit a long dissertation, for our present purpose we need only recite them.

On the advent of independence we inherited in free India an established administrative structure as a going concern.

Scores of ex-colonial countries have attained independence since then. In most of them democratic rule, the rule of law and the institutions of a free society have in more or less degree been subverted. India is the one outstanding exception wherein a working democracy in a free society continues to function unabridged. The one factor which has contributed more than any other to this signal consummation, is the god-like forbearance, the good-will, the peaceable and patient disposition of the Indian people at large. Let us however acknowledge that another factor and an indispensable means to the attainment of this happy outcome was the fact that the new rulers of a free India had at their disposal the elements of a well-found and well-manned administrative organization. It is to their lasting credit that India's emergent leadership preserved this inheritance and did not seek to subvert it.

Of course, the Administration to-day has vastly larger responsibilities than the colonial bureaucracy of the Indian dominion of 1947. The country has been engaged since freedom on nothing less than the complete political, social and economic overhaul of our ancient, complex and involved Indian society, spread out over a sub-continent. In correspondence with its immensely vaster responsibilities, the Indian Administration has also grown in size and complexity, besides being called upon to face a variety of new tasks, especially in the field of economic direction, to which it was not previously accustomed.

Systematic and comprehensive national planning started in India thirteen years ago. Planning involves the marshalling of resources, the determination of national objectives and their relative priorities and the deployment of these resources into the desired channels. The planning effort has increasingly enveloped and suffused the entire administrative complex from the national to the Panchayat Samiti levels. The success or failure of the planning effort is now fully synonymous with the success or failure of the administration.

On the attainment of independence the Indian leadership had to face many new tasks.

First of all, a Constitution had to be evolved to embody the urges and aspirations of the Indian people and to provide a

parliamentary apparatus at the Centre and in the States as a means for democratic governance. Parliamentary forms and practices had to be thrashed out and still continue to be evolved. The problem of political integration of some five hundred odd principalities had to be faced and resolved. Next came the problem of reconstituting the units of the federal Union along the lines of greater homogeneity indicated by the linguistic sub-national communities inhabiting the different regions of the country. The rule of law, adult franchise, independence of the judiciary, political neutrality of the services, freedom of press and political organization, secularism – these and other doctrines, each one of which represents the culmination of a long chapter of struggle and evolution in the history of mature political democracies – have by now been woven both in the letter and the texture of our polity. They have now become an integral part of the accepted ideology of our public life.

India had no foreign affairs previous to 1947 being only a dependency or a camp-follower of the British world power. Free India had to evolve a foreign policy of its own. There may indeed be, and there are and will continue to be, differences of detail and emphasis relating to specific issues of India's foreign policy. However, the broad ideology of non-alignment with power blocks is now a universally accepted article of our political faith. Indeed, India's stance in this regard has pioneered a very substantial body of world opinion which now subscribes to broadly the same doctrine.

In the field of economic ideology also we had to break a new path. This has come to be known as the doctrine of a mixed or plural economy. Avoiding the ideological extremes of unqualified 'laissez-faire' on the one hand and total State regimentation on the other, we have decided upon plural economic system. Herein, within the framework of a general plan embracing the entire economy, private enterprise and initiative are retained alongside of governmental undertakings. We believe in a pragmatic choice of agencies, depending on merits, in industry, commerce and other sectors of economic life.

In this brief lecture, there is no time for a discussion of the many important details of the working of a mixed economic system. I am concerned only to point out that while there may be difference of emphasis and many specific quarrels about details, the main

concept of this philosophy, viz., a pragmatic choice of agencies and belief in the possibility of their co-existence now underlies the wide spectrum of economic thinking in the country.

In brief, democratic socialism in its broad outline undoubtedly represents the general consensus of India's political and economic thinking of to-day.

It is indeed very refreshing to recall, in the midst of the babel of political outcries that one constantly hears, how large are the areas of basic agreement underlying the bulk of India's political and economic thinking.

Indeed, for most of India's current problems it is fairly plain and evident as to what requires to be done. This may surprise many of the vociferous contestants themselves. But the fact is there is substantial agreement as regards what needs to be done; most of the political argument is regarding how well or badly it is in fact being done. That is why so many issues of political controversy on a close scrutiny resolve themselves into nothing but simple problems of good government.

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Another important point must be considered as a preliminary to the problem of Good Government in contemporary India.

It is through the political mechanism that the wishes of the community are translated into programmes of action and administrative tasks.

In a parliamentary democracy, the political life of the community is greatly influenced by the state of party politics. Any consideration of the administrative apparatus would be unreal save in the context of this political landscape.

The Congress Party continues to command after seventeen years of independence a majority in all the constituent State as well as in Parliament at the center. It is often believed that it is indispensable for the successful working of democratic government that there should be two large more or less co-equal parties competing for popular majority and alternating in the seat of power. Whatever that may be, we have in India a situation in which one political party has been and continues to be by far the

most numerous element in the political life of the community and is charged with the responsibility of government all over the country. Nor does there seem to be any likelihood of this situation materially altering in the immediate future. This feature inevitably adds one more dimension of complexity to the situation.

