

## *The Dynamic Factor*

MANY THOUGHTFUL PERSONS have observed that organization tends after a while to confuse itself with the purposes it was created to further, that it emphasizes means rather than ends, and that these tendencies may in time become so strong as ultimately to defeat the prime purpose of the enterprise. Thus the forms of religion and the prerogatives of a hierarchy tend to get more and more emphasis and the content of faith less and less. Thus a political party set up in passionate devotion to some cause tends to get steadily more concerned about winning elections and gradually less concerned about the cause that gave it birth.

So, too, older government bureaus tend to run down, to become obsolete in method and in product and unimaginative in spirit. They may become more and more efficient in their routines, but in terms of policy they begin to petrify. In contrast, new bureaus will have a lot of "policy drive" but, on the whole, less efficient administration. One of the most important functions and responsibilities of a top executive is to help new bureaus develop administrative efficiency and to help old bureaus rejuvenate themselves.

Even though organization tends ultimately to defeat its own purposes, great ends can be achieved only through organization. Life today entails more and more complexity, and, by that token, more and more organization. How may we organize for progress? What are the dynamic factors through which we may avoid organizational petrification?

### *Something Less than Revolution*

Jefferson had questions like these in mind in his anticipation of periodic revolutions in our society. Obviously we do have periodic minor revolutions. Each election has a little of that nature, and occasional elections have something more than a trace of revolutionary content. The change in department heads resulting from a change

in the Presidency will effect at least a minor administrative revolution. We have, in addition, various non-periodic changes in places of responsibility in the government as a whole or within single departments; they are the means by which administrators make adjustments to changing situations and necessities. Some executives almost seem to administer by a process of irregular explosions. Yet for that matter, however foreminded and imaginative a leader may be, there will be times when he or the public will develop sudden realizations of new things needing to be done and he will make adjustments accordingly.

These changes provide a sort of correction-line on the map of government. Yet the frequency of change in department and bureau heads thus resulting does not yield a clear profit. Cabinet members new to government or even new to the Cabinet level of government sometimes do greater damage to the administrative process than they offset by new contributions in the field of policy. To deprive them of the power to do great harm to administration and yet to open the way for them to make necessary policy injections is a continuing problem for which as yet no one has found a sound solution. Administration should therefore endeavor to provide itself with dynamism within its own organization. By so doing it could avoid altogether the threat of drastic revolution, could minimize the fluctuations of the political pendulum, and could make the march of government more continually progressive.

Rarely does a new Cabinet member arrive at his post by being washed there by a tide of support for a ready-made program. Even if he should so arrive, he would be ill-equipped to put it quickly into effect. Characteristically a new secretary simply exerts by the slant of his judgment a mild and moderate influence on a course or program already largely set. A good many of his "slants" are reflections of his own personality rather than the result of any overt social trend or a response to clear social need. But any secretary in the course of his comings and goings becomes aware of governmental movements, sentiments, and situations. These exposures are something different from and in some respects superior to the sum total of the exposures of the rest of his department. Out of these impacts come certain reactions which he passes on to his department as policy stimuli.

They may be defensive and reactionary or aggressive and progressive. The more imaginative and reflective the secretary, the more frequent and constructive will be the stimuli.

No Cabinet member can make such stimuli effective unaided by persons who share his peculiar responsibility for suggesting such adjustments. There will be large areas over which his mind does not range fruitfully, and this in turn will prevent his imagination even in its active areas from being adequately considerate of the entire department. No secretary, no matter how imaginative, can, by himself, provide adequate stimulation for his whole department.

Although an incoming secretary may bring in a number of yeasty people, it is inevitable that the new regime will steadily become involved more deeply in its own program. When this happens, it will frequently succumb to the temptation to release from its rolls its more irritatingly stimulating personnel and will endeavor to settle down to the entrenchment of its strength on the ground first occupied. Few people and few organizations have the capacity to keep moving in proportion to the times. It is therefore incumbent upon every top administrator to try to find ways of generating a dynamic spirit and outlook within his organization.

