

staff in the basic purposes which are being pursued. Yet some promotion of a greater sense of common effort is essential to any system of management. The machinery requires a doctrine of public service.

III Administrative Advice for Political Purposes

56. The second role of the Principal official is to offer advice on how the machinery might be mobilised by the government in order to follow the political objectives which it wishes to pursue. Administrative instruments carry different connotations according to the context in which they are used. Ministers and heads of government have predilections for particular methods. The Principal official has a high sensitivity to the full implications of alternative courses of action in administrative arrangements.

Allocation of functions

57. The allocation of administrative duties and responsibilities is much more closely associated with political dispute than the day-to-day problems of co-ordination. The Principal official treads on most delicate ground when he gives advice on who should perform what function. Yet all administrative machines must be geared to the political purposes of those in power, and the Principal official is primarily responsible for advice on the instrumentation of the government machine.

58. There are two conflicting requirements. On the one hand, all governments have to create suitable political offices for their supporters. In systems where the tradition of parliamentary accountability is strong, the number of offices created may be regulated. On the other hand, all governments have to decide which set of functions can best be grouped together, either for specific political reasons or to improve the effectiveness of the machine. It is often very difficult to see the wisest course of action because the needs of policy administration are always changing. In countries particularly concerned with development planning, the administrative machine must also be able to handle all communications between the top and the bottom of the hierarchy, in order to relate planning goals to actual achievement in the field.

59. There are also important questions of scale. A small country does not need the same administrative structure as a large one. For example, in Swaziland the Government is considering making a distinction between policy departments and executive departments. The first would be managed by Ministers of State within the Prime Minister's Office. Such a distinction would place policy questions at the centre, with a Cabinet Office, a Ministry of Finance, a Department of Planning, and a Department of Establishments, leaving a series of executive departments to cover the specialised functions, such as local administration, physical planning, housing, or roads.

60. Larger countries have attempted to simplify their machinery of government. Where there are a large number of ministries and agencies, it is sometimes possible to reduce the size of the Cabinet, or the number of Chief Ministers, by various forms of amalgamation. For example, the British Cabinet has now been reduced to about 18 Ministers. These amalgamations also make it possible to resolve some of the inter-departmental differences which arise when the principal agencies of government are more numerous. Related functions can be grouped together inside a large department. But such departments create new problems. A single Minister in a large department finds it difficult to cover the whole range of issues for which he is responsible. Large departments therefore develop "Cabinets" of their own, which consist of meetings between the Minister and his junior Ministers as well as senior civil servants. In these conditions there is some danger that problems which need to be discussed externally are swallowed up in the internal processes of the large department itself. It is difficult to draw the dividing line between departments in such a way as to do the minimum damage to their essential inter-relation. For example, it is difficult sometimes to devise the most appropriate organisation for giving effect to the concept of regional policy. All the aspects of applying a regional policy, such as land use, communications, industry and employment, cannot possibly come underneath the same department.

61. The creation of large departments has increased the need for effective machinery of co-ordination at the centre. This is particularly true in the allocation of resources and assessment of priorities. For example, the British Government now includes

three major departments of State at the centre — the Cabinet Office, the Treasury, and the Civil Service Department. As explained above, the Cabinet Office has now enlarged itself by taking in a new body called the Central Policy Review Staff. Much of this work in reforming the centre of government has to be related to the concept of collective Ministerial responsibility, while at the same time retaining the sense of individual responsibility for the work of departments, which is particularly important where parliaments entertain a strong sense of the need to make Ministers accountable. The central machinery of government has to be designed in such a way that it is possible to examine the whole programme of the administration in power.

62. But there are important political pressures in favour of keeping a large number of separate agencies of government. In the first place, it seems easier to keep a large number of small units in check, if they are to be held accountable for their actions to Parliament. In the second place, governments find it difficult to retain a sufficient sense of personal responsibility for individual Ministers if the scope of their responsibility is too large. One solution is to create agencies in which civil servants can be held responsible for management. For example, in Britain this delegation has taken two forms. First, work is transferred to bodies outside departments, particularly where it is of a sufficiently commercial character to enable the organisation to be regarded as wholly or largely financially self-supporting. When this is the case, efficiency can be measured by the price mechanism or some other form of performance test. Large parts of the public sector have been handled in this way, particularly through the nationalised industries which comprise all the major public utilities. Second, there are certain blocks of executive work where the degree of ministerial accountability can be reduced, insofar as issues of policy are rarely involved and there is little need for day-to-day ministerial supervision. In such cases, management can be devolved as far as possible to the officials in charge of the organisation. Such agencies have been created to deal with the provision of advice about employment opportunities, and to handle credit facilities and guarantees for exporters.