We must therefore evolve, at least for the time being and until other strong elements appear on the political scene, a working system of functioning in a 'one party democracy.' Obviously this imposes special burdens on the dominant party. The party must maintain inviolate the basic democratic framework notwithstanding the pulls and pressures of such a lop-sided political equation. It must constantly distinguish between national interests and its interests as a political party and always spurn to take advantage of the powers and patronage available to the working government of the country. It must incessantly search for areas of agreement with opposing political elements and always keep a hand extended for working association with its political opponents in such fields.

Our infant democracy is a cherished possession of all the political elements. The situation therefore imposes equally onerous responsibilities conversely, on the political opponents of the party in power. Even though condemned to wander in the wilderness they must avoid developing sterile and frustrated complexes. While seeking to unseat their political opponents in office they must always be careful not to subvert the democratic apparatus or the concept of authority itself.

We have witnessed in recent months some extraordinary happenings in legislative chambers in India. Of course, one may allow for high feeling and frayed tempers provoked by the hardships of the common man in respect of food and the bare necessities of life. However, violence to the dignity and decorum of a popular assembly only degrades the prestige and diminishes the utility of the sole democratic means whereby erring governments can be called to account. For a political opposition, to disrupt the democratic processes themselves which hold out the only hope of redress or remedy from their point-of-view, is like a ship in distress firing on its own rescuers!

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When political life is weakly organized, it is especially necessary that the public administration should be stable, well-found and integrated. In countries like France for instance, before the advent of the Ninth Republic under Gen. de Gaulle, the French people and the French economy continued steadily to flourish in spite of the notorious vagaries of French politics. This was made possible by a strong and stable administrative organization which sustained the multitudinous social, economic and cultural interests of the French people notwithstanding the shifts and changes at the political level.

By and large one would say that the special position accorded to the Services in the Indian Constitution and the momentum of a well-founded working apparatus provide the necessary basis for the orderly progress of the Indian community. Given a chance to function, the administrative system could furnish the necessary elements of stability and strength to insulate against the risks implicit in the lop-sided equations of our political life.

6

The present generation in India has to live through a multiple revolution. First, there is the revolution in the mechanics of governance; namely the transition to a parliamentary democracy from a colonial administration and to the apparatus of a welfare State accountable for all aspects of life as sharply distinguished from the former severe police State which was concerned mainly with the maintenance of law and order and the collection of revenue in sustenance of the effort.

The second revolution is the one involved in the transformation of a semi-subsistence economy into that of a modern industrial community informed by urges of social justice.

Thirdly, we are undergoing a social revolution in that a caste-ridden stratified society is being evolved into a modern community throwing up in the process staggering problems of emancipation and upliftment of tens of millions of under-privileged and suppressed members of different sections and communities.

Lastly we are involved in a technological revolution and a

scientific revolution not only as regards the material furnishings of social existence but also regarding mental attitudes.

All these revolutionary processes which are concurrently under way are governed by their respective laws of growth and dynamics. The multitudinous social, technological and economic forces act and interact on each other incessantly.

In other countries of the world, history afforded them the leisurely opportunity of enacting corresponding transformations not only over longer periods but also separately and one by one. In India however all these multiple processes, which were successively slow-motined through centuries elsewhere, are compounded into a single staggering reality facing this generation.

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The national tasks of reconstruction facing the present generation in India are indeed stupendous.

To name but a few: the problem of harnessing India's immense but still largely unexplored natural resources; the problem of increasing food production to provide a sufficiency for 450 millions of people, a seventh part of the entire human race; the staggering problem of providing employment in the face of a population, which responds to the first modest improvement of standards inevitably by an explosion in numbers and the consequent degradation of standards. Then the economic problem is multiplied and overlaid with other clamorous issues inevitably thrown up by such massive upheavals in an ancient, involved and stratified community.

The urges for a better distribution of wealth and income are forever competing with the imperatives of increased production. Hard choices have to be faced at every turn – greater productivity against labour displacement; small *versus* large industries; quick but low-yielding projects *versus* slow but high-yielding projects; investments that will satisfy the uproarious consumer needs of today against capital outlays that would strengthen the basic frame work in the interest of a better tomorrow.

Then, we have advisedly chosen the slow metabolism of a democratic way of life with ceaseless debate and many fumbings, second thoughts and hesitations, the necessarily go with it!

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Inevitable, even under an infallible leadership, there is bound to be much impatience and even anger somewhere or other, now and again, during the career of a community advancing under these conditions. And who will say our leadership has not been fallible?

The investment resources will continue to be short for a long time to come for all that we want to-day. Obviously, therefore, for several years to come, we must be prepared to live with a regime of control and regulation in the various sectors of the economy. Import controls, foreign exchange regulations, regulation of the flow of industrial capital, industrial licensing, divers controls over production, distribution, pricing of scarce commodities will continue to feature in our economic policies. Fiscal, banking and credit measures will have to support and subserve these policies of economic development.

Within the long-term strategy of development, according to the expediencies of the situation, we may even need, time and again, detailed controls over distribution or rationing of food or commodities essential to the life of the common man. In an economy where production is so marginal and demand incessantly mounting in so many directions, the successful working of such a regime necessarily entails a very alert comprehending, coherent and capable administrative organization.