#### *Dynamics in Policy and Program*

One of the interesting possibilities developed in the Department of Agriculture is that of *organizing* for progress by assigning to one unit, as its sole responsibility, the duty of looking ahead. Some six years ago the regulatory and semi-regulatory activities of the old Bureau of Agricultural Economics were transferred elsewhere within the department, and the bureau's fact-finding, statistical, and analytical functions were reinforced with the functions and personnel of several planning units in order to make of it a program-planning agency for the whole department. Free of direct administrative responsibility, its whole job became the business of examining programs and needs and proposing shifts, modifications, and new developments.

Planning should be an active process at all levels—national, regional, state, and local. There should be various types of planning—program, administrative, budgetary. Program planning will be most

immediately serviceable to the secretary in Washington, but it has distinct contributions to make at each level. Beginning in the county by bringing representative interested citizens together with officials representing both educational and action programs in agriculture, planning makes a great contribution to popular understanding of the whole effort and supplies great stimulation for improved integration and co-ordination. People in the counties come by this process first to see the whole activity in its broadest local terms, and second to know and appreciate the considerations that must be weighed in Washington because of the impact of issues arising in all the other counties of all the other states. This process of translating county outlooks and county needs into a feasible and acceptable national program is furthered by state and regional handling. Educating the citizen ultimately affected by any program is equal in importance to the process of educating the officialdom in Washington.

It is implicit in such an arrangement that there should be some friction which would provide a continual problem for the department. Administrators will feel that the planners are theoretical, impractical, and unfamiliar with their problems. Even if these things are true—and they are only relatively true—the contribution of organized planners has tremendous value as a supplement to the unorganized complaints and appeals that come from individuals throughout the country. And although planning units are unpopular with politicians, planning makes for a politically more vital department. To create thus a bureau whose function is wholly dynamic is to give an important hostage to progress. It is worth what it costs; for a program adjusted to the demands of administrators, politicians, and planners will be a superior program.

The building of an organized bridge between planners and doers is essential. The bridge must have different forms to meet different organizational situations. It needs to have several parts. To have small operational planning units in the bureaus is a helpful part of the bridge. To have staff men around bureau heads and around the department head—staff men of general rather than specific responsibility, or staff men of no administrative responsibility at all except to move from item to item and to produce reports, suggestions, ideas—this is a helpful part of the bridge.

One common shortcoming lies in the fact that too often the flow of work runs too exclusively along the lines of the administrative hierarchy and fails to reflect the co-ordinated thinking of the whole staff at the various levels. Some years ago, for example, when we on the departmental level called on the old Bureau of Agricultural Economics for comment on some proposal, we usually got back a memorandum written in one section of the bureau, transmitted to the head of a division, then to the chief of the bureau, who signed it and sent it to us with a covering note of transmittal. Instead of the wisdom of the bureau we got the opinion of one specialist, which usually made a wholly inadequate contribution to departmental or governmental thinking. Only very important or very hot matters would be considered more broadly, and then the consideration would tend to be defensive rather than constructive. Invariably the use of more staff people gives greater breadth to the work product.

*Dynamics in Administration*

Program planning has an influence on the development of administration as well as on policy, but it cannot deal with the whole problem of administrative improvement. Bureaus need to emphasize management and to be equipped with staff charged with the duty of improving administration. But in this as in every other field, bureau responsibility is not enough, and bureau considerations and outlook are not enough. Departmental and governmental responsibilities and outlooks must be brought to bear.

No secretary can himself "administer" a large department in the sense he is generally felt to do so. He embodies the whole authority within a department and can be responsible only by dividing and assigning his authority. Nor can he do this simply through bureaus. His performance then would have exactly as many variations as he had bureaus. Yet his responsibility is more than that of the assembled bureaus. His accountability must be in generally common terms. He must be able to say to the public, to the Congress, and to the President what he does in his department, not what he does in each of twenty great bureaus.

