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Seventh Annual General Body Meeting

(August 26, 1961)

My part in the work of this Institute is, as you know, to come here annually and attend this function. I am glad to do so because it gives me some little insight into the activities of this Institute and also to some extent the way present-day problems of administration, which are growing in number and complexity, are being tackled here.

I should like to say, however, that what little I know of the activities of this Institute, by coming here annually and by looking at your publications and journals from time to time, I have been impressed by them, and I do think that this Institute is doing good work. It may be that there is a legitimate criticism that its activities are, well, limited to some top-ranking people, more or less. That is almost inevitable to begin with. It must, in the nature of things, concentrate on improving quality all over, of course; but, first of all, quality has to be improved in those people who can improve quality in others, and so that is inevitable.

And yet, I am wondering how for it will be feasible for this Institute and the Executive Council to consider certain extensions of its activity in the lowest grades of the administration. When I say lowest grades, I have in mind, at the present moment, the *panchayats*, the *panchayat samitis*, which are growing tremendously in importance, and which, I have no doubt, will play a vital part in the administrative apparatus of our country by virtue of their numbers alone, if nothing else. I do not quite know how this Institute can tackle that problem. Perhaps, it might specially study the problem as to

how to tackle it. That is the first step. Perhaps, it could open a small section specially for that purpose and give short courses, say of a month or two weeks even, for people specially connected with *panchayat samitis*, to come and take that course. I would personally like, if it is at all possible, for the very *panchas* themselves, some of them, can't be many, of course, to come here from time to time: not very many. Of course, there are hundreds and thousands—there may be millions in India: I do not know their number, a vast number. But nevertheless, they could choose a number every year for short courses. Of course, courses would have to be made for them; it is no good going to them with your rather high-class stuff. But sometimes the courses for them could be a good thing, I imagine. Anyhow, I suggest to the Executive Council to consider this matter as to how to approach this subject. You could get in touch, perhaps, with the State Governments on it, with the Ministry here of Community Development and Cooperation. But that, I think, is important because I am very much interested in this development of *panchayats* and *panchayat samitis*, and you have, at any rate, one member in your Executive Council, that is, the Chairman, who is an expert on it and has deep knowledge, and you could profit by that.

Apart from that, you have to deal with a situation which is growing, developing and changing. Even in the purely administrative field of Government, it is enlarging and growing, but more so in the field of public or private enterprise, chiefly public. And there can be no doubt that a great deal depends on the success of the administration of that enterprise. We argue about public and private enterprise. The real fact of the matter is that its success comes from the efficient administrator, whether in public or private enterprise; "public" or "private" does not make much difference except in the consequences and the outlook. The actual thing depends on the administration of that enterprise. We have public enterprises in India which have been outstanding successes, and I have no doubt that they have been so not accidentally but because of the virtues and the ability of the men on the administrative staff there. We have others which have not shown such bright results. Again, I think, you should seek the remedy in the administrative staff, apart from other reasons which may exist. So, it is most important that our administrative apparatus should improve, not improve in the normal old sense of a Government administrator who had to deal with certain limited set of problems, but in the modern sense of dealing with modern industry, with modern technology and the like, which again probably means that the old type administrator should be, not always but often, replaced

by the expert administrator, the technologist, who knows that particular job well. All these new problems arise from our growth—industrial growth and general growth in various sectors of our economy. Many people may criticise it and many of their criticisms may be justified, or are justified, I think. But the fact remains that India is going through a period of fairly rapid growth, and rapid growth requires frequent adjustment of your administrative apparatus to fit in with that growth. It is just like a suit of clothes you wear. If you grow, you want slightly larger clothes, a slightly different type of clothes, or else either your growth will be impeded or the clothes will burst with your growth. One of the two things must happen. One has to have that type of mind which can adjust itself, which can realise the needs of the day and adjust itself. And not only the needs of the day, but the needs of tomorrow and the day after, some glimpse and outlook into the future; because the future is obviously one of tremendous potentiality in India and the world. Vast new forces have been released and we have not only to catch up but to do something more to make our own contribution to this new world in the way of ideas and practice.