If in these circumstances and in the long march of a nation's progress to economic growth, the national morale is to be maintained certain conditions are imperative.

The nation morale, I submit, depends less on the level of national comfort or the actual progress achieved than it does on the prevalent standards of national integrity. Even if the growth is halting and there are many temporary reverses, the people will cheerfully put up with a lot of hardship and privation if they are convinced about the *bona fides* and integrity of those in authority. If progress is not spectacular, if ameliorations long promised have to be postponed and even denied, people will not complain if they have faith in the integrity of the national leadership. If they have none, even larger material gains will fail to impress or bring satisfaction.

It is in this context that we have to view the new phase of

critical self-analysis and interrogation which has overtaken public life in India. There is much doubt, incredulity and a sense of disenchantment, to put it at the lowest. It is more than anything else a crisis of confidence. The death of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru has catalyzed and dramatized this crisis which was gathering up even before his passing away.

The Congress Party took over the reins of office in free India seventeen years ago wearing the mantle of a revolutionary party. It had the immense prestige of a successful fight for freedom and trailed clouds of glory derived from the epoch-making leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. The masses of India naturally looked to the Congress Party now enthroned in seats of authority all over India, to enact into every-day life the principles and promises of the Indian revolution. The charismatic leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru carried onward the crest of the wave until almost the other day. Whatever the short-comings and fumbblings of Government, people at large had till the last an unshaken faith that their interests lay safe in the hands of the final national arbiter.

Indeed during the last seventeen years, starting virtually from scratch we have founded the cardinal principles of Indian polity and settled the framework for future progress. Secularism, democracy, peace, socialism; the grammar and philosophy of a new social order have been written up for the Indian people. A body of doctrines and working practice to guide the steady groundswell of national policy in the internal and external fields has been evolved. It is finally derived from our traditional inheritance and is rooted in the wisdom of the race. Yet it is adapted to the requirements and techniques of the scientific age of to-day.

History will doubtless acclaim these fundamental achievements of the first fifteen years in the history of free India. The credit for these will be warmly accorded to the monumental leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru. However, with his death an epoch has ended for good or ill.

We always get used to the good fortune we have enjoyed and take our past blessing for granted. These fundamentals of our polity have now become a part of our common inheritance. Amidst the harsh realities of our day-to-day problems we are prone to be oblivious both of these achievements and our good fortune which made them possible. The further fulfillment of the Indian

revolution will be judged in terms of the specific economic achievements that we would register hereafter. Good government will now be judged by the harsh realities of administrative performance; by the production of food and our arrangements for its distribution at a reasonable price; by the growing production and equitable distribution at a reasonable price; by the growing production and equitable distribution of the other essentials of the common man; by the growth in employment opportunities; by the timely and efficient completion of our development projects; by our judgment of their priorities.

II

Good Government: The administrative malaise and connected issues

9

Good government is more an art than a science and there can be very few esoteric principles about it. It is a question of performance rather than theory or axiom. Breaking down the problem of "good government" one may pose the following queries:

Do we have a system which would tend towards securing in places of political authority and responsibility, persons capable of exercising it with the necessary comprehension, integrity and skill?

Do we have a system whereby they would be quickly brought to book and displaced where they are seen to fall short of these standards?

Is the administrative structure at the Centre, in the States, in the Zilla Parishads and at the still lower levels coherently organized? Does it nourish initiative and secure power and responsibility appropriate to each level and position at the multitudinous points and levels whence governmental power is exercised?

The problems of development and planning at the present stage of their evolution in India though gigantic are largely straightforward. The practical programmes involved are simple in conception though vast in dimension. The main requisites for their successful tackling

are a clear formulation of policies and objectives and the creation and charging of an appropriate administrative organization.

We can obviously here consider only some of the basic and outstanding problems of administrative organization.

10

What are the main features of the administrative scene in India? The administration of the country is carried on by a large number of small and big functionaries spread out all over its far-flung stretches. They number to-day something of the order of 5 millions or so. The Union Government, the State Governments, the various local authorities, public corporations and semi-commercial undertakings of government – all these come within the ambit of the administrative complex in India.

The Centre and States have their respective fields of legislative and executive authority, duly demarcated in the Constitution. However, partly as a result of the constitutional division of functions and more especially since the authority as well as financial wherewithal for the planning process lies at the central level, in the economic field in particular, all the main levers of authority lie at the Centre. The State administrations control the general administrative apparatus which comes into daily touch with the common man in the street, in the field and in the Centre, in many sectors their implementation, and in that sense the actual governance of the country, is largely in the jurisdiction of the States.

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The most distressing feature of the administrative scene and its greatest disability, especially at the Centre is the lack of coherence and sufficient co-ordination. Ministries which are really the limbs of government and not separate self-contained entities are often seen to function as if they are self-willed and governed by laws of their own. This lack coherence is obviously a crippling incapacity of government as a whole for achieving results and leads to a lot of waste of energy, cross-purposes and nugatory effort.

Dr. Appleby, an American expert on public administration, high-

lighted another chronic and persistent shortcoming of our administration. This is diffusion of responsibility and the plethora of consultation before a decision is reached accompanied by a general lack of follow-up and implementation.