Specifically, in administration a secretary who will function well

on his proper level will rely heavily on departmental executives charged with department-wide responsibilities. Having a departmental status, they will naturally uphold the secretary in his departmental function. They will manage general relationships on the governmental level—with the Bureau of the Budget, the General Accounting Office, the Civil Service Commission, the governmental information office, other executive departments, Congressional committees, and the like. It is in these relationships that they will have their influence on the bureaus. And they will be checked, in turn, by the powers and needs of the bureaus themselves.

In these departmental offices will lodge special responsibility for improvement in administrative management throughout the department. Since no one of them has total administrative responsibility, however, in many circumstances it will be helpful to associate these offices under a career assistant secretary. Either with or without that unification it is desirable, however, to have an additional central official to co-ordinate and give leadership to the administrative management functions of these offices.

In the Department of Agriculture these central offices have been held by departmental directors—for example, the Director of Budget and Finance, the Director of Personnel, the Director of Information, and the Director of Extension. The Solicitor of the Department has had in certain respects a similar function. The departmental work in administrative management was in addition to such work of the kind as was carried on for single bureau application within some of the bureaus. Departmental administrative management work was carried on in the Office of Budget and Finance, the Office of Personnel, and the Administrative Council. The last gave general supervision to and co-ordinated projects within the two offices or jointly conducted by the two. A rather random selection of a few of the simpler project titles will hint at the range of this work:

1. Summary of recommendations concerning economies and efficiency—to prepare for convenient reference a summary of recommendations for economies and improvements in administrative organization, management, and procedures contained in bureau chiefs' replies to the secretary's letter of August 16, 1939, and to include with these recommenda-

tions the suggestions of the Division of Fiscal Management as to how they might be further studied.

2. Survey of departmental committees—to make a survey of departmental and interdepartmental committees on which the department personnel holds membership; to determine which of these committees are obsolete, inactive, terminated, or which have completed the task assigned to them, no further reason for their existence remaining; to determine the approximate work load of the committees (hours per month spent in meetings); and to determine the extent of overloading the department personnel with committee work.

3. Telegraph study—to discover ways and means for securing maximum economy in telegraph and telephone operations in the department.

4. Ordering, stocking, and distribution of forms—to recommend improved methods of administering or managing the ordering, stocking, and distribution of printed and duplicated forms used in the department.

5. Restriction on airplane travel—to develop means by which the Department of Agriculture can restrict unnecessary and costly airplane travel within the general policy laid down by the secretary's office.

6. Rental of equipment—to obtain legislation that will permit bureaus to rent equipment from other bureaus and thus assure the bureau which owns the equipment that the bureau will be made "whole." It is hoped that the availability of the rental plan will reduce, even eliminate, the reluctance that bureaus now have to lend equipment to other bureaus.

7. Field procurement authority—to develop a plan which the Division of Purchase, Sales and Traffic can put into operation for permitting bureau field offices to do more of their own procurement work subject to central office control.

8. Bonding of certifying officers—to analyze the effect of HR-5785 on the department and to prepare a reply to the Bureau of the Budget and to the Senate.

9. Administrative changes required by the moving of Farm Security Administration and Rural Electrification Administration—to take leadership in the Office of the Budget and Finance for making such arrangements and proposing such administrative procedures as may be necessary for the co-ordination of accounting, budgetary, procurement, and other matters relating to Budget and Finance, Treasury, General Accounting Office, and Bureau of the Budget, arising out of the moving of Farm Security Administration to Cincinnati and Rural Electrification Administration to St. Louis.

