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Third Annual General Body Meeting

(April 6, 1957)

The annual meetings on which I come to you are more or less of business character and they provide me with an opportunity of making some general remarks. A person who is not dealing in an expert way with a specific subject will evidently go in for generalisations on the various points. And as I am not taking any particular subject and I am no expert anyhow; so I say many things about many subjects. Looking at this Institute from a distance, sometimes looking at its publications on coming here every year, it seems to me that the Institute has been making good progress. One of our members said something about the lack of research. As a matter of fact, this Institute started functioning really only since a full-time Director appeared on the scene.

We have been told that similar Institutes in other countries have begun to appreciate its work. There can be no doubt about the importance of the work which faces you today. Taking advantage of the presence of so many distinguished persons who have come here today, I am glad that from a small annual business session this gathering will spread out into a conference on a specific subject-matter, *viz.*, recruitment and training for public services. We had a seminar on this subject some months ago. Now, this is something which I feel as really solid and worthwhile. I am quite sure that it will bear results. It may be that the results may not be very obvious, but it would anyhow be an earnest discussion of subjects of high importance. I often wonder how we have to approach these subjects. What I mean is that there are several approaches to them—the technicians's approach, the

professor's approach, the administrator's approach, and, may be, the politician's approach and the man-in-the street's approach. I believe that most of you who have gathered here at this meeting are, probably, people of either of two types: the administrator's type with actual experience behind or the professor's type. Both types are very important, both having a fund of knowledge at their disposal. It may be said, however, that neither of these two types represents the man-in-the-street's approach. I do not think the man-in-the-street approach is likely to be well-informed, or even very helpful. Whatever it may be, it is an important approach; obviously because it is the man-in-the-street in or in the field who counts; because the administration is after all meant to serve him ultimately. You must always remember that aspect; if you do not, you will have no solid relationship or ground. It is worthwhile repeating this, because the administration has not only to be good but it has also to be felt to be good by the people affected. That should be always so and it is all the more necessary in a fully democratic set-up.

I said a "fully democratic set-up", because a full democratic set-up is being fastly developed not only in this country but in many others too. Since the last generation or so democracy has spread out. This spreading out of democracy brings, and ought to bring, all kinds of changes in the relationship between the administrative apparatus and the people. Take the word which all the more used to be, and still is, usually looked down upon: that is "bureaucracy" or the "bureaucrat". During the British period it was considered to be a bad word by us, and something of that still hangs about it even now. It stood for government officials who considered themselves superior to the common man, the common human beings. There was something in that criticism, and I think, it is still somewhat true. Obviously, when there is a democratic set-up now, there must be a full realisation of the implications of democracy—how it affects public administration, and how public administration affects it. After all, it should be one of the principal functions of public administration in its broader context to direct democracy into right channels. In fact, public administration, though necessarily requiring more and more things like training and trained service and experience, has become more and more allied to democracy, the democratic element, so that there appears to be no hard and fast demarcation line, in administration, between the trained public servant and the representative of the democracy. If there is no such reliance, or no such mixing together, there may be friction, and there will be hardships on both sides.

Now, what is self-government? We have a Parliament which is sovereign, which is elected every five years, normally speaking. It is obvious that the vast majority of the measures considered and passed by Parliament are in a way being considered by the 360 million odd people in the country. If I may say so, the peoples' representatives tend to function on the basis of a feeling of the general pulse of the people. The latter have got the power to kick out a Government, or a Member, after a certain period of time, as it is important to keep in check the Government or Parliament. Again, there also exists a general feeling or awareness in the people that things are being done according to their wishes or in consultation with them; in fact, they have begun to feel that they are functioning, that they are governing themselves. It is only partly true, but it is true enough in the sense that there is a check on the Government, and also on Parliament, that it would be kicked out if it went too far in any direction. Therefore, it behaves and tries to keep in line with public opinion. By and large, a Parliament or a Government does what is reasonable without really making a reference to the people. So long as it gives the impression that democracy has been preserved and that people are being consulted, that their wishes are being respected, it is all well. But whether they are actually consulted or not is another matter. If they get the impression that things are being imposed upon them, then friction arises.