To illustrate: the process of planning necessarily throws up the question of priorities at every level. Is our capital outlay going to be oriented mainly towards strengthening the basic framework? Or is it going to be applied to a greater degree in raising immediate consumption standards and in the provision of goods tomorrow instead of the day-after? Each of the schools of thought has a strand of validity and indeed almost any solution has to have an element of both. Or again how much modern industrial technique shall we have in the interest of productivity and how must shall we plan to be produced by labour-intensive methods in the interest of employment? Or again how much of fertilizers we will plan to produce within the country in the interest of production and how much of the shortfall we would make up by imports of food or fertilizers? These are hard choices but they have to be made.

After due canvassing of opinion and consideration of pros and cons – as long as you like and at as many levels as necessary – finally a definite decision has to be taken and a clear policy laid down. This final policy must not be vague and ambivalent but must be clear and specific. It has to set in motion the multitudinous administrative processes and decisions of private entrepreneurs which would pick up the thread from thereon and eventually implement the programmes. Once these decisions are taken the entire machinery of government must execute them with an undeviating, integrated purpose and without reservation.

A decisive virtue in the field of administration is certainty and clarity. Administration is concerned with specific action in the field and a clear and definite decision, even if it is not the best, is preferable to an indecisive, process in which marginally superior decisions are inconclusively canvassed or hesitatingly adopted. Democracy does *not* mean slovenliness or ambivalence or indecision. There is a sharp distinction between the processes that precede decision-making and those that follow. In a democracy prior to decision-making, whether in popular assemblies or at other levels, there must be lively responsiveness to public opinion.

However, administration is necessarily hierarchical and after a decision is taken the word of command must be clear and unambiguous.

Then there must be rigorous implementation in the field. There are many slips between the cup and the lip. For instance, consider industrial licensing on which our entire industrial policy is based. Licensing a certain industrial capacity is a very different thing from its actual implementation. Partly it is an obstacle race for the industrialist against many administrative delays and retardations. It would be a separate issue to consider how these clearances could be expedited. We have no time for this digression here. Partly it may be designed contumacy on the part of the licensee. He may intend merely to pre-empt the capacity against possible competition or he may prefer to employ his funds in the easy pastures of trading and turnover rather than the hard-won accomplishments of industrial entrepreneurship. In either event the result is disastrous for the public. We have erected a sheltered internal market for industrial goods at the expense of the common consumer in order to build up the necessary indigenous potential. If licensed capacities are not created there are shortages and high prices and the multitude of mal-practices that go with them. In the absence of an efficacious machinery of implementation the sheltered market becomes merely a decoy and an engine of extortion for the ordinary consumer without corresponding national gain for which he was asked to sacrifice.

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Another outstanding deficiency is failure to locate definite responsibility at different points and levels of the administrative hierarchy. This location of responsibility has to be finally carried down to the level of the individual functionary.

To illustrate the point at only one level of authority and in respect of an obvious requirement: there is no doubt that the performance of our public undertakings would have been far more satisfactory than in fact it has been if we had only left the principal executives of such undertakings undisturbed for sufficiently long periods. Let the initial choices of persons by all means be made after giving to every legitimate consideration due weight, including seniority and

personal aptitude or even convenience. Once the choice is made, however, the principal executives of a complex undertaking ought to be left to carry the scheme through to fruition so that they could be held clearly accountable for the results with which they had been charged.

This is a simple and even elementary tenet in the art and practice of administration. Surely it could not be for want of its knowledge that it is so often observed in the breach.

Here again we come up, as so often indeed we do in the field of Indian administration, against the hard fact that it is quite well-known and indeed even obvious what requires to be done. The defect simply is that it is not done. It is clearly due to want of will, not understanding, at the appropriate levels.

In a large administrative hierarchy, the art of delegation is obviously one of the most important to be nourished even as it is one of the most difficult attributes to cultivate. Delegation involves readiness to refrain from interfering unless interference is imperative. It also involves a readiness to support and sustain all legitimate and *bona fide* exercise of discretion and initiative at subordinate levels unmindful of the results in specific cases. Above all it entails in the superior a capacity to resist the too frequent temptation of displaying wisdom after the event.

Administrative leadership at all levels predicates a capacity to delegate. A connected attribute of administrative leadership is a capacity to inspire enthusiasm and draw forth the best from amongst one's colleagues and subordinates, while yet maintaining a certain measure of wholesome fear that less than the best will be noticed and duly censured.

In the administrative hierarchy, important heads of administrative agencies and departments are valuable to government not merely for their personal intelligence and capacity but also, and indeed more importantly, for the administrative leadership that they can show. This is true not only of the professional administrator but also of the Minister whose political office vests him among other things, with leadership in the administrative field.

The administrative organizations as a whole can function satisfactorily only if the various units in the structure are coherently conceived, the operative policies clearly and unambiguously laid

down and each unit operates at its appropriate levels of responsibility and powers. The Ministers must function at the level of policy-making and of general supervision and accountability for its implementation. The Central and State Secretariats must operate at their appropriate levels – neither above nor below them. The departmental administrations at the Centre and in the States and the executive agencies have also their respective limits of power and delegated authority. At each level, there has to be willingness not only to assume the responsibility appropriate to that level but also a readiness not to arrogate to itself responsibility and functions appropriate to a lower or higher level.

