

Basappa Danappa Jatti

*Twenty-third Annual General Body Meeting
October 10, 1977*

It is my great pleasure, as President of this Institute, to have an opportunity to address the Twenty-third Annual General Body Meeting of the Members of the Institute. Most of the things that I am going to touch upon are already engaging our attention. However, some substantive aspects of our problems need serious thought. These relate to providing, *inter alia*, jobs, houses, education, medical aid to millions of our less fortunate countrymen, women and children, particularly those living in the rural areas. Their basic needs and wants are, after all, no less important than those who are better off in society. The political leadership is today fully conscious of the disparity between the rural and the urban and the need to improve the quality of life of the less fortunate ones. They have been rightly emphasising the need for speedy action, and serious and sincere search is on for finding ways and means of tackling these complex problems.

I need hardly say that in order to solve the gigantic problem of

poverty we need the active and energetic support of our massive governmental machinery. There is no gain saying the fact that our public services have acquitted themselves very well in times of national stress in the past—be it famine or foreign aggression.

The task of any government is complex but in our country certain factors have made it even more so. We are an ancient nation with a rich and glorious heritage. Most of our strengths and weaknesses spring from our legacy of the past. The cultural, ethnic and linguistic diversity, though rich and colourful, has inherent problems which result in frequent contradiction on the unfolding canvas of socio-economic development. The legitimate rights and demands of special groups have to be reconciled with national goals and interests. Diverse communities have to be integrated so that unity is ensured. Public administration has to respond to these situations. It has to surmount the difficulties and obstacles presented by internal conditions and those imposed by global factors. The future can neither redeem the past nor wholly escape from it. What is required, however, is to explore the positive and constructive contribution of the past and the present, in shaping the future. It is both important and imminent that the civil servants develop an enquiring mind perceptive to new ideas and spirit which keeps urging them constantly to find better ways of doing things and side by side developing a certain measure of self-confidence, energy and imagination to meet varied situations in life in their professional career. This is possible only if the administrators and academicians work together to find appropriate solutions.

The Indian Institute of Public Administration has already done its bit in this direction—considering its limited resources. It has done commendable work in imparting training to Government functionaries at various levels. A lot of research work is also being done by its faculty. In the latter field, perhaps, it could 'adopt' a small governmental agency for its investigations, propose new designs and processes. If this proves successful, the experiment could be spread over to other agencies and departments. But, since the results of research always take a little long to come in, in the meantime, let every administrator—no matter where he is positioned on the hierarchical ladder ask himself whether the unit

of which he is a part is delivering the goods? If not, where is the lacuna ? In this way, within the system itself the functionaries could be encouraged and permitted to innovate. The civil servant must redefine his role in the new context. He must undergo a kind of self-renewal and respond to the fast-changing environment. Bureaucracy after all, is not an island unto itself. It has to be involved in the hopes and aspirations of the people. This implies that the administrative contacts with the citizen have to be closer and more meaningful.

In the current complex situation, the role of the administrator is far from simple. Some jobs require a deep socio-economic awareness whereas others need in addition specialised competence. The quality and performance of administration will be evaluated by the nature and extent of effective services rendered to the community and the citizen. In this noble task, the academicians as well as the practising administrators will have to put their shoulders to the wheel. The members of this Institute have a special responsibility which they have shown an awareness of. Both the civil servant and the academician must be inspired by a social purpose in order to be effective in the work of nation-building.