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*Basappa Danappa Jatti*

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*Twenty-first Annual General Body Meeting  
October 26, 1975*

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I am very happy to be here this evening on the occasion of the Annual General Body Meeting of this Institute. At the outset, I would like to thank you all for having elected me as the President of your organisation. May I take this opportunity to share some of my thoughts on public administration with this distinguished gathering of scholars, academicians and practising administrators?

Public Administration is a vast subject. It has assumed special importance in countries like India where the State has increasingly assumed the tasks of bringing about social and economic change. Consequently, the range of the public administrative system has become extensive and nearly all pervasive. It is no more concerned merely with the tasks of system-maintenance but also with those of system-development. This change has brought about many challenges. This evening I would like to talk to you about some of these challenges and some of the problems they have raised for our public administrative system.

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 contradictions on the unfolding canvass of socio-economic development. The legitimate rights and demands of special groups have to be reconciled with national interests. Diverse communities have to be integrated so that unity is ensured. This puts a strain on the political system and on the methods of economic planning, which seek to optimise the use of scarce resources. Inflation is a result of this strain and its impact is compounded by the widespread incidence of poverty in our country. The increase in population seems to devour whatever surpluses the technological advances have made possible and there is further aggravation of the situation caused by the oil crisis. Oil prices are influencing our plans of development and attempts to hold the price line. Public administration, therefore, has to respond to these situations. It has to surmount the difficulties and obstacles presented by internal conditions and those imposed by global factors.

As you know, in trying to meet many of these challenges, the Government has launched various schemes of development. Massive investments in the public and private sectors have taken place during the course of various five year plans. Attempts have been made also to fulfil the demands of a welfare state and to achieve the national ideals. However, all these attempts have to be seen in the context of India's heritage. India on the one hand has a very rich cultural and spiritual heritage and on the other the weight of tradition also continues to be a heavy burden on a country seeking progress through modernisation. It is recognised that the first large scale efforts to industrialise drained the country of the sizeable foreign exchange it possessed upon Independence and made it dependent on foreign credit as a *sine qua non* for further modernisation. The agricultural base necessary to sustain human life was largely lacking and there was a pronounced dependence on the monsoon and age old-agricultural techniques. The future can neither redeem the past nor wholly escape from it. However, we have to explore the positive and constructive contribution of

the past and present in shaping the future. Development and progress have to suit the genius of the people and it is the task of people like you to suggest strategies and plans that can best utilise our resources—both human and physical and take us on the path of development which is particularly Indian.

While this task of development is huge, it is not insurmountable. It requires a joint effort by all. It is not something that can be done by the politicians alone or the civil servants alone. It demands a cooperative effort in which the common citizen also has an important role. A welfare state in a democratic set-up cannot be evolved without the willing cooperation of the people at large. Therefore, it has become extremely important to educate the citizen to appreciate and support the rationale of developmental policies so that he becomes a willing partner in the nation-building activity. A change is called for in securing people's involvement in national affairs. Implementation of plans or new economic programmes requires support from the people for whom they are intended. In the absence of such support and interest, governmental measures will remain largely as mere plans on paper.

There is a general recognition that the entire philosophy of administration is due for a change. Bureaucracy has to be involved in and not insulated from the hopes and aspirations of the people. Administrators should function with a genuine concern for the individual citizen. Only then can the administrative system establish its credibility and furnish proof that it is taking effective action and making sincere efforts to satisfy the needs and demands of the people. This means that the administrative contacts with the citizen have to be closer and more meaningful. Only then the public confidence in governmental effort will develop, and a healthy hope in the future can be nurtured.

Such changes require emphasis on the personnel who man the administrative system. In the current complex situation, the role of an administrator is far from simple. Today, administration has become a specialised profession. It is not true any longer that anyone can fit into any job at any time. Some jobs require specialised competence and others a deep socio-economic awareness, and this has to be cultivated systematically and

conscious administration is a recognised field in the present-day context. It is a profession supported by a body of systematic knowledge and expertise, and certain well-defined standards of professional and ethical excellence are necessary. The quality and performance of administration will be judged by the nature and extent of effective services which it renders to the community and the citizen.

In this noble task, the labour of academicians as well as of practising administrators is required. The members of the Institute have a special responsibility in providing the environment in which such fruitful dialogue between the two groups can take place. Both the civil servant and the academician must be inspired by social purpose in order to be effective in the tasks of nation-building.

This is all the more true today when the country is facing new challenges and new demands. The nation looks to you also to provide a vision of the future which blends with the heritage and genius of our country. Let me make an appeal to you to bring fresh thinking on the problems that we are confronting today. Let us not pre-judge issues or be weighed down by prejudices. The tasks ahead are too important to be allowed to suffer for trivial reasons. It is my fervent hope that the Institute will continue to provide a forum which will generate ideas for improving the public administrative system and the standards of administration.