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Apart from these general administrative canons, let us consider a few of the relevant specific issues of importance. The administrative tasks of to-day call for a reorientation of outlook and practice in the doctrine of financial control.

There is a significant difference between the exercise of financial control in a 'law and order' State and the exercise of the same control in a 'welfare' State engaged in the process of total national planning. Besides, the traditional outlook of 'financial control' carries with it the overtones of its origin. Originally, it was solely conceived as a check on behalf of the democratic legislature on the Crown or the executive agencies of the government. Of course, correct appropriation, the vouching of expenditure, the requirement of parliamentary warrant for every rupee of public fund that is spent are all matters which still continue to have their value. It is however not sufficient that financial control should be merely anti-septic as before. It must now comprehend much more than merely the negative properties of proper accounting, proper budgeting, proper vouching. It must be exercised imaginatively to secure the larger economies of speed, of bold planning and phasing, quicker accrual of benefits, forward-looking organization, the logistics of timely marshalling of men and material on the job. The reorientation that is necessary for this changed purpose is still to be written in the canons of our financial control and – what is more important – built into the

corpus of the mental outlook brought to bear on the job by officials charged with the exercise of such control.

A word may be said about the logical place in the administrative set-up of the Planning Commission. The Planning Commission brings too bear on the working of government the special faculty of planning. Ministries of government tackle issues as they arise; the business of government is always envisaged, financially at any rate, within the limits of the budget year. It is nobody's specific business in the government to reckon with all the co-ordinates of action over a period of time; to assess total resources; to determine and set out national objectives; to arrange priorities. It is to this end that the Planning Commission was set up and the Commission can best function with reference to such a clear purpose. Intrinsicly, the role of the Planning Commission can only be advisory and not executive in which latter field the government's constitutional responsibility remains unaffected.

Since in a federal Union, a proper equation between the federal administration and the State units has also to be achieved if the administrative organization is to function satisfactorily. In each federation such an equilibrium between the federal Centre and the constituent units has to be forged. This equation is necessarily a reflection of the national temper, the national homogeneity, the constitutional position as well as the imperatives of the times. Apart from the State and Central sectors of executive responsibility, there are fields of action in which programmes necessarily predicate a coherence and co-partnership between the Centre and the States. In some fields while the implementation lies wholly in the State sector the policies have to be laid down by the Centre. In others the Centre's role may be that of tendering counsel, fixing national targets and type-designs and generally promoting efforts in the right direction while the actual implementation would still fall within the State field of action. While our planning effort necessarily elevates several issues to the national plane, in the actual implementation there has to be accommodation for diversities of the country, the variety of regional needs, the unequal organizational and developmental progress in different States in different sectors, the individuality of the social and economic complexes within each State.

The problem of federal finance is a large and complex issue in itself. The States to-day are, one and all, wholly dependant on the Centre for the financing of their plans of development. This position creates certain special problems of administrative co-ordination between the federal Centre and the constituent units and casts certain special responsibilities on the administrative leadership of the Centre. I will content myself with stating without arguing in extensor, just one fairly obvious desideratum of our federal financial relationship. The financial relationship between the States and the Union must be such as to foster the sense of financial responsibility, of financial autonomy and of financial self-help within the different States.

While inter-State pressures and lobbying at the Centre is to some extent inevitable in a federal relationship, given the necessary comprehension and leadership at the Centre I have no doubt that institutional means can be devised for harmonizing the divers regional interests with the common economic destiny of the whole country. The unities of Indian life are so profound that whatever the transitional difficulties and howsoever our vote-catching demagogues may whip up parochial frenzies, provided there is faith in the *bona fides* of the Central leadership, any reasonable solutions of inter-State problems will receive the resounding support of the men of good-will all over the country irrespective of regions.

14

The problems of administration resolve themselves finally into the issues of organization and personnel. Perfection of organization will in itself avail nothing unless we have the men to man the organization adequately.

I would like to express here a personal opinion based on some experience and considerable reflection. The personnel resources available in our country for the filling of the various jobs in the administrative machinery are by no means in any sense inadequate. It may be that for certain specialized techniques we still have not developed the requisite know-how; this is however merely a matter of opportunity and time. For the normal requirements of the

administration, I would say that there is abundant personnel available with the requisite skills that talents. It is all a question of those in authority being able to exercise appropriate judgment in regard to men as well as administrative problems and to dispose the available personnel appropriately.

So far as the structural problems are concerned, if the organization is properly conceived and laid down many delays, retardations and frustrations may be avoided. So far as the personnel aspect is concerned in the administrative field at any rate, the defects are entirely and rapidly curable. The present administrative failures must be viewed in their proper perspective. Most officers are patriotic enough and have already or could be induced to cultivate a due sense of duty. Their performance is deficient owing to a variety of reasons; for want of clarity or decision at policy-making levels; wrong juxtaposition in which power is divorced from responsibility; because rules and regulations charging them are inapt and ill-conceived; because at appropriate levels of reference a ready machinery for a decisive resolving of differences does not exist. There are no villains with horns and hoofs in 'the administrative jungle' just common or garden varieties of ordinary folk with their average share of virtue, patriotism and good-will. They will just as loyally carry out the duties of a well-orchestrated relationship.

