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Indira Gandhi

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I am glad to have this opportunity to be with you because, as Asokaji rightly said, the administration is the instrument through which all programmes of work for the country can be achieved. Even though this is perhaps one of the busiest times of the year, I took this opportunity to be with you. You all know that in the last four or five years there has been a general quickening of political consciousness. It has been obvious in India. But this consciousness of the people is a phenomenon which is visible, I think, in every country of the world. At some places, it takes the form of protests, movements and in other places different forms, but they are really different manifestations of the same thing, that is, through education, through growth, etc., people want to have greater participation in what is happening.

In India, because of our own problems and our own economic backwardness, naturally the people are not satisfied with the existing state of affairs. They want a much faster rate of growth. They want more equitable distribution of the fruits of our national

endeavour. They want greater social justice and greater equality. They expect a great deal from political parties. They want service from them. They want changes in the legal system. And, I think, it is this general ferment which is at the root of the demand for administrative reform. To achieve these objectives, the administration must be imbued with a sense of need for change and development, the technical competence, the necessary knowledge and also the necessary attitude of mind.

Nothing in the world is ever static and we are at a time when things are moving much faster than ever before. So, whatever plan or programme we take up, including imparting of training, we have always to look into the future. The training is for a particular situation which exists today but it should simultaneously look into the future to see how that particular situation can be improved as we go along step by step, year after year. I find this is what is lacking, which is so obvious in the educational system not only of this country but of other countries also. Everybody is being prepared for *status quo* in a society, for conditions as they are, rather than the sort of society we want to have, a better society. I think, any training institute must deal with both these points of view simultaneously.

Here in India, and perhaps everywhere, Government's activities have increased in range, volume and complexity in the course of our planned economic development. The number of public employees has also increased and amongst those, who invoke the so-called Parkinson's Law, are many whose aim is not efficiency but reluctance to accept the need for the Government to undertake new responsibilities. Government's functions have increased as people's requirements and assertiveness have increased. Our country has rightly refused to adopt a negative attitude towards the functions of the Government and the role of civil servants. If Government has to do more for the people, its employees must play a more dynamic and more creative role as the instrument for implementing government policies and programmes.

To be able to discharge its new responsibilities, the civil service must change itself. Some transformation has already occurred but much more is required in the years to come.

Development, even more than maintenance of continuity and order, has become the business of the administrative apparatus. The implementation of plan programmes requires a greater say for the expert and the technician and re-examination of old axioms so that the desire to enforce obedience to rules does not hold up work. At the same time, the general administrator himself has to acquire a greater understanding of economic and technological forces.

In all countries, today, there is a kind of battle between the expert and the generalist. Our aim should be to ensure that the country gets the best from both. Sometimes, I find that our experts are not expert enough. Nor are they immune from the common human frailty of in-fighting or a sense of hierarchy. Expert and generalist are both products of the same social milieu, and both must strive to equip themselves for future tasks in a world where interdisciplinary approach is becoming the key to advance.

It is against this perspective that we should keep under constant review our policies regarding recruitment and training of civil servants of different categories and the procedures for appraisal of their performance. No Government can possibly be run without rules and regulations. But these rules and regulations cannot be static. They must fit into the dynamics of a changing situation. We cannot consider satisfactory a state of affairs in which it is easier to amend a constitutional provision than some so-called fundamental rules or civil service regulations.

I am not here to spell out the required changes in rules and regulations; it is for experts in administration like you to think about these things and to find a way out. I would only like to stress that the procedures and practices should encourage initiative, foster innovation, match responsibilities and powers, and create a sense of participation at all levels. We call ourselves a participatory democracy; our administrative system should reflect the spirit of involvement. The question of rank should give place to sense of partnership and working together.

The vast majority of Government servants—whether they are clerks or engineers or tax officers or general administrators—have

a career extending over nearly three decades. During this long period, every civil servant will necessarily witness striking changes in the society around him. When the young civil servant of today—whether he is on a technical or a non-technical post—rises to the top, he will see a world vastly different from the one in which he had joined service. Obviously, he should strive for a continuous upgradation of his skills.

I therefore, attach great importance to the programmes of training—initial training as well as in-service training—to all categories of civil servants. Apart from formal training, I would consider it even more important for a civil servant to develop an enquiring mind receptive to new ideas, and a restless spirit which keeps urging him constantly to find ways of doing assigned tasks better and more efficiently. These are the positive qualities which the country expects from the civil servants of tomorrow. Negatively, they should try and keep away from cynicism and the attitude of taking the line of least resistance. We should place on a rational basis our procedures for the identification of talent, nurturing of talent, and of rewarding such talent. Nothing can be more frustrating than talent unrewarded. A society cannot progress if only seniority of rank counts. Public administration must get out of the shadows of feudalism.