10. Survey of library facilities in the department.
11. Federal Crop Insurance Corporation: organization survey of Washington office.
12. Survey of methods of keeping leave records in bureaus.
13. Decentralization of Retirement Unit of Office of Personnel.
14. Delegation of field employment authority—personnel procedure study.
15. Alleged delays in personnel procedures as cause of delay in making up payrolls.
16. Personnel records in Bureau of Agricultural Economics.
17. Wage rates in the Unclassified Service—analysis by occupation, geographical location, and bureau of 200,000 positions not subject to the Classification Act (indicated need for more attention at the department level to problem of salary and wage administration).
18. Attendance at meetings of scientific groups—attempt to work out a new policy for the department.
19. Average salary, age, and length of service of all USDA employees.
20. Five-day week in Cartographic Division of Soil Conservation Service at Beltsville, Maryland.
21. Analysis of demands on time of Chief of Bureau of Agricultural Chemistry and Engineering.
22. Claims procedure, cost of handling small claims in solicitor's office and bureaus.
23. Public patents—policy concerning their use.
24. Reorganization—office of the secretary.
25. Study of Investigation Units.
26. Expediting clearance of communications in secretary's office.
27. Consolidation of duplicating work.
28. Local administration study (county study).
29. Study of county employees who meet the public.
30. Study of combining identification cards.
31. Study concerning consolidation of field warehouses.
32. Study of information demands on AAA county committees.
33. Delays in clearing letters of authorization for forest roads.
34. Organization in Virgin Islands.
35. Delegation to sign contracts and approve bonds.
36. Statistical reporting by county agricultural agents.
37. BAE-FCIC dispute concerning planning activity.
38. Beltsville Center—management problems.
39. Secretarial office memoranda.



40. Preparation of educational program material for internal use.
41. Fostering USDA Clubs.
42. Analysis of different forms and varying extents of decentralization.
43. Recruitment and training of "generalized specialists."

*Use of Committees and Other Devices*

Another aid to the development of departmental policy and departmental administration is the proper use of committees. The creation of such committees may be overdone, but they can be distinctly helpful. Usually the number in existence in the Department of Agriculture has ranged between two hundred and three hundred.

Another aid may be found in the establishment of more points at which specialized undertakings come into focus as departmental activities. By giving regional staffs to the solicitor, for example, in place of having single lawyers working in scattered locations on single activities of single bureaus, the secretary secured a greater measure of departmental consistency in the handling of a wide variety of legal problems with which the department had to deal. Again, moving regional offices of various action agencies to the same city and, if possible, to the same building will make for an increase in understanding and a better integration of activities.

*Systematic Search for Superior Personnel*

Another field requiring special attention in terms of progressive improvement is that of recruitment of new personnel at various levels and the related business of arranging for their appropriate training.

Most recruitment in most organizations is on the simple basis of trying to get persons qualified to do the work represented by the vacancies to be filled. The Department of Agriculture has thus employed each year eight hundred or more persons in the lowest professional grade—and usually has selected them for their ability to do work in that grade. Yet from such recruits administrators must later on select division head and bureau chief personnel. Certainly much can be done to ensure that a larger proportion of the recruits have some of the flair for generalization that is of the essence of higher-level performance.

It is also a matter of common experience that a good deal of re-

cruiting must be done at a higher level than the lowest professional and administrative grades—those in which the beginning salary is \$2,000. Indeed, it seems imperative to bring in some bureau chiefs from outside government, especially when there is a marked shift in policy and much new activity. In the Department of Agriculture, for example, if one looks at a recent chart of organization and leaves out of consideration the three Presidential appointees and their immediate aides, one will observe that there are twenty-eight heads of bureaus and offices. Of these, sixteen were in the government ten years ago and twelve were not. Of the twelve, two had been in government in earlier years and were brought back, and six others had been engaged in analogous careers. Of the four who lack this logical background, three had nevertheless had broad and diverse experience; they rank among the exceptionally able chiefs of the government. As a whole, the group sustains a high average. But wise selection from governmental, semi-governmental, and non-governmental sources is necessary to get such an average. Persons having the needed combinations of qualities are so rare as to require the most painstaking search. Mathematically, government itself provides the best reservoir of talent, and that pool can be made even better by changes in the recruitment and training of personnel. But some of the yeast and some of the rare combinations will continue to be found in other places not readily to be identified.