I know it is a common practice amongst politicians in office, as political administrators, to plead the alibi of a want of sympathy on the part of the professional administrator in extenuation of their own deficient performance. Such a plea of helplessness, if it is not merely cloak, can only be a confession of incapacity. It is a poor rider who complains that the horse takes him where it listeth and not where the rider wants to go. The point hardly merits a serious rebuttal.

It may be and indeed it is true that the quality of the administrative personnel of superior rank has been seriously debased in recent years in certain important respects. The number of officers who will dare to give unpalatable advice when their duty requires it is rapidly declining. This however is because unpalatable advice even when honest is often not relished by the political superiors. If there is want of tolerance and understanding

in their political superiors, not unnaturally, officers learn to trim their sails and anticipate the wishes of their masters and serve up opinions accordingly. I am aware that there are noble exceptions to the general run who still persist in doing their duty, would state only what they honestly feel and are prepared to bear the consequences. All honour and glory to them. However, when you are thinking of large bodies of men you cannot postulate on the basis that each should be a hero willing to be martyred. If you want honest and fearless advice – and anything else is hardly worth having – you must, when in a superior position, be prepared to allow the *bona fides* of those tendering it, until the contrary is proved.

I maintain that our administrative personal resources are intrinsically as good as the best in the world and that given the necessary climate at the political level they would not be found wanting in any professional calls made on their capacity.

If again the integrity of the administration is undermined by political pressures and political interference at the level of individual officers, – and who will deny that this is not happening already to an alarming extent? – the machinery of government could be suborned or abused.

Again to state the obvious: the officer is a servant of the law and is bound to carry out the lawful wishes of the people as articulated through the popular democratic governments, in office. He is *not* a servant of the whims, fancies or interests of the individuals in office or their political supporters and friends. Where in fact the administration has been debased and enfeebled by political pressure, the only sure remedy is to reaffirm the appropriate discipline of political office. To expect amongst officers a race of heroes and martyrs who would in all cases withstand such pressures would be wholly unrealistic.

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We have noticed very briefly some of the outstanding basic problems of administrative organization. For instance, the need for clarity, decision coherence and co-ordination at the policy-making levels of the administration. We have referred to the question of

delegation and initiative and the related question of fixation of specific responsibility. We have noticed the specific problems of financial control, the role of the Planning Commission, the equation of State-Centre relationship. I have underlined that the administrative resources are ample if only they are suitably deployed.

I venture the opinion in conclusion that the Administration at the professional level though in considerable disarray – largely due to amateurish and disingenuous handling – can be rapidly rallied and turned into an adequate instrument to serve the needs of State policy. All this is however only one aspect of the problem of good government.

The professional administration is only the vehicle of policy. It has no meaning save as a machinery which transmutes the impulses to which it is set, faithfully and efficaciously. The impulses are to be imparted by the policy-makers, that is to say, in a parliamentary democracy the ministers of government as the spokesmen of the popular will. A consideration of administrative mechanics merely at the professional level will, therefore, never be a sufficient analysis of the problem of good government. The problem of good government is indivisible.

In a parliamentary democracy the ministers of government belonging to the majority political party are, among other things, charged with the leadership of the sector of public administration falling within the ministry or department over which they preside.

The political administrator while he holds office leads the administrative team of his department and has a crucial role to play in administrative performance. This position which obtains everywhere, is further underlined by the special conditions which operate to-day in India.

The Indian revolution is now in the phase of translating its distinctive philosophy into the realities of economic, political and social conditions for the day-to-day living of the Indian people. The task is too gigantic and momentous to be conceived merely in terms of an administrative undertaking. The Congress Party in India as the ruling party of the country has to furnish much more than merely a political administration for the day-to-day governance of the country. It is the spearhead of India's revolution and it has to accomplish the purposes of that revolution. The Congress Party's

task must, therefore, be sharply distinguished from the humdrum chores of a political government in the Western democracies.

Let us consider for a parallel the tasks undertaken after the Russian Revolution by the communist authorities in Soviet Russia. In a totalitarian political system where the entire political, economic and social life of the community is regimented, the physical tasks of national reconstruction are relatively straightforward. In India we have to accomplish our tasks in a democratic climate amid free institutions. This different circumstance obviously makes our job far more complicated and difficult. The communist rulers could accomplish their revolution over a number of years only by calling to the aid of the formal organs of State, large masses of party cadres working devotedly day in and day out.

What sort of an organization have we to show against the much greater call that our tasks to-day make upon the ruling party?

The Congress organization springs to life principally during general elections. It functions mainly as a gigantic vote-gathering electioneering machine. The constructive programmes of organizational work have been more or less wholly neglected, the organization as such having little activity independently of the administration that it puts into office. May be, the constructive aspects of party organization are equally neglected by other political parties. While the role of other parties is a negative role of criticism and monitorship from the wings, the Congress party has itself to perform at the center of the Indian stage. As the functioning trustee of the Indian revolution, it has a special role to play. That is why its organizational short-comings, normally an internal matter of the party to consider, become relevant to a consideration of good government in India.

