

Weekly Copy Ps. 5

Annual Subscription Rs. 2

OPINION

Vol. XXIII

NOVEMBER 30, 1982

No. 24-28

RECIPE FOR SUCCESS IN ADMINISTRATION

None who has had any real knowledge of Indian Administration can read the paragraphs on it in the Government of India's Draft Outline of the Third Five-year Plan without a feeling of deep sadness. "Dear God," he can scarcely help exclaiming, "can they still be at this level! Such meagre understanding, such marked complacency!" In a short while, he realises that this writing is but another facet of the same superficial thinking that plans so grandiloquently but sketchily that new steel mills cannot function because the coal for their furnaces has not yet been mined, or, if mined, cannot be transported to the site of use for lack of wagons, that builds huge irrigation works and forgets essential field channels, that hails its Community Development scheme as a social revolution, that hopes to find a new millennium in what it terms democratic decentralisation or *Panchayati Raj*, that sees in Prohibition a most successful measure of social reform and economic betterment, that constantly proclaims its desire to hold the priceline, while carefully turning away from doing any of the things essential for holding it.

The modern Indian recipe for improving public administration is, indeed, remarkable. It is compounded of various elements. Take a Prime Minister who keeps on telling publicly, in and out of season, his principal servants, on whom he relies for the framing and carrying out of policy, that they are wooden, hide-bound, caste-ridden, ignorant of the people's needs and unable to understand them, who is inclined to regard honestly held views expressed in opposition to his own by such servants, as indications of disaffection or stupidity, whose bad judgment of men is notorious, and who seems quite determined to protect dishonest politicians by refusing to have investigated, by independent authority, even the *bona fide* complaints of responsible people. To him, add Ministers at the Centre and in the States, to most of whom the whole idea of a permanent Government servant being a colleague engaged in a common task is anathema, who, in fact, are of the view that there should be very little difference between a Government servant working under them and their own private servant, that the former's behaviour should in any case approximate to that proper to the latter, that his real role is not to tell them what the law is and what he thinks under it the public interest demands but to find ways of doing whatever they

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done, setting his conscience at naught if necessary but without troubling them about it, and the large majority of whom, distinguished neither for intellect nor industry, also look upon their posts as opportunities of personal, family, caste and party aggrandisement. Strengthen the mixture with legislators seeking their own places in the sun and determined to have them, via the Minister if necessary, whatever the Government servant may urge is right and proper and with influential, unscrupulous businessmen, clients in the Roman sense of the Ministers, whose party-chests they fill to the brim, and whose private jobs they are reputed not to be averse to doing, always knowing that, even if the reward tarries occasionally, it is bound to come. Sprinkle in important places, Government servants of the right flexibility for such conditions, passing over if necessary honest men addicted to principle and decision on merits, terming them rigid to justify the supersession. Decorate with a report or two from some foreign expert who, little understanding Indian conditions and necessities, regards corruption as hardly worth bothering about, and pays glowing tributes to the political leadership, tributes that can be always quoted as certificates. Scatter all over a great deal of management and organisation and methods jargon, and place prominently on top an Institute of Public Administration at the capital with branches in the State capitals, to publish magazines and brochures, hold meetings, arrange seminars, have visiting professors, produce in fact an air of great happenings and significant doings, taking care all the while, through suitable arrangement, to see that these bodies, while appearing independent, never really exercise independent judgment to the extent of causing the Government any embarrassment. In the result, is there anything to be surprised at in the tremendous advance in public administration so clearly visible all over the country ?

The advance seems very striking to those conditioned to look for it. To others, the unfortunate accustomed to see things as they are and not as authority wants them to be seen, it may not appear to be there at all. It may even look like deterioration. The Prime Minister and others of his type are always urging the educated, doctors, engineers, students to go to the countryside. They are often contemptuous of the reluctance shown by the young to follow their advice. Do they realise that, in large parts of the land today, life in the countryside has become extremely unsafe, that law and order have fallen largely into disrepute, that no man can be sure of his life, property or liberty if he offends the local bosses, that investigation of crime itself is done by the local police official in consultation with the local bosses, and that any interference with the investigation in the interests of justice by the higher officials, police or revenue, leads to such a spate of allegations through legislators and other influential people against them that they hastily retreat to their desks, content to busy themselves with papers and leave doing alone ? Have they any idea of how much the *Panchayati raj* they are all so enthusiastic about will add to the power of these local bosses, and how much more difficult it will be for the simple individual in the village

who wishes to lead his own life and be left alone, to escape oppression and tyranny? Perhaps, it may never have struck them that the general maintenance of law and order in a tehsil or a taluka has rested not so much on the one sub-inspector and fourteen policemen who form the force within it as on the respect men have felt for the entity of Government, renewed from time to time by the conduct of some high official of whom it was rightly said, "Good man he was and there was great awe of him. In his days, no man dared to harm another." The conditions of their rule, their constant interference with matters well within the official's competence, the contempt they openly express for their servants, have made it almost impossible for such men to appear, and as to respect for Government, how can Governments that all know to be approachable in most devious ways command respect even from the simple?