Then, we have just had the Third Five Year Plan placed before Parliament and the public. Broadly speaking, I think it is true to say that it has been welcomed and appreciated by the public at large. Very few people in India disapprove of the whole subject of planning; they are very, very few. The main criticisms are in regard to some details here and there. But the real thing is not so much the criticism of the planning part. I think that time is past. We in the Planning Commission and other concerned have grown more experienced and more expert in planning. But the real question is not planning, but implementing the Plan. I fear we are not quite so expert at implementation as at planning, although there, too, we are making improvements, no doubt. Now in this business of implementation, a very important factor is the administrative aspect; in this you can help, and I have no doubt you are helping, though indirectly. Of course, the other aspect in implementation, in the vast plans that we have and which concern millions of people, is not a set of officials who implement them; you have to bring in a certain understanding of the public, a certain cooperation of the public. I think every administrator should realise this public aspect of any major undertaking. He must, whatever he may be working and whatever the project may be, whether he is the old type administrator or the new type of technical man, he has to create an atmosphere of understanding and appreciation in the public and win their cooperation. It is not difficult if you

try to do it, if your mind is bent that way. I think the administrator must realise that he has to explain things, explain things to everybody, to the person, even to the untrained labourer who is working at the job, and certainly to the trained staff, too, and everybody else. This is not fully realised. High class engineers, high class administrators in superior grades, do not always realise that the smallest man, even the peon in his office, should understand their work and should be made to feel that they are also doing their bit in that large undertaking. If you do that an atmosphere is created. I have no doubt that if this is done it helps and it helps in a curious way. Practically, it helps in a certain psychological way. The man on the top is surrounded by a psychological atmosphere which is helpful when people in all grades understand what he is doing. Therefore, I would attach importance to this approach all the time. I would repeat that this approach, of course, comes in the moment you deal with large masses of people and not live just in an office apart; of course, if you are dealing with any major project, whether it is a steel plant or some river valley scheme, you are dealing with large masses of people, trained or untrained. There must be this public approach of every senior officer to his juniors and right down to the trained and untrained workers in that project.

Now this leads me to another thought. We have people who are doing practical administrative work in the Government of India and the State Governments, wherever it may be. And there are our universities and elsewhere, and this Institute, which discusses, considers, speaks about and writes about the theory of good administration. To some extent, not entirely, of course, they live in different spheres: the university professor, certainly, from the practical man. Take even a more obvious example. We have got very fine national laboratories. There is the National Physical Laboratory here in Delhi, and there is the University of Delhi, which teaches people the Sciences, etc. Now to my amazement, the two are quite independent. They have no contacts. I do not understand this. I think that there should be frequent interchange. The head of the National Physical Laboratory (NPL) should be, let us say, an honorary professor. He cannot give much time; I do not want him to give much time. But I would like him to come twice a month, at least, just to speak to the students there. He is a man of note, a man of great eminence, the man who is the head of the NPL, and his going to the students gives them a breath of fresh air, new ideas, and they profit by it and the university profits. In the same way, I should say that all these big laboratories and other places should be associated with the local

universities. This is an obvious example. It may be somewhat more difficult to do it in other cases. In the same way, administrators who do practical work should have a glimpse of theory, which they can through your Institute or otherwise. As far as possible, one should bring the practical aspect, practice together with theory, and that will lead to the advantage of both.

You see, it is really the same thought running in my mind, whether it is the *panch* in his *panchayat* or the local *panchayat* in the village, or the top-ranking people in the laboratories and universities and administrations. It is always bringing practice and theory nearer to each other, and the more this is done, the better fitted the man is, because in all administration you have to deal with human beings. That is, an engineer may have to deal with iron and steel and cement and bricks and all that. But he has also to deal with human beings. Administrators have to do much more with human beings. To understand human beings, to come in contact with practical work, is important and to make them understand what you are doing is even more important. I should like this idea to run throughout your activities. This reduces the walls and the barriers which separate the various grades and classes of work and produces an integrated organism, a project of people working for a certain object.

Finally, our whole approach should be, what I would call, task-oriented: that is, you have got a job to do, a task to accomplish. If it is task-oriented, I think work will be swifter and more integrated for the purpose of fulfilling that task.