In the field of agricultural production, in the field of education, in the promotion of co-operative enterprise, in the field of industrial relations, in the working of Panchayati Raj, on the sensitive but all-important issue of family planning, in the dissemination of public information about our programmes of national reconstruction – in all these fields, to quote only a few for illustration, the administrative undertakings must be supported by a gigantic volume of well-

organized non-official effort if the objectives are to be achieved. To essay to do this merely as an administrative enterprise through an agency of stipendiary officials would be like beating wings in the void.

The requirements of the organization and personnel of the Congress party, were very different when the party was leading the freedom struggle. The goal was then glorious and incontrovertible; the programme heroic and straightforward. Today's objectives are more sophisticated. The programmes of national reconstruction are more complex, taxing, less manifest and more disputatious, besides being unsensational and prosaic. They will not be solved merely by slogans or heroic flourishes or merely a blur of undisciplined enthusiasm. The Congressmen both in the organization and in office must cultivate new techniques and skills, must develop new comprehensions.

Where are the seminars, training programmes, syndicates, indoctrination courses and the systematic imparting of skills and necessary comprehensions to produce the requisite leadership both at the organizational level and for political office, to implement the philosophy of national reconstruction?

It is unavoidable while considering the issue of good government that we should have to make a reference to the strife, indiscipline, self-seeking and opportunism that one has the misfortune to witness in the ruling party. All this is wholly unbecoming of the party that bears the mantle of the Indian revolution. How are the personal vendettas and stratagems between party bosses – and one reads so much of them in at least half a dozen States – for overmastering the party machine relevant to the public good? These squabbles are always and unashamedly for personal or group ascendancy, unmodified by any difference on ideology or grounds of public policy. It is because these political bosses bestride an entire State's administration and sometimes utterly pervert it, that their antics, otherwise a matter wholly for themselves and internally the party which should discipline them, are of concern to the student of good government.

In the choice of candidates for organizational as well as political responsibilities or in awarding tickets for membership of legislatures, can there not be more care and discrimination and deliberate picking

of talent rather than merely the helpless registration of the equation of group strength within the party at the relevant level? This is no place to consider how exactly the party may be rejuvenated. The techniques are familiar and well-known.

The winning of elections is a means not an end. It is certainly a very important means. But it is the kind of means which is best served by a concentration on the end, which is that of promoting public good. A party is an organization of men professing a common ideology for the promotion of public good and not merely a caucus for vote-catching with no end other than the perpetuation of its ascendancy.

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There are no sensational short-cuts to good government. There are no spectacular solutions. What is wanted is a long and patient siege. Here a little alteration, there a little adjustment; here some minor surgical cutting of gordian-knots, there the use of a needle rather than a pole-axe. The steady and patient building of procedures and moral, the nurturing of initiatives, the rewarding of merit, the attack on inefficiency corruption and circumlocutory delay; here and there a frontal assault to reduce some stubborn bastion of vested interest or some huddle of departmental jealousies.

It is as the sum-total of a myriad small acts and decisions – each undramatic and almost trivial in itself – at innumerable levels that the mansion of good government is built up. Each act of indecision, ambivalence, incoherence, aggrandizement, default or nepotism; each compromise on principle and departure from the strait and narrow path of rectitude; each surrender to vested interest or sell-out to easy popularity saps and erodes the structure until it rots through and through.

The consequence of no single act or omission is dramatic. Bad administration is like a pernicious cumulative poison that steadily but inexorably debilitates the system. No single act can be picked out to mark the catastrophe. It is *more* and *not less* perilous for that reason. For no alarm is sounded while the machine imperceptibly slithers down the slippery slope.

17

There have been stories of corruption, high living, nepotism in high places in recent years. It is quite likely, of course, that many of the allegations are wild and exaggerated and spring from motives other than a dispassionate search for purity in public administration. And of course, constant dinning about corruption is likely to give a wholly mistaken slant to public opinion regarding the general working of the administration, both within the country and abroad. However, even the authoritative public findings relating to such charges are sufficient to establish that all this smoke is not without some fire. We have to live in a regime of controls and regulations of a variety of sorts for many years to come and the fact as well as the faith in the purity of the administration is of the highest importance. One must therefore obviously take a grave notice of this degradation of moral standards in public administration.

The matter with all its ramifications has been enquired into by a Central committee quite recently, and I will content myself with only a few broad observations.

So far as the administrative ranks themselves are concerned, it is easy enough by the determined exercise of well-established methods to bring the mischief under control. It is not as if corruption and nepotism are hitherto unknown diseases which have suddenly erupted. The well-known methods to contain the evil and to cope with what cannot be contained are known to the merest tyro in public administration. It is not necessary to seek out novel cures for these ancient maladies. Of course any efforts to build up and organize public opinion in support of probity and rectitude have their obvious virtue. But merely as a matter of administrative mechanics it is the better enforcement of the traditional methods which we must mainly fall back upon. Very often, dilatory and inept procedures and ill-conceived regulations serve as breeding ground for corruption and nepotism. Apart from remedying these, all that is wanted so far as the stipendiary ranks of the administration are concerned, is some strengthening of vigilance agencies and an overall determination to act decisively whenever infringements are brought to notice.