Apart from doing his work, the administrator, whether he is low down or high up in the scale, must give the impression, even if that impression is not cent per cent correct, that he is working through public will and carrying out the public will. Of course, it cannot be done always, you cannot carry out everybody's will; but the broad impression that he is functioning in accordance with the public will, always thinking of public grievances, trying to remedy them, consulting the people and so on, must be given. I know it is big thing to consult everybody. Such an impression can be created or not created—it all depends upon the manner of functioning of the administration. It is quite essential in a democracy to create this impression both in the interest of the public and the administrator. Otherwise, democracy rebels; may be, not immediately but after a period of time; may be a month later or a year later, it rebels and it creates trouble. This applies generally to all types of administrative activities but it applies more so to work of a social character, which affects the people at large. Therefore, it becomes all the more important that the administrator has his hands on the pulse of the people all the time, and the people feel that this man is one of them, that he

is reflecting their wishes and will always reflect their wishes.

The administrator doing an honest man's job, and thinking that he is doing his utmost, often does not receive the recognition that is due to him. In fact, he meets with criticism and curses and feels irritated and hurt. An able administrator, however, will always do the right thing and make the people feel that he reflects their wishes. That sensation must come to the people, that he is reflecting their wishes to some extent. When a multitude of voices are advising the administrator or criticising him, obviously he has to make his own choice and function according to his own decision. He cannot listen to and agree with each of the hundreds and thousands of voices which advise him in their own way. But by his manner of functioning he should make them realise that he has given due consideration to what they said and that he has been courteous not only to them but to their thinking. That way, by and large, he will be able to satisfy each of them to some extent.

In administration, as in most things in life, it is not only what one does, but the manner of doing it, that is exceedingly important, especially in dealings with large masses of human beings, as in a democracy. Of course, what you do is important enough but the manner of doing is of the highest importance—the manner of approach to the individual or to the group. I would like to stress this especially because it is of the highest importance, of course, for the politician, but equally so for the administrator. The politician realises this normally, because he will have to go if he did not realise it quickly enough. The administrator, however, can continue much longer without realising it fully; but there will be ill feeling against him and he would not be able to do his work adequately because most of it now involves the active cooperation of masses of people. The police functions no longer dominate the scene anywhere in the world. Each State wants to rise socially, economically, in all kinds of activities. As a matter of fact, in a way, all public administration is bureaucracy. The growth of socialism is the growth of bureaucracy. Bureaucracy will grow. It is very odd that the people who shout most loudly against bureaucracy are the people who want more and more of it. That is what is involved in the growth of socialistic avenues of work. The administrator's work is becoming bigger and bigger, not merely just keeping the pace in particular areas or collecting taxes. All this involves close contacts and touch with the people and winning over the people to his side. It involves, in fact, something of the approach of a politician, of a good politician, of an effective politician—not in the sense of the politician's

approach when he tries to get votes, but the normal approach of a politician when he wants to win over the people to his side to do something with their help.

Incidentally there is a mention in the Report of the Director of a research project on local self-government. I think that it is of the highest importance that this Institute or any other should give consideration to the administrative problems of local self-government and even more particularly to those of *panchayats*. There are hundreds and thousands of *panchayats* in this country. They form the real base of our democracy. If that base is unsound, then we are not cent per cent stable democratically, even with the second base of our Parliament. We are told that *panchayats* have not succeeded because there are squabbles, there are parties, there is corruption and all that. It is true, I think, that our experience of *panchayats* has been distressing. But real democracy cannot be at the top, it can be only at the base; and in India, this is not something alien; it is something natural to this soil. The fact remains that the *panchayat* is the primary base of our democracy and we have to improve it.

We have to evolve ways and methods of doing things to combat faction and corruption in public administration. To take an instance, some kind of compensation is often given in the villages to a large number of people, or some relief work is taken in hand in some villages, and some petty official is put in charge of giving relief or compensation. There always are and there will always be great delays in giving it. Very often, by the time it reaches the recipient, either most of it disappears or by then the recipient has suffered a great deal. What are we going to do about it? Are we to wait till everybody is thoroughly honest and will not delay things? Of course, we should try to do that, but we cannot wait. Suppose we try another method of disbursing relief. Suppose the whole village is gathered together and the Government announcement about the scale of the compensation is made in public. The whole village will hear about it : "come forward, you take this much". You see the chances of corruption would become lesser because the matter becomes too public. It is a very simple thing which is not done. Why can't we work through simple methods? I have suggested that instead of summoning the people, and their coming again and again, let the official go and sit in the village and call all the village people, announce publicly the Government's decision about compensation and say: "come along, take it here and now". And where this is done immediately, the chances of somebody delaying it do not exist.

Unless some such methods are evolved, corruption will become serious. Of course, some may continue even with new methods, for its full elimination requires higher standards of integrity on the part of the people and other things. But we should make it more difficult for corruption to occur.