Says the Planning Commission's Third Plan Outline: "The need for securing efficiency and speed in execution and widespread confidence in the integrity of the administration at all points affecting the general public have always been stressed as vital problems in economic development." True, they have been stressed in the first and second Plans and even before that, for, in an introductory note to the 1951 Report on Public Administration, the Planning Commission declared, "there can be no doubt that clean, efficient and impartial administration is the first condition of successful democratic planning." The point, however, cannot be met by emphasis and reassertion. Clean, efficient and impartial administration just don't happen by saying they should be. They are not self-executive. They have to be brought about. To bring them about is the task of men, primarily of the Prime Minister and his Cabinet-at the Centre, of Chief Ministers and their Cabinets in the States, and of all the officials. Is the administration today cleaner and more impartial than it was ten years ago? No one aware of what is going on in the country dare say, "yes." Is it more efficient than it was ten years ago? Again the answer unfortunately has to be "no." The first condition of successful democratic planning has then not been fulfilled. Is it any wonder that the democratic planning of the Planning Commission, the Government of India and the States has not been successful? Is it also any wonder that institutes, courses, working-groups, seminars, volumes of instructions and letters by Ministers, organisation and methods cells, economy sections, foreign professors, observers and advisers, many more M.As and Ph.Ds in Public Administration, have not made any difference? They can in the very nature of things be no substitute for honesty, impartiality and efficiency. The confidence of the public can be won by action consistently animated by these qualities. In their absence, no amount of devices and gadgets, however modern and well-spoken of, can help.

What makes the current situation even more deplorable is that Indian Administration inherits a lofty tradition. Administration comparable to that of modern times, flowered and bore fruit in the

of the Maurya Emperor, Chandragupta, under the fostering care of his wise Minister, Kautilya. The noblest of the Moghuls, Akbar with the help of the ablest and best of his chief feudatories and officers, Rajput and Muslim, nurtured it. The British contributed to it the Indian Civil Service, the first and one of the finest of the high instruments of Government in the modern world. "Noblesse oblige" has from the beginning been the proper motto of the Indian Administration. The only role of the king and his officers was, according to the Hindu tradition, the service and safeguarding of the people. No other justification was there for their existence, and always the greatest emphasis was placed on the personal integrity of the ruler. Justice, even-handed and equal, with security for the people and the lessening of the burdens on them so that they could be prosperous, were the aims of Indian Administration under Akbar. The ideal of the Indian Civil Service, too, was truly to serve where it ruled; its desired code of conduct: duty, courage and the highest integrity. At all times, of course, there were some who fell away from these standards. Yet these were the standards.

Honesty At Discount

Today, however, few are the writers of honest reports. When by some strange inadvertence, Government has appointed to inquire and report a principled and knowledgeable person who gives his views without fear or favour, the normal course is to put forward plausible arguments for not doing what everybody, including those adversely affected by the recommendations, know ought really, in the public interest, to be done. Confident in the belief that "The devil himself seeth not the hearts of men," they sometimes turn furiously upon the maker of honest reports, attacking his knowledge, expertise and impartiality in their anxiety to prop up a case against his views. They thus depart from the custom of even a few years ago, when, however little the willingness of those to whom a report was submitted to act upon it, the report and its author were at least not maligned, the work being, on occasion, even acknowledged to be good, and the worker deserving of thanks. Latter times, however, bring newer manners, and now Indian Administration has reached a stage when the maker of a frank report, having only the public interest in view, devoting freely his time and labour to it, prepared to consider his work, like virtue, its own reward, must, in addition, learn to regard it as his sole defence against the discourteous and malicious attacks of some of those touched by his recommendations, and of their partisans political, journalistic and even academic.