But corruption of the great is however always the worst

corruption. It is the corruption at the political level to which a good part of the administrative corruption is directly or indirectly accountable. Apart from the wider circle of corruption and nepotism so generated, the want of moral standards in public life is degrading to public morality itself.

The cynicism and coarsening of outlook in the younger generation induced by this depravity in high places is amongst the heaviest tolls that the country is having to pay for this degradation of public life.

The real question is how corruption at political levels may be controlled without releasing a whole cataract of abuse and mischief in the shape of wild charges, blackmail and character assassination.

It should be recognized that a lot of decisions, especially at the level of the political administrator, that is to say, minister, necessarily entail the exercise of discretion. It would be a wholly impossible position if the *bona fides* of every exercise of discretion were open to challenge. The result would be a total paralysis of decision-making already palsied and so faltering.

No doubt a great deal can be done by greater systematization of procedures at various levels. There may also be some use for the institution of the Ombudsman which is being tried in certain other countries.

Finally, however, I feel that an abiding solution to the question of integrity at the political level has to be sought not in any formal administrative or judicial machineries to be automatically set in motion, but in party discipline. It is the party which above all should be concerned about its fair name and the good repute of the ministers it has put into office. Enquiries and probes within the party can be carried out without formality and far more elastically and effectively than any formal machinery could do. If the party High Command set about the matter with determination and started enforcing a strict code of discipline among members, particularly those in office, very quickly – believe me far more quickly and painlessly than the High Command may itself dare to hope – things will get into order and shape. No formal device or organizational legerdemain could equal the efficacy, aptitude and flexibility of self-regulation by the party.

What does this all add up to? We have all the elements and the necessary resources at hand for good government in India.

So far as the permanent administration is concerned, the problem can be easily and rapidly solved. Our Administration no doubt somewhat disarrayed and weakened in the interval has still the elements which if they are rallied and reinforced would furnish a serviceable instrument for all purposes of State policy. We have the personnel, the skill as well as the organizing capacity at the purely administrative level, to accomplish successfully our stupendous national tasks of reconstruction.

The soft spot all along has been the political level of the administration. The genesis of the administrative malaise lies at the political level of authority. Its cure must also be sought in the same quarters. Here also the trouble is essentially curable given determination and a will to set about the matter. The political level also can be tooled up to play its crucial role in national reconstruction. Indeed, unless this is done the Indian revolution would have miscarried and the hopes and aspirations of the Indian people cruelly betrayed.

Integrity can be re-established fairly rapidly if the high-minded top leadership of the ruling party shows determination in the matter. The development of the necessary comprehensions and administrative skills to cope with the gigantic tasks of directing the various streams of national reconstruction can obviously not be achieved in a trice. But want of intelligence has never been one of our handicaps in politics. It has always been want of will and character. If we set about deliberately to "educate our masters" they would soon develop the necessary comprehensions and skills. Here again the High Command has ample resources of capacity and intelligence to draw upon. And in any case rulers of integrity and will have never lacked reservoirs of skill and good counsel to assist.

If I may venture to quote what I wrote on this subject three years ago. "Correctly tackled the machinery of Administration in any State and indeed even at the Centre can be geared and tuned up within six months; and there is no reason why there should not be

as rapid improvement in the outer formations and echelons: the pack of cards is there and contains all the tricks; all that is needed is to build it up into appropriate suites and play the cards discerningly. I believe it can be done not only at the Centre but all over the administrative field; and the broad masses of Indian humanity who have just woken up to a dawn after a long, wearisome, oppressive night and would be the direct beneficiaries of such a transformation, deserve no less."

We can count on some invaluable blessings on our side. The immense patience and goodwill of the Indian people and their resources of the spirit are one such important asset. The fundamental unity that binds the country together, despite many surface cracks and distempers is another invaluable resource. India's cultural tradition and its ancient virtues of piety and mutual tolerance are a bulwark and a safeguard against the doctrines of horror and terrorization.

Here are all the elements which can furnish good government to a seventh path of the human race and could turn the greatest challenge of human history into the greatest opportunity for Indian statesmanship. If only we will!

5

IN DEFENCE OF BUREAUCRACY AND AN AGENDA FOR REFORMS

L.M. SINGHVI

ON this day we should perhaps recall with thanks giving the past forty years in the life of IIPA but should also reflect on the next forty years, and that reminds me of the famous song of Harow, which is called "Forty Years on", a song which I believe was sung together once Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Sir Winston Churchill in a spirit of loyalty to their common almamater. The refrain of that brave song is, "Follow up! Follow up! Follow up" That refrain also carries a poetic signal to our bureaucracy which ought also to heed the clarion call of the song "for old hopes to be mended with new faiths". I would like to see not only old hopes to be mended with new faiths but old as well as new hopes to be mended with old as well as new faiths. The catch of the song of Hanow is Wafted to us today for this fortieth anniversary occasion from the country where I temporarily reside. I quote a few *lines* from the song in defence of Bureaucracy, even though I do not belong to it, and I am sure you will not fail to read between the lines of the song also:

*"Routs and discomfitures, rushes and rallies,
Bases attempted, and rescued and won,
Strife without anger, and art without malice,
How will it seem to you, forty years on?
Then, you will say, not a feverish minute*

Lecture delivered on 29 March 1995