63. But in some countries it is impossible to reduce the number of departments, and to make civil servants responsible for the

management of agencies without making them into some kind of 'political' association of Ministers. Many pressures are in favour of a greater fragmentation of government. Leaders like to be able to create offices for their supporters. Only in military regimes have there been conscious attempts to reduce the number of offices available. The military regime in Ghana for example tended to group the ministries which it took over when allocating them to members of the National Redemption Council.

64. Federalism also tends to multiply the number of units in government. The head of government usually has to satisfy a number of regional interests in his Cabinet. In both Canada and Australia there is a tendency to have larger cabinets for this reason. The Indian Prime Minister is also under some pressure, and has to find a way of reconciling different parts of the country with the central regime by allocating certain offices on a regional basis. Unitary systems which have strong regional identities may also experience similar difficulties in reducing the number of central government offices.

65. It is also difficult to prevent professional and technical departments from defending their own interests, which they often see embodied in a separate autonomous existence within a single agency. Some professional civil servants are very loyal to the organisations to which they belong, and are reluctant to see them amalgamated into any larger units.

66. The machinery of development planning adds its own dimension of difficulty. It usually contains two sets of requirements which are in conflict. First, there has to be some central body marshalling all the figures on available resources in order to make decisions of allocation; second, the government requires a fairly decentralised system of administration to be able to involve the people at the lowest level in the implementation of local plans. Several governments have experimented with ways of decentralising the central machine, while at the same time building up at the village level institutions which can co-operate with regional or district agencies. In those Commonwealth countries where a sharp distinction between the secretariat and the district was the most notable feature of the pre-independence system, it has often been possible to adapt the system of field administration for new political purposes in economic planning.

67. Governments interested in economic planning may also exploit the use of statutory corporations. This is comparable to the form of delegation to nationalised industries explained above. But statutory bodies have themselves to be grouped and supervised, and it may sometimes be difficult to relate their work to economic planning at regional level without creating a special separate central agency.

68. Malaysia has tried to solve all these different problems by creating a "national operations room". This is a point in the system serviced by the implementation and co-ordination unit in the Prime Minister's Office which can at any given point in time express some view of the overall position in economic planning. But its effectiveness depends largely on the fact that the unit responsible is part of the Prime Minister's department and services the executive committees of the National Action Council. The latter's decision can be made binding on other Ministers and departments, and can therefore transcend the lines of Ministerial jurisdiction. This degree of centralisation is combined with a system of local committees, so that the National Action Council at the centre is paralleled by state and district 'action committees'.

69. Another method is to build upon the system of provincial and district commissioners. One way of decentralising the system of economic planning is to give greater responsibility at the provincial level. For example, in Tanzania and Zambia, regional officers enjoy ministerial rank, and their secretaries, Permanent Secretary rank. In Tanzania the regional commissioner and regional development director come directly underneath the President's Office, which is responsible for co-ordinating regional affairs, and their submissions for local planning are sent by that office directly to the Ministry of Economic Affairs. This means that regional officers have direct contact with the centre of government. Similarly, in Zambia, the provincial secretary serving the provincial minister has been given more responsibility for financial control. The Zambian hierarchy of development committees parallels the civil service hierarchy. At the bottom the village leader is chairman of the village productivity committee, while at the top the provincial minister is chairman of the provincial development committee. Each village sends two representatives to a ward council, which also has a ward development committee, and the district governor is respon-

sible for grouping the wards in his district for the district development committee. Zambia has also made provision for traditional chiefs to participate in this system of development planning by making them responsible for the supervision of the system at ward level.

70. The use of provincial and district commissioners in development administration is particularly characteristic of those states with a one-party system of government. The organs of the party are usually organised in parallel to those of the administration. In Tanzania, the district Chairman of the Party is also Chairman of the District Planning Committee. Similarly in Zambia the political committees of the Party are organised in parallel to the development committees of the community.

Financial Procedures

71. Principal officials are required to consider important procedures which lie at the heart of politics, giving effect to decisions on the use of resources or to judgements about priorities. Finance is an important field of government activity. There seem to be two essential parts in the necessary instrumentation. First, governments need to find suitable procedures for assessing future requirements. Secondly, they need to control the pace and scope of public spending.

72. The meeting therefore decided to commission a study of the two aspects of the question: "forward planning" and "financial control". These two topics appeared several times in the course of the discussion, particularly in connection with the design of an appropriate "support system" for central decision-making. But financial procedures also throw an important light on the difficulties of allocating government functions, particularly in those countries concerned with development planning.

