

Item 4 : Address of the President of the Institute,  
Shri R. Venkataraman

ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT

“My esteemed Friends, Chairman of the Institute, Shri S.B. Chavan, Dr. B. Venkatappiah, Shri L.P. Singh, Shri H.M. Patel, other Vice-Presidents, Director and Distinguished Members of the Institute and Friends !

“I did not commit myself to a written speech. I have addressed several meetings of the probationers who were undergoing courses. I have also had opportunity to participate in some of the seminars held under the auspices of the Institute but I do not know what to talk to members who constitute the IIPA itself. Many of you are seasoned administrators; some of you have spent the whole life time in the administration of the country. As the President of the Institute, I thought I should lay stress on some of the basic questions that confront the relationship between the bureaucracy and the government constituting the ministries and also go further deep into the administrative system that is prevalent now and how far it satisfies the needs in the current context of our aims and objectives. If we analyse the constitutional words, they broadly form into three categories:

1. Where we have authoritarian system;
2. the other where more or less *laissez faire* prevails; and
3. the third one is where the government stands for a welfare state.

“What is the kind of bureaucracy that exists in each one of them is worth studying. You will find that in authoritarian state, the Executive is supreme. It is not cramped by the judiciary and very often the legislature in those countries only endorses what the Executive has put forward as resolutions and the administrative machinery in those states generally carries out implicitly the directions of the Executive.

“If you now look at the other kind of state, namely, where the individual liberty is enshrined both in the constitution and in their concept, you will find the Judiciary is supreme. It is the Judiciary which interprets not only the legislation and laws of the country, but also interferes with the Executive action only to maintain and uphold the individual rights and liberties. In those countries the Judiciary is supreme and the bureaucracy and the administrative system tries to function in a manner in which it will be able to uphold the rights and privileges of the citizens.

“When you come to the third category of states, namely, the welfare state, it is the Parliament that is supreme. You may have a written constitution; you may have any other known system of administration, in the ultimate analysis it is the Parliament that will be supreme and Parliament will determine what should be done in the interest of the people and public at large and here the administrative system has to adapt itself to serving of the people, furthering their welfare and improve their conditions of life.

“Though the bureaucracy as such is neutral, the bureaucracy as such does not enunciate policies and programmes and yet in the implementation of the various programmes the bureaucracy plays a very important role in the sense it is the instrument which actually interprets and executes the policies at the grassroot level and the way in which they interpret and execute at the grassroot will determine the nature of the state. Therefore, bureaucracy in our country, has to work for a welfare state. It is necessary that the bureaucracy should be attuned to furthering the interest of the masses, help larger sections of people as against individual rights and work for the greatest good of the greatest number. Have we trained our bureaucracy for this purpose is the question.

“If you look at our administrative system, it is largely

based on the Montague Chelmsford Reform of the state. The administrative system was framed immediately after 1919 Act was passed and thereafter there have been only peripheral changes; there has not been a thorough re-examination of the entire bureaucracy and administration in the Central Government. You will see that in 1919 when they had a large measure of local autonomy, the Central Government had very little functions to do. An Executive Councillor was in charge of having labour, education and five other subjects and these were largely the responsibility of the states or provinces as they were called at that time. When the 1935 Government of India Act was passed, a re-arrangement of the secretariat of the Centre did not take place. Many states refused to accept the responsibility, the Congress refused to accept responsibility and the 1935 Act could not be implemented and even when it was implemented, the World War II broke out in 1939. No serious attempt was made to recast the Central Government services to suit the new 1935 Government of India Act.

“Then we come to the next stage when we had the Quit India Movement. The country was thrown in the turmoil; there was no occasion or opportunity for the Central secretariat to recast to suit the needs. In 1947 we became free and therefore the old system continued. Only marginal changes, ad hoc changes, amendments were made to suit the new constitution. In fact what we should have attempted to do immediately after the framing of the Constitution was to set up a committee to go into the structure of the Central Secretariat and see that it is adapted to the needs of the new Constitution which we have framed. This was not done and the consequence is this. There is no Central chief executive of the services in the capital. If you look at the states you have a chief secretary who is head of the services who protects the services and at the same time controls the services.