The biggest thing that leads to corruption is delay. The moment you give an officer a chance to delay matters, he can extort money in order to do something. Therefore, a method should be evolved which makes it impossible to delay. If there is no delay, there is no corruption. But we sit in rooms and form rules and regulations involving a great deal of delay. I do hope that the Director of this Institute will take in hand a study of *panchayats*. He may leave out municipalities and district boards for the time being. What is important is to start with the base, *i.e.*, the *panchayat*, and examine what it can do and what methods it should adopt for its successful functioning.

I wonder if any or some of you have come across an address delivered by an Englishman, K. Blount, in October 1956 at Chatham House, London, on "Science as a Factor in International Relations". I think it appeared in "*International Affairs*". It is a very interesting address and I would like to draw your attention to it in connection with the forthcoming discussions in your Seminar on the question of training. I did not know this before, that a person who has gone in for purely technical studies is not allowed to enter the senior administrative services, for he is not cultured enough or an all-round educated person that a public administrator should be. In discussing other matters, I hope you will discuss this too.

Here, I am thrown back to the time when I was at school in England more than half a century ago. There used to be a great argument then in regard to the form and extent of introducing the subject of science in schools, *i.e.*, as a compulsory or as an optional subject. I suppose there have been some changes in the last 50 years; anyhow there is always this attempt, this pulling in two directions of what are called "cultural subject" which presumably produce an integrated human being, and "technical and scientific subjects" which presumably produce a useful man. It may well be argued that too much stress on technology and other branches—specialist branches of physical sciences—has led to a certain lopsided growth of human beings in industrially and technically advanced countries. It has led to too great a power being placed in the hands of human beings without the corresponding moral capacity to use it rightly. But that is only one aspect of the problem. The other aspect, and an exceedingly important one, is that a country can

only survive today if it has enough of scientific and technical personnel. There is no particular reason that the scientist should be an uncultured person; it may well be that the scientist is more cultured and more integrated than a person who has read, let us say, only literature.

I have already referred to Blount's address. He brings out some points in a way which strikes your mind. Science itself is very old but scientific methods are about 150 years old. The application of the scientific methods, let us say, to industry, as everybody knows, makes a vast difference today. We all know of tremendous changes that science has brought in every field. And now we belong to the hydrogen bomb age, a tiny bit of mass converted into enormous energy which can be used for good or bad purposes. Blount humorously points out that if a country wants to progress it must have the capacity to get itself changed. Any country which is traditionally-minded in regard to various matters, including administration, is doomed in a rapidly changing world. Scientific methods help you, by collection of data, statistics and all kind of things, to assess the forces in action to control and watch them and to stop and remedy what is wrong. In fact, the scientific methods means planning. Planning is the scientific method; it is science in action. Planning has to be flexible, it has to be wide awake and alert. That applies not merely to industrial processes, it applies to administration as well. Administration has to adapt itself to the changing phases of society.

A second point which Blount has stressed is that everything depends apparently on the number of technologists and engineers you have in the country. We cannot ignore it. Taking the big countries today, he adds, that by and large, it is now generally agreed that human beings given the same chance could produce the same results. And given the same chance, therefore, the bigger the countries and the more the population, the more the results. And that leads us to conclusion that China and India, being two countries with vast populations, are likely to forge ahead in technical and scientific fields. Their industrial productivity is naturally tremendously increasing. It seems all the more true of China. India is going in the right direction, but it has to struggle with traditionalism in the shape of some aspects of Hinduism, caste, etc. But, anyhow, India is going along the road. From the point of view of scientific technique, Western Europe appears to be somewhat at down-grade and the United States at the peak. The Soviet Union has, in the application, both in width and intensity, of their science and technology, gone ahead very fast and is likely to move faster still in the future.

The traditional concept of administration as something apart from the normal life of the community, is, I think, completely out of date today. In fact, the administrator, who knows nothing of the other jobs, would not be a good administrator. In the highly complex society of today the integrating aspect of his role has become exceedingly important, and he must, therefore, keep himself fully informed not only of the developments in the social community he serves but also of those in the world at large. There are many problems but the general impression that I get of the world is an impression of disintegration, not of integration. It may be, of course, that this disintegrating process is connected with this transitional phase and out of this disintegration some bigger and deeper integration will come. Anyhow, we are all living in a disintegrating world, where standards have disappeared, moral values have been bidden goodbye, and people think more and more in terms of power over Nature. It is obvious that all this technological and scientific progress in the world, unless it is balanced by some kind of moral standards and ethical values, is likely to lead to destruction. That is why we are so concerned over the basic question presented by atomic energy. Use it for evil, it will destroy the world; use it for good, it will raise the world to unknown standards of progress and happiness.