73. The debate on financial procedures varies according to the particular context of economic planning. There appears to be a significant difference between those countries which have no separate planning apparatus, and those which have inherited their procedures from a colonial system. The former are increasingly concerned to improve the real standard of living in terms of education, health, leisure, the environment, and governments are compelled to compare claims on resources which are not strictly

comensurable. It is difficult to make the procedures of macro-economic budgeting responsive to judgements about the quality of life. But in developing countries the principal concern is to avoid delay in the implementation of decisions, and to promote methods which "cut the red tape".

74. It is very doubtful whether the British colonial tradition of financial procedures is now appropriate for the work of economic planning in developing countries. The colonial system of accounts was primarily concerned to produce a balanced budget of recurrent expenditure that made the colony self-sufficient, and to separate into a development budget all those items which involved long-term investment. This meant that the major concern of colonial governments was to make sure that there was an effective system for the collection of revenue, and that officers responsible for disbursement were not able to make private gains. Development budgets usually meant a separate development programme, with projects which could be managed independently of the main structure of government.

75. It is equally doubtful whether an Exchequer system is appropriate to development planning. It may be that making a Permanent Secretary accountable to Parliament for the vote of his department produces a system for authorising expenditure which is too highly centralised. It might be better to adapt the colonial system of accounts and audit.

76. Developed countries do not find a centralised system such a handicap. Indeed, they are frequently so concerned with central arrangements for the review of on-going policies that they have been able to separate the planning process from the machinery of financial control. Their main anxiety is about the control of future commitments. The strict financial control of day-to-day disbursements can be brought underneath a Ministry of Finance or Treasury, and departments can be obliged to keep within approved spending limits. Difficulties arise not so much within the system of controlling disbursement as in the system for monitoring policy making, which has to ensure that the resources will be available for any proposed switch in priorities.

77. But developing countries working within the framework of national plans experience rather different dilemmas. There is often

a lack of trained personnel for an extensive system of financial control. Delays seem to arise largely because of the need to secure authority for expenditure, which is usually vested at the centre, and not in the regions where development officers are working. The authority to purchase material, for example, may be delayed by several months. Development planning also involves a process of education, in order to get people in the village and on the shop floor to understand the aims of government. Too rigid a system of financial control may inhibit the business of communication.

78. In most Commonwealth countries there are therefore two basic dilemmas. First, the "forward planning" process requires some kind of reconciliation between the conflicting needs of securing local co-operation in planning and making an accurate budgetary assessment at the centre. The centre must know where the local pieces fit in, and the locality must understand the overall plan in order to be able to implement their part of it. Second, an extensive public sector investment requires a deployment of staff within the regions, and probably over a wide range of differing areas, as well as some kind of system at the centre for holding all staff accountable. Each country has to strike its own balance in the solution of these problems.

79. Several schemes are under consideration for the delegation of authority to provincial centres. For example, it is possible to delegate more of the routine financial control procedures to provincial secretaries, and at the same time to allow provincial authorities to develop their own staffing organisations and programmes. It might be possible to develop a system of local committees or to adapt the existing pattern of local government to allow communities at the village level to mobilise their own resources. The action of central government would then be to supplement local initiative.

Communication with the People

80. A key area of responsibility for the Principal official is the effectiveness of government machinery in communication with the people. Governments need to establish that their actions have been understood; they also wish to secure support for their policies. The Principal official is concerned with many priorities in administrative action which have political overtones. He is expected to make sure

that the government machine is responsive to political initiatives, and that appropriate procedures can be found to put a decision into practice.

81. There is always some suspicion that civil servants are themselves too isolated from the people and that they therefore do not understand the most strongly held political opinions. It is sometimes argued that public servants are not particularly good at projecting their ideas to a mass audience, and that therefore their organisations are not geared to giving popular explanations, or getting a widespread support.

82. Some Commonwealth countries have shown an interest in forms of communication used by governments outside the Commonwealth. For example, there has been some interest in the methods employed by China. Some admire the Chinese method of sending senior civil servants and other officers to work in factories or in the field, and believe that such methods provide an opportunity for bureaucrats to appreciate the problems of the common man. The Indian Foreign Office has now initiated a course for trainees which requires them to spend nine months in rural areas. This helps diplomats to understand the development aspects of foreign policy.

83. There is also some doubt about the convention in those countries where the role of parliament in communication with the people is accepted. Ministers, who are anxious to mobilise opinion, may be tempted to by-pass Parliament. The constitutional doctrine that Parliament is the basic channel of communication does not seem sufficient in days when new means of communication are available. Ministers nowadays tend to make important political statements by themselves before television cameras. If policies are openly reported to Parliament, Ministers feel that they are at the mercy of the journalists who explain their policies to the public. In some countries parliamentary sessions are often very short, and as a consequence departments are accustomed to preparing important statements for consumption by the press or television.