One important administrative problem of today—and the subject of many of your studies—is delegation. But we can interpret this narrowly to mean that an agency or executive should be in a position to make day-to-day decisions without the Secretariat in Delhi (or in the State capital) breathing down his neck. Often the heads of institutions to whom power is delegated do not share it with their colleagues, and do not develop the spirit and mechanism of team work. The aggrieved go back to the same old central authority for redress. This is an area in which there is great need of new practices and conventions.

Another problem is that of attitudes. Our civil service is largely drawn from the urban areas and is urban-oriented, while the majority of our people live in rural areas. With the broadening of the base of our educational system and the wider dispersal of facilities for higher education, we should expect the class

composition of our services to change. But this will take time. In the meantime, the problem of knowing as to how to impart to the civil servant—whether he is an administrator, like a collector or a doctor or an irrigation engineer—a sense of identification with the problems of the poor of the rural areas remains. How are we to ensure that they have intuitive sympathy with the people and have a livelier appreciation of their problem and difficulties? The inculcation of proper attitudes should perhaps begin in our educational institutions. But the process must be carried through and completed in the course of the civil servant's career under the Government.

Our civil servants had to undergo a major process of adjustment at the time of transfer of power in 1947. Because of the need for continuity, we did not then make structural changes in the system which were necessary. By and large, the process of adjustment was smoothly completed. As Government's policies are becoming increasingly egalitarian, a similar process of adjustment is now called for. There is urgent need for radical attitudinal changes, particularly at the points at which the administration comes in contact with the people, for example, the block development office, the taluka office, the police station, the post office, the railway ticket booth and so on. Greater courtesy, speed and consideration in dealing with the people is called for.

The cooperation of civil servant and their associations should be enlisted in bringing about a visible improvement in the manner in which these public offices at the grassroot level function. Higher ranks of civil servant have a special responsibility in providing effective leadership to bring about such improvement.

In the process of expansion of our social welfare and social security schemes, we are setting up new agencies and institutions. It is particularly necessary that these agencies and institutions, for example, the Employees' State Insurance hospitals and dispensaries, and offices which give scholarships and aid to scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, should have men imbued with genuine compassion and concern. But the complaint at present is that the smallest government functionary acts with condescension

and callousness towards the villager, while he himself resents the same attitude on the part of higher officers.

Much of what I have said applies even more to our public sector undertakings. There we need a greater sense of commitment to social objectives, greater scope for the technical element, greater delegation of authority down the line, greater involvement and the development of a corporate spirit. In short, a new culture. The public enterprises must primarily fulfil their economic role. But efficient functioning they should add to the nation's economic strength and also to budgetary resources. They should help to foster a new ethic in administration.

Democracy has struck roots in our country. Whatever theories of administration we may evolve, or whatever system we may fashion, these should be acceptable to the people and promote their interests. Our democratic system has enabled an increasingly large number of people to acquire direct experience of administration through elective offices as members of panchayats or panchayat samitis, zila parishads, state legislative assemblies or Parliament. We, thus, have people in different walks of life who have had occasion to observe our administrative system from positions of vantage, and have some ideas on how the machinery functions and how it could be re-shaped. I hope the Institute has devised or will devise arrangements by which there could be mutually beneficial inter-action between experts and holders of elective offices.

I am very glad to hear from Asoka Mehta about your proposed work in the regional languages because it is obvious that we can deal with the people only through their languages and we can understand them much better if we know their languages. So, we have to develop the regional languages and we have also to promote the knowledge of Hindi which, as you know, I always call the national link language. It is not because we want to force the language on anybody, but merely from the very practical point of view of getting to know each other, of communicating with each other, it is absolutely essential to have one language which all the persons in this country can understand and speak. Of course, for those who are in administration, it is even more necessary than the ordinary person.

We have very many problem in this country. We think, it is because we are backward, because we are big, because we became independent recently. But actually, even the smallest country thinks that it has an equal number of problems. So, problems are not merely because of bigness. I think, there are problems wherever there is man, and if we can learn not just to deal with the problems but to deal with the man behind the problem or concerned with the problem, I think, we can find a more durable solution. In the modern world, I find that more and more we think of people not as individuals with problems or difficulties or joys and sorrows but as statistics, whether one is a Harijan or one is of some caste, or one is educated unemployed. Everybody is in some category or the other very neatly labelled and so we forget that behind these labels each person is an entirely different person. Of course, no administrator can deal with each individual but atleast, if he thinks of these groups as composed of individuals, it would bring about a difference in his attitude; if he looks at each person not as a person who has come with a problem but as a person with whose help we can solve the problems, I think we would have already moved one step towards finding a proper solution.

Asoka Mehta has said very kind words about me as leader and so on. But perhaps you know that I have quite strong views in the matter. The whole point of democracy is that we should not work with a concept of leader-and-led but we should evolve a concept of partnership. We are here all involved in trying to create a better standard of living without damaging or diminishing the spirit of the people, because we find in many places where the standard of living has gone up, it has not really always made them better people or happier people. So, we have this tremendous task and we can only do it in a spirit of cooperation and partnership, and I think perhaps the most important thing that all of us, whether we are in the administration or not, have to learn is how to work together for the common good of all.