That patron-saint of administrators and gentlemen, Confucius, was asked 2,000 years ago. "What is Government?" He answered briefly, "Straightening." Today, too, in the main Government is straightening, thinking straight thoughts, making straight policy, taking straight action, straight being always that which serves the public, and no sectional, group, party or personal, interest. Straightening is not impossible in

India. Ours is, in many ways, in spite of all its problems and differences, not a difficult land to govern. In the hearts of most of us, even when we do wrong ourselves, there is appreciation of the right and the straight. A Government that lived by these would receive overwhelming confidence and support. But the questions remain, "Can the crooked straighten? Must they not straighten themselves first?" (This was in 1960. How stands the account now? Much worse, alas, much worse.)

INDIA AFTER INDIRA

A. G. NOORANI

BY now few nurse the illusion that, inimical though Mrs. Indira Gandhi is to democratic government and to the rule of law, she is a competent ruler. Nearly three years after her return to power her political opportunism and shortsightedness, administrative incompetence and unimaginativeness, if not worse, in foreign policy are woefully apparent even to her admirers. Even the most ardent of *tabalchis* in the media and academia no longer play the *teen tal* as they used to so vigorously not very long ago. Mrs. Gandhi's forte lies in tactics, not in policy-making. The sole objective is survival. None of the opposition leaders, with the possible exception of Mr. H. B. Bahuguna, comes anywhere near her in mastery in the skills of the game. No compliment is intended for any. Tactical skill is not admirable unless it is disciplined by a concern for values. Ignorance of even the rudiments of tactical skill justly exposes a politician to ridicule.

By now, thanks to Mrs. Gandhi, every institution has been denuded of its strength—the judiciary, the legislature, the civil service, the State Governments *et al.* But, consider for a moment the shape of our politics were she to quit politics tomorrow. The Congress(I) will dissolve into factions galore and the opposition parties will squabble away merrily. This is not a plea for Mrs. Gandhi's continuance in power at all. It is a plea that we consider the perilous course of our politics today and begin to devise correctives urgently. The longer Mrs. Gandhi continues in power, the worse will be the state of the country when she actually quits. The longer the opposition parties persist in their present sterile policies, the less capable they will be of doing their duty by the country.

That without Mrs. Gandhi the Congress(I) will dissolve into warring factions hardly needs any proof. Every Chief Minister has to face opposition in his own Party and in the Cabinet itself which is guided by Central Ministers hostile to him and working for his removal. The crisis in the Punjab would not have deepened to its present dangerous state were it not for the unbridled conflict between the Chief Minister, Mr. Darbara Singh, and the former Union Home Minister, Mr. Zail Singh. The sordid charade in Andhra Pradesh is another example whi yo

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illustrates the true character of the Congress(I). It is a collection of retainers not a political party. The composition of the Union Cabinet and the selection of the Chief Ministers testify to nothing but the Prime Minister's deep and abiding commitment to the preservation of wild life in the country.

And what is the true state of the B.J.P. the much-touted "national alternative" but a political front of the R.S.S.? Those who imagined that the Bharatiya Janata Party was an heir of the Janata Party rather than of the Bharatiya Jan Sangh have been dis-illusioned. On the morrow of the Moradabad riots Messrs L. K. Advani and A. B. Vajpayee called on Mrs. Gandhi virtually to make common cause in defence of the police against the Muslims. (I mention Mr. Advani first only in fair recognition of his ardour in the R.S.S. cause) Mrs. Gandhi rebuffed them and went her own way. In the wake of the Meerut riots, too, it is the same story of the B.J.P.'s defence of the P.A.C. As for Mr. B. J. Deoras, the R.S.S., Fuhrar, his latest utterance at New Delhi on November 7 is typical of his stance. According to *The Hindustan Times* (November 8) "he called upon all political parties to defend Hindu Society as the basic tenets of democracy, secularism and socialism would be safe and secure 'only in a Hindu majority India'." Comment is superfluous—except to point out the utter dishonesty of his claim that in his lexicon "Hindu" is synonymous with "India". This is the very man who bent his knees before Mrs. Gandhi during the emergency. The B.J.P. leaders who are members of the R.S.S. or who defend the R.S.S. owe it to the country and to themselves to declare whether they accept the Deoras doctrine.

The Lok Dal has split, predictably, thanks to Mr. Charan Singh's highly personal style of functioning. The socialist rump, which has quit, deservedly commands little respect. The Janata has some men of high integrity like Mr. M. R. Dandawate, Mr. S. Shahabuddin and Mr. Surendra Mohan. But a party which failed to organise itself in its halcyon days is hardly likely to improve its ways in days of adversity. The Congress(S) counts for little outside Maharashtra. That leaves us with the two Communist Parties. It is not a cheering situation.