“In the Central Government we have a Cabinet Secretary who at best being a secretary places the agenda to the Board of Directors. It is true that whereas we have been given ad hoc powers but have we made any one person in the Central Secretariat Head of the Services, a person who will be responsible for ensuring efficiency of the entire secretariat as well as

secretaries who are heading a number of ministries, and who will also be the protector of the services in the sense that they take upon themselves to represent to the government as such the difficulties, the problems and the needs of the services. This has led to a certain amount of weakness. For instance, Commerce Ministry will pass a circular which will not be binding on the Industry Ministry; Industry Ministry will pass a circular which will not be binding on the Agriculture Ministry. There is no system of Government Order which is prevalent in the states. Even in the states if two or three ministries are involved in a file, the file will go from one ministry to another, from one secretary to another and then from one minister to another and when it is finally signed by the chief minister it becomes a Government Order (G.O. binding order on the entire states on all administration). Here we do not have a Government Order at all.

“In fact it will be possible for one secretary to lock the file in his drawer and go on a holiday and nothing will be heard. It has happened before I know. Therefore, you have to see whether our new system, new structure that is required for our implementation of our policies and programmes under the new Constitution has been attempted or made. They have not done that. In fact the same point was made when I was a Minister in Madras to the Administrative Reforms Commission. Shri Morarji was Chairman. He was more interested in the ministries and the functioning of the department than in the re-organisation of the Central secretariat which I thought was the main function.

“Therefore, it is up to you very senior and experienced members of the IIPA, people like Mr. H.M. Patel, Mr. L.P. Singh who have spent their whole life-time to see whether the time has not come for restructuring the civil services at the Centre in a manner which will be able to function more smoothly and effectively. A system which prevails in all the states is a great lacuna in the Centre and very often conflicts arise. We are, therefore, trying to resolve conflicts by government meetings of secretaries and the secretaries meetings have discussions and arrive at certain conclusions. I have found that the meeting of the secretaries committee is not represented by the secretaries but they send junior officers,

and when the matter goes to the respective ministries the secretary does not want to follow the consensus arrived at the secretaries meeting.

“Once again the process of movement of files, horizontal and vertical goes on and considerable amount of delay occurs in the administration. The need for certain kind of offices and officers at one time may not be the same at a later time. As the time goes on certain offices may become redundant, certain officers may become supernumerary. All the time there must be an assessment of what are the changes taking place and what should be done to keep the secretariat streamlined.

“When I was in Finance, I wanted to abolish the Industrial Investment Centres abroad.

“My reason was that at a time when there was no nationalised bank and at a time when the banks had not proliferated abroad, there was a need for an Investment Centre abroad so that people in that country wanting to invest in India will have full and first hand information about the possibility, rules and regulations, etc. After nationalisation, we have branches of bankers all over and every important country have a bank branch and no man is more fitted or qualified to give information with regard to the investment possibility in India than a bank. Not only that, the foreign investors never come to the Investment Centre ; they go to their bankers to find out what the conditions are in India through their bankers in India. Therefore, what was necessary and useful at that time, say in the early 1960s is not necessarily needed or required in the 1970s and 1980s after we have brought in new institutions. I am citing this as an instance. This is the kind of examination that will have to be made every decade in the secretariat to prune out laws which have become redundant and see in what way the new areas and avenues in which we will have to expand and create institutions. We have been having and acting after the events but it should be the policy to anticipate the events and then provide institutions for the purpose and this has escaped our attention for such a long time. I would suggest to the IIPA to take up and find out whether they can make an objective study and see what advice, guidance they can give in the matter of the

Central secretariat reorganisation.

“I started by saying that we have become a welfare state and most of our programmes are directed towards the people in the rural areas, whether it is IRDP or NREP—all these programmes are directed towards people in the rural areas. If these programmes have got to be effective, the only instrument that can make it effective is the services at that level, at the rural level, at the block level. We have found that in the recent report of the PEO that in respect of assistance or benefits, most of the benefits have been given in places where there are no panchayats or local administration continued by the bureaucracy and the PEO placed a very interesting revelation. It says that only 15 per cent of these beneficiaries are the poorest among the poor as decided by our administration.