84. Military regimes have found that they need to provide opportunities for government to make its policies and programmes known to the people, and at the same time to identify the avenues whereby the reactions of the people to these policies can be effectively

brought to government attention. In providing administrative procedures for a military government, it is important to pay particular attention to the creation of "consultative committees". Military governors in Nigeria established a communication system between themselves and the people by appointing to their regional cabinets a number of civil commissioners from each of the divisional areas and from each of the major interests. There are also a large number of consultations at various levels between all ministries of the various governments in the Federation. The commissioners for each of the major services in the region have regular meetings at the national level.

85. A particularly important area of responsibility for the Principal official is to ensure that government speaks with a single voice. This means that he is sometimes required to initiate procedures which help the government to avoid the embarrassment of contradictory statements from two or more separate sources within the administration. For example, it is occasionally necessary to issue a number of circulars calling for all statements which Ministers intend to make to be cleared in the Prime Minister's Office before being released. Another problem was that spokesmen while abroad may be tempted to talk to students about jurisdictions which are not covered by their own responsibilities, and they therefore issue statements which have to be contradicted later.

86. An important agency in securing a common format for public statements or presenting popular versions of complicated matters is the Government Information Service or the Ministry of Information. Some governments own newspapers which they can use, and ministries in the communications field sometimes operate their own broadcasting services, which also arrange seminars in which people can discuss government policies and projects on the air. The Minister of Information himself might specialise in touring the country in order to explain what the government is doing.

87. The Principal official might be directly involved in devising schemes through which the government can meet the people more directly. For example, some countries have experimented with the practice of arranging cabinet meetings in different regions four or five times a year. At such meetings the Prime Minister can hold press conferences and Ministers can collectively visit the area and talk to the people. A Provincial Cabinet in Canada has held its

meetings away from the capital, dividing them into two halves, one public and the other private. One country has experimented with a series of ministerial trips, in which ministers "exchanged areas", and each visiting parts of the country outside his own constituency.

88. Heads of Government may also devise their own forms of press conference. One Prime Minister has established the habit of making himself available on certain days without appointment to any member of the public who wishes to consult him.

89. A system of field administration offers the opportunity to provide communication with the people through the administrative structure. In some African countries the *Baraza* is a recognised institution by which groups of people in rural areas meet regularly with government officials to discuss local issues. This method is also used by Heads of Government and Ministers. In many countries district commissioners are the principal representatives of central government in all areas. They also have beneath them in the administrative hierarchy a number of chiefs or village headmen. People holding these offices can be asked to organise meetings at which policies can be explained and where complaints and ideas from the people can be examined. Appointed or elected councils might work alongside with such officials, and in several countries the system of development planning relies heavily on development committees within this administrative structure.

90. In those countries where traditional chiefs or members of the nobility play an important part in the system of government, people enjoying traditional status might be used as a means of communication. In some countries the churches are also important. The minister or priest using his pulpit as a vehicle for circulating information might be of great value.

91. Almost all these innovations in "meet the people" procedures run into difficulties over the use of official languages. In many Commonwealth countries English is not widely used outside government. If English is used in government communication, it may create barriers which keep the people at bay and obstruct the flow of communication between government and people. Some Commonwealth countries have decided to introduce the indigenous language into the procedures of Parliament, and also in government, in order to involve the people more actively and enthusiastically in the

country's affairs. Those countries which have a single national language enjoy a distinctive advantage. If there are a large number of languages, each spoken by a different minority, a great deal of time and energy is consumed in translation. For example, government news bulletins have to be produced in more than half a dozen languages.

92. The Principal official is frequently asked to advise on improving the general orientation of civil servants towards the methods of communication which the government wishes to employ. Much of the aid which civil servants can give to the projection of government information depends on the degree of confidence and trust inside the administration. When there are grievances about the behaviour of civil servants at both national and state levels, some countries have instituted the office of Ombudsman. This officer concerns himself with definitions of maladministration, and provides a useful channel of information about relations between civil servants and members of the public.

93. The meeting found that the three topics discussed which illustrate some of the difficulties in tendering advice on the use of the administrative machine led to a number of possible topics for future discussion in detail. The allocation of functions is an area of particular difficulty in getting the organs of central and local government working together for the development of backward regions in each country. There are awkward problems in getting central bodies to provide regional offices and points of co-ordination, and at the same time in persuading local authorities to work together. The manner in which functions are allocated at the centre has important consequences for those who wish to create regional "teams". Similarly, financial procedures tend to encourage centralisation and to delay the provision of adequate materials for regional development. One of the reasons why communication between government and people was a subject of such concern to the officials responsible for development policies is the genuine conflict which exists between what civil servants might legitimately do in promoting government views and what they might expect from their professional status. Civil servants who propagate expressions of political opinion, whether such views are personal or part of government collectively, are vulnerable to charges of bias.