

SUMMARY

PROBLEMS CONCERNING THE ADMINISTRATION OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

The All-Executive Development Seminar was held at the Bangsaen College of Education, Choburi Province, under the auspices of the Institute of Public Administration, Thammasat University, from February 11 to 14, 1963. At this seminar, the participants discussed certain factors illustrative of problems underlying the administration of governmental affairs, and ways and means of solving these problems.

In our opinion, a digest of this discussion will be of interest and value to our readers. Accordingly the texts of these problems are published herein in their entirety, and a cursory description of each provided as follows:

1. Responsibility of government officials. It is generally felt that there is a serious lack of a sense of responsibility on the part of government officials pertaining to the performance of their functions. This irresponsibility seems to have derived from weaknesses in the system of administration, the socio-economic environment, and, above all, the traditional habits and background of the officials themselves. Proposals for solving this problem include: modification of the administrative system and procedures, the introduction of the newer concepts of "positive personnel management", and the inculcation of the sense of obligation to the public on the part of the officials.

2. Allowances and expenses on official trips inside the country. The inept handling of the expenses of government servants taking official trips to places within the country exposes another problem. This situation may be partly attributed to the petty rules and regulations issued by the government regarding the handling of such expenditures. For instance, every official who has made a trip within the country is required by government regulations to attach all receipts for money expended in order to obtain reimbursement. The complex formalities entail unnecessary paperwork and frequently prove irksome to the officials. It was agreed, therefore, that the system be simplified and that expenditures in lump sum for each trip be granted, so as to do away with the many petty rules and regulations.

3. Red-tape in administration. The problem of "red-tape" in administration is another serious one. Generally, the causes for administrative red-tape comprise minor, and often unrec-

essary rules and regulations; unsuitable working procedures; inadequate workflow; poor organization; unqualified and irresponsible staff; and other outmoded patterns. Possible means for "cutting the tape" include: "streamlining" existing administrative system; work simplification; proper delegation of authority; and improvement of coordination and communication system, both within and without the organization.

4. Economy in administration. The problem of economy is perennial to all administration. It is normally desired by every administrative organization. But, in the executives' judgment, governmental operation is still far from economical which is due to various factors such as inappropriate utilization of human resources, overstaffing, and weaknesses in the administrative system. Until these factors are improved, inefficiency and uneconomy in the administration of the country will continue unabated.

5. Training of subordinates. The inadequate training of subordinate officials weakens further the administration. Superior officials generally are unqualified for the job of training their subordinates. This may be due to a lack of knowledge, a lack of interest or a lack of time. The problem is complicated further by the fact that many subordinate officials do not have interest or enthusiasm in their job performance and consequently care little about improving themselves. In this regard, recommendations for remedying the situation emphasize the importance of training of superior officials to the extent that they realize their responsibility for the training of their subordinates.

6. Competency and Ability of Public Officials. The last problem discussed at the Executive Seminar was how to develop competency of government officials. The problem is no less crucial than complex. However, it is suggested that in order to rectify the situation, certain personal factors and economic situation of public officials must be taken into consideration. Moreover, administrative system and environment as well as other surrounding circumstances must be improved. Besides, an active training program, including the developing of individual officials, must be adopted and carried out continually, unceasingly, and relentlessly.

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