“Therefore, a greater responsibility now rests not so much on the Finance Secretary and the Industry Secretary or the Commerce Secretary but on the local administrator who has to implement the policies of the government at the grassroot level. What training have we given to improve them? Of course, we have seminar to explain to them. Would they be able to advise a person what the rural industry or college to start? Would they be able to give any guidance in the way in which he can change his mode and method of living to better his own economic lot? In that we have no such training. Years go waste. In Madras I started a dozen cooperative mills at one stretch. We took officers from different departments, put them through a training and send them also to the institutions like the South India Textile Research Association, like the one we have at Ahmedabad and got them trained to be managers of textiles mills and I told them at that time that they will earn their promotions and scales of pay, otherwise they would have earned if they had continued in their administrative service. A few years later when I went back, all of them had changed as one man in charge of Rural Development and another Industry, totally changed. Even if you give them training, what happens today is that the persons who are given the training are posted out of the discipline as soon as his training is over.

“The need for specialised training and the need to con-

tinue them in areas and discipline in which they have had the training is paramount, is very emergent and important. Otherwise the training is wasted and other person who comes there learns at the cost of the poor people of this country. Therefore, the institutions like this should be able to formulate a policy to the government with regard to rural development, then needs of the area, the specialised training that is necessary for officers and members of the local services so that they may be able to serve the needs and then continue to serve them for a long time.

“We have the transfers. The transfers are intended to see that the person does not develop local prejudice, likes and dislikes and so on. There are certain areas where such transfers cannot be accepted because it would mean the denial to the people of that area the expertise which has been developed in that area. Merely routine transfer of a person after 15 years without any consideration of the specialised training acquired being imparted to him would have disastrous consequences. If we were only a state maintaining law and order as during British period, anybody could be transferred to any institution at any place. But today the entire government services and the government functions have changed. Unfortunately, now law and order is again becoming more and more prominent. In a civilised society, the law and order must take a back seat and its developmental activity should come to the forefront of the government functions and if you try to do that kind of work, greater specialisation and greater emphasis on skill development and the skills necessary. Therefore, we are trying to run the welfare state with wholly and totally different objectives with an instrument which is based on a government which maintains law and order, or a government which maintains just bare civic amenities and so on.

“The institutes like our IIPA must devote more attention to the basic problems of the country. A few seminars held here and there, a few subjects discussed here and there—of course they have their places but it should not be the only function. The function is to take up something which is basic and see what contributions they can make. I can assure you that government is always anxious to get good advice. It is

not that we are averse to getting advice. Only advice has to be good and it has got to be accepted.

“Objectivity is necessary not only for the institutions like this, but also the services. People talk of committed bureaucracy. I have never understood the meaning of committed bureaucracy. The committed bureaucracy is certainly committed to carrying out whatever has been given at the policy level. The bureaucracy cannot have any other view. You can point out the difficulties, you can point out the defects, mistakes, drawbacks and everything. It is the Executive government of the country to take the full responsibility for the decisions they take and bear the consequences. So far as the civil services is concerned, its function is to execute without fear or favour, without prejudice, ill-will the policies which have been enunciated and put forward. Therefore, the bureaucracy is always committed to certain standards of conduct, objectivity, morality, integrity and so on. This is what we have to impress upon the services. Given these parameters, the bureaucracy will have a very important and great role to play in our administration. No man is omniscient. I cannot know everything that happens in the country nor can any minister know all the repercussions and ramifications of anything that we do. It is the function of the bureaucracy in this case to bring to the attention of the executive head the pros and cons, the ramification, the repercussions that will follow as a result of following a particular policy and then if a decision is taken by the executive, then the bureaucracy implements it because it has no other part to play except implementing. My submission to all of you is that there is a great need now to go into the basic structure of the Central secretariat, particularly and see whether it fulfils the needs of the modern welfare state with so many functions all thrown in. We are running industries, we are having shipping companies, we are doing almost everything which the private individual used to do in the past. How qualified are we to do this within the present set-up that you have? What I said about the specialisation in the rural areas also applies to the specialisation in respect of public sector enterprises. The All India Services transfer a person after 3 or 4 years from one public sector to another has not



yielded, in my opinion, the good or the best results. There are people who have pulled up some of the public sectors which were in a rut into profitable undertakings and yet when they reach that stage, they are transferred to another public sector undertaking. In the private sector, a man continues to be a managing director for 20 and 35 years and by sheer experience, he is able to handle a situation that arises. If we change a man every three or four years, he can never gather that kind of expertise as the other man gathers because a rolling stone gathers no moss. Therefore, the whole approach to services must be looked into afresh. I am sure your Institution is best qualified to do it and you have done a number of studies and so I would like you on this occasion to devote yourself to a particular subject which I mentioned. I forgot to thank you for electing me as the President of the IIPA.

“Thank you.”