

11. Item 9 of the Agenda : President's address

Shri Jawaharlal Nehru said :

Friends, ever since the inception of your Institute you have been electing me as its President. Though I knew that I could

do no more than participate in its Annual General Body Meeting, I agreed to accept its presidentship because I thought that that might help you a little. But as has been observed here, it has tended to produce some stagnation. It is better that the President should change and some younger man should take my place because it would infuse some freshness.

I think that your Institute is necessary and is doing good work. I do not know in detail about its work but I believe that it is going in the right direction and the work which it has done is essential and useful.

We are at present faced with many problems. There is the problem of planning but the problem of administration also is important. Ever since we won our freedom we have devoted some thought to the structure of administration. It has changed a little and is changing but on the whole the old structure has continued. The administration has become somewhat confined in the old frame. This has had an adverse effect on our work. Firstly, decisions are considerably delayed and consequently the implementation is also delayed, which gives rise to increase in expenditure and other undesirable consequences.

Secondly, we have a much bigger problem to face—the problem of corruption in public administration and elsewhere about which there are loud complaints. The complaints may be exaggerated; still there is some substance in them. There may be difference of opinion as to the extent of corruption but in any case we have to make all possible attempts to eradicate it. How is this to be done? Every Government tries to meet this problem and our Government also has a special department and Special Police Establishment, etc., to uproot it. Every month I get a long list of the number of cases inquired into, of action taken against big and small officers, but our rules and regulations are generally complicated and make it difficult to take action. They are good in so far as they provide security of service but they are bad because they obstruct action, except when somebody is caught red-handed. Even then, the rules are so complicated that it is difficult to take action. I think that we should consider whether the rules and even the Constitution require some amendment, so that we may take action against an evil which, we know, exists. This is a matter deserving attention; your Institute should consider this.

After achieving our Independence, we took to planning and drew up big projects. In many cases implementation of these projects was delayed, giving rise to increase in cost. To some extent the fault lies with the administration because responsibilities were not properly allocated with the result that at every stage reference to a higher authority was required. We were repeatedly advised to delegate responsibility so that the man on the spot could take quick decisions. Something has been done in this direction but perhaps more is to be done. We have to consider how we can activate our administration so that decisions could be taken quickly at every level.

There are many other problems besides this but the most important issue is to put an end to corruption. Now a difficulty crops up. I do not know of other countries, but in our country it has become a profession, almost an industry, to make wild allegations. Charges are made recklessly and if everyone of them has to be investigated, a huge department may have to be set up. Most of these allegations are either baseless or highly exaggerated. As you have heard, there is a public authority in Sweden appointed by the Legislature with full powers to inquire into charges of corruption. Nothing is beyond his jurisdiction. He is empowered even to inquire into the conduct of High Court Judges. I thought that a similar institution in our country might be introduced but since, as I have said, we have a large scale industry of professional accusers, we may require more than one authority of this type to look into all these allegations. So, we have to find some way and I would like you to consider over this problem of eradication of corruption.

Along with this, we have also to do away with inefficiency. I agree that we should not be too hard but some way must be found to make it possible for the efficient and bright men to advance and the inefficient to be weeded out. Consideration of seniority is desirable to some extent but it is not wholly desirable because it pays regard only to the length of service or age to the detriment of efficiency. Things are different in science. In mathematics or mathematical physics it is commonly held that the brain functions with the highest efficiency between the ages of 18 and 25. The mind is creative within this age limit. It functions even after 25 but it is not regarded as a creative mind. In some other branches of science the creative age may be a little more but it

is commonly supposed that no big scientist does any creative work after reaching the age of 40. He still works but he does not make any new discoveries. Now, if this principle were to be applied in administration, it should be applied to the Prime Minister before all others. There are difficulties in picking up brilliant men for the manifold new tasks which are before us. Old minds may be good but they are still old and they cannot bring a new outlook to these new tasks. We have many senior men and they are very good. I do not mean to cast aspersions on them but difficulties do crop up if we go by seniority alone.

We have a project which is working very well, that is, our Atomic Energy Department. It has a very large staff, about 3 to 4 thousand, headed by very responsible men as Directors but you can hardly find a Director who is more than 30 or 35 years of age. They are all young men, though they are doing very responsible job. Some of them are below 30; some of them are between 30 to 35. There are few who have reached 40 and this is the reason why we have made and are making good progress in developing atomic energy. Our young scientists attend conferences all over the world and are held in esteem and I think that similar progress could be made in every sphere if we pay regard to efficiency and not merely to age. We should respect age but it does not mean that it should always occupy a premier position—the chair. So, we should consider this matter and amend our rules so that they do not force us to go by age only.

I attended a seminar on work study this morning. This is a subject in which your Institute is interested. Other countries have benefited greatly by work study. Work study is concerned with doing the work better with more speed, efficiency and economy. I was impressed to see how this work study has led to new techniques and very useful results. My attention was first drawn to this in England by Lord Mountbatten many years ago who showed me how considerable economies were effected by making only a little change here and there. He was in charge of the Navy at that time. He showed me how a small improvement resulted in saving of hundred thousand pounds and also some economy in the staff. Small improvements and administrative adjustments as a result of work study resulted in a total saving of 4 lakh pounds. Therefore, the Institute should take

a special interest in work study and it is good that we have made a beginning. We have already effected some economy in our foreign missions and reduced our staff as a result of work study. Some economies have also been made in our ministries here, though not to the fullest extent. Work study is a modern method. It started from the factories and has spread to administration. It was Ford who began work study and other big industries in U.S.A. and in England followed him. Later on it was applied to administration. In the beginning it was confined to clerks. Gradually it was realised that it should extend to higher officers and men of the top rank and not to clerks, because in those days generally the men at the top sat in their chairs and only found fault with others. So, we have to begin the work study at the top and from there proceed downwards. Your Institute should take up work study and train people into it.

We have to learn new techniques because while we make very good and well conceived plans we fumble in execution. Partly due to administrative lapses and partly to defects in planning, we falter in execution. This is not the fault of a particular individual. It is our method of work which gives rise to delay. If we can remove these defects we can effect considerable saving in time and material. I think that you or our Planning Commission pointed out that as much as 1/4th or 1/5th of our outlay is spent on erection of buildings alone. Evidently we can effect great economy if we could cut down the construction cost. This would set free large funds for our Plans and other projects. Some engineers have made recommendations but I do not think they have been fully implemented. Despite the fact that everyone knows that our construction methods are out of date and very expensive, we have not been able to implement the suggestions for improvement. This shows the big gap in our thinking and execution. I believe about 100 crores are set apart for buildings in our defence expenditure, and similar amounts in other plans too. Everybody says that even a little economy in construction could easily result in a saving of 15 to 20 per cent and even a 15 per cent saving means a saving of a hundred crores. This would set free large funds for other work. Therefore, it is a matter for urgent consideration why there is such a big gap in our thoughts and actions. Why it takes so long and makes it so difficult to put our ideas into effect?

We are faced with very knotty problems which are getting knottier every day—problems of shortage of funds and resources on the one hand and of pushing our projects with speed on the other. Therefore, we have to readjust our whole administrative apparatus, so that persons who could work fast may be able to do so and things may move faster. We cannot move fast if we continue with old men, purely out of respect for age.

So, you have to ponder over all these problems and perhaps you may have discussed them in your seminars. However, this matter of administration has become very important for us, specially for our plans. It is an essential function of your Institute to interest yourself in this matter and to offer advice, to make suggestions and to work for their acceptance. So, I have placed before you a few ideas which occurred to me and I hope that you will think over them.