Add to this the facts that political corruption has increased and holds the polity in its grip; that basic reforms in the electoral and administrative system are sorely needed and are deliberately put off; that there is lacking between the ruling party and the opposition the trust so essential for the success of the parliamentary system. The opposition has behaved not only responsibly but co-operatively on the Assam and the Punjab crises. Rest assured that Mrs. Gandhi will not desist from accusing them of lack of concern for the national interest, once again.

Obviously the ideal situation would be a realignment of opposition parties on a programmatic basis. But the ideal is a very distant one.

The realities of today mock at it. Must we drift from bad to worse ; from an unacceptable and ruinous situation to something worse than even that ?

The citizen is not helpless. He can alter the course of events by showing greater interest in and concern for national well-being. The political parties will bestir themselves only if citizens' bodies mobilise public opinion. To expect our politicians to save the country is to court disaster.

METROPOLITAN MORSELS

By GAURI DESHPANDE

THE large, complex and all-encompassing network of railways and subways that criscrosses Tokyo is a great joy. I mean, to look at, because the dozen or so different lines are painted in all the beautiful pastel colours of icecreams, and some are even striped : they zip past you in a blur of pink or sky blue or primrose yellow or chartreuse or silver or orange, and you want to jump on and go ! Except that quite often they are packed to five times their capacity and on various stations the sliding doors refuse to close and the green-uniformed, white-gloved pushers have to come and jam in the protruding and obstructing bodies like we pack clothes in a bulging suitcase. It is my fate, alas, to travel every day for about half an hour on just such a packed train. I am fortunate in that I get on at the terminus and so find a place to sit ; however, that is no guarantee of safety because a large mass of humanity is going to be jammed against your legs, arms and head anyway, but at least you are not falling down every time the train reduces or gains speed, because the handholds are too full to allow room everyone's hand, and you are standing up on one foot being kept upright by being packed too tight.... And let me tell you, no one says so much as 'hell!', or 'watch it, buddy,' or 'stop pushing, dam it!' or *anything* for that matter. They all stand silently, and either try and read a book or a paper with one eye (one eye is closed because of somebody's elbow) or just go to sleep standing up, like horses. I swear this is true. And do you think this close physical proximity (that's putting it mildly) engenders any fellow feeling ? No way. If you try to smile at someone with comic apology because you happened to scratch his ear, while you wanted to scratch yours which was being tickled by someone else's moustache, do you think you will win an answering smile ? Keep hoping ; you might if he happens to be an Ethiopian student or a Philippine doctor ; not if he is a Japanese 'sarariman (salary-man ; the Japanese all-purpose name for the middle class employee—what we might call a white collar worker)'.

And while I am eulogising the railways in Japan, let me put you straight about one thing. While I was on a holiday at home in Sⁱn

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everyone seemed to think it amazing that I should actually be planning to return to a country that I said so many nasty things about. So let me say at once, that I like Japan fine. It is one of the easiest countries to live in: clean, relatively noise-free, full of all material comforts, cultural events, culinary delights and scenic spots; it has entertainments, interesting TV programmes, great sports events (like Sumo) and a quiet, disciplined and law-abiding populace, which, if not actively friendly, is at least not actively discouraging to foreigners. I like Japan fine. What I don't particularly like is the above mentioned populace; but you can't have one without the other, can you? I mean left to myself, I could really work up a long practically unending list of Indians that I would rather be without in India, and after eliminating whom, I think India would be a marvellous country, so I have no right to complain about the Japanese—they at least have the virtue of being unbearable to me on account of their good points rather than bad—such as their exasperating adherence to the letter of the law, their invariable formality and insistence on correct behavior (according to their lights) in every situation, their humourless acceptance of various ridiculous mores, their unwavering assurance that everything Japanese is the best, their assertion that they are 'different' and that foreigners cannot understand them....and so on. Anyway, do discard the thought that I dislike it here. I complain and I write at times sarcastically and at times humorously, because I think, as good old Obelix would have done, that "these Japanese are crazy!" and also because I am growing into an old curmudgeon.

Next time I will write to you about the picture exhibitions we went to see and where we had to stand in queues to look at each Monet and each roulouse-Lautrec! So long.

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Posted at Central Packet Sorting Office, Bombay on 30-11-1982
Regd. No. BYW 69
Licence No. 14. Licensed to post without pre-payment

Edited and published by A. D. Gorwala at 40C Ridge Road, Bombay 400 006 and
Printed by him at the Mouj Printing Bureau, Khatau Wadi, Bombay 400 004.
Proprietor: A. D. Gorwala.