Reliance on accident in locating such individuals can be further reduced by developing in government organized information about superior and unusual persons of the kind desired and by supplementing an improved recruitment of persons just out of college with a similar systematic recruitment of persons at about the age of thirty. In some respects this last could be made the most helpful of all means of getting personnel capable of developing later on into top officials. Non-governmental experience in earlier years, particularly when it has been secured in a number of different fields, coupled with a stout devotion to the general welfare and a flair for generalization, provides a better bet than the same qualities in a man experienced only in government. He is a much better bet also than the man who has stayed in business until his outlook and attitudes have been crystallized by that environment.

The conditioning of younger personnel has never been given the attention it deserves. Much depends upon individual supervisors, but from higher levels there should come much more stimulation and concern for especially promising people. Those with the widest range of interest and capacity should be moved from bureau to bureau and from bureau to departmental assignments, and should be given experience of various kinds, including field work at the ultimate point of contact with the affected public, before being moved into the more rarefied atmosphere of top-level administration.

*Dynamics through State Experimentation*

There remains for consideration the possibility of securing dynamism in national administration through experimenting with variations in Federal programs among the states of the Union. Our federal system has been praised for making possible the conduct of various kinds of governmental experiments in "the insulated chambers of the States" and, indeed, there is value in having forty-eight states able to handle governmental problems in different ways. Actually, however, there seems to be less and less differentiation in their methods and procedures and there is much desirable experimenting that will never be done if we rely upon the states to do it. In some ways it is more possible and in some respects it is more likely that the national government will do the experimenting.

Doing things nationally does not require absolute uniformity, universal applicability, or certainty of results. Opposition criticism of the present Administration for its experiments surely leaves no room for the assumption that growth of Federal activity always makes for rigidity and petrification and that it rules out experimentation. Some kinds of experimentation carried on in recent years have attracted practically no attention. The Agricultural Adjustment Administration, for example, while carrying on national programs, has found it possible to have each year a number of experimental counties where its programs have been markedly different. Numerous constructive changes in its general or national programs have grown out of these county experiments.

In their volume *American Schools in Transition*, Mort and Cornell have made a study of change and development in education in

Pennsylvania. Some readers discern in such changes what they regard as a distinct state contribution to educational experimentation. For reasons not directly relevant to the present discussion, I am much opposed to placing education under national control. But I see nothing in Mort and Cornell's report that is not duplicated in other fields where state administration is not involved. There is nothing in such experimentation as they report that could not have been tried through *any* form of decentralized national administration.

It is perforce true that all experimentation has been conducted *within* the states. And much experimentation has been conducted *by* the states. As Paul M. Herzog has pointed out in the *Annals* of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, much American social legislation has had its beginning in the states, with the national government finding models in them for its own expanding program. But as he also points out, the history of legislation pertaining to labor relations has run in the opposite direction, with the national government moving first and the states following. It is not my contention that the states do not and should not experiment. My only argument is that it is not necessary to rely on them as an exclusive or even a preponderant source of experimentation. All administration that is divided into parts contemplates deviations from uniformity. All legislation represents segmental attacks on public problems, and all legislation, whether state or national, is to a degree experimental.

The point is simply that we can and must organize the function of experimentation; we can and must administer flexibility; we can and must open the door to dynamics. There is more of this being done under national leadership than has been realized. Yet national experimentation has not precluded and will not prevent the states and municipalities from making any experiment they may wish to try.

#### *Dynamics through Politics*

Finally, in a democracy there is the dynamic of politics. The logic of events is superior to the logic of the mind. Events, working through politics, will force changes on planners and administrators. The dynamic factor of the most basic importance is outside of government in a people free to vote, free to discuss, free to organize politically to influence their government. Democratic government cannot and

should not grant exclusive franchises for consultation and agitation to any group. But it will inevitably be affected by popular movements, whether old or new. Free competition between political groups furnishes the most important kind of dynamism for both government and administration.