

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Notes on Their Relationship

by James W. Davis*

I

Three titles competed with one another for the place at the top of this essay :

Public Administration in Developing Countries

The Meaning of Development Administration

Public Administration and Development

The latter won, the first two lost. But some attention to the losers may give more meaning to the chosen title. "Public Administration in Developing Countries" was rejected as a title as it became clear that I was not interested only in development in the developing or underdeveloped countries. I was interested also in development in the developed countries. We may distinguish loosely between developing or underdeveloped and developed countries, but in fact development goes on in both. Social, political, economic, and administrative development can and does occur in countries that we call developed and I did not want to exclude them in thinking about the relationship between public administration and development.

II

"*The Meaning of Development Administration*" was the original working title of this essay, but it became clear as I read what had been written on the subject that the phrase "*development administration*" was too ambiguous to be of much use; and I saw little point in adding still another definition to the existing list. Some sample quotations may illustrate the difficulty.

Some have confused it [development administration] with administrative development or the changes and growth that take place in public administration in any country. Others have taken on the philosophy of the White Man's Burden, and believe development administration to refer to the problems of public administration in the less developed countries of the world. A

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variation of the same theme looks upon development administration as designating those changes in an administrative system that are necessary for modernization of a backward country. Some administrationists, feeling insecure and inadequate against the onslaught of the economists, have seen development administration as referring to the administration of economic development programs. Others have countered by pointing out that there is social and political development to consider also, and have suggested that the term therefore applies to all internal and domestic services of government.¹

Development administration in government refers to the processes of guiding an organization toward the achievement of progressive political, economic, and social objectives that are authoritatively determined in one manner or another.²

...poor countries have special characteristics that lend to create a different role for government. These characteristics and this expanded or emphasized role of government, particularly as it effects economic growth, tend to make the operations of the public administrator significantly different. Where such differences exist, public administration can be usefully called development administration.³

As the term [development administration] is commonly used, it embraces the array of new functions assumed by developing countries embarking on the path of modernization and industrialization.⁴

Development administration can be regarded as the public management of economic and social change in terms of deliberate public policy. The development administrator is concerned with guiding change.⁵

¹Edward W. Weidner, "Development Administration: A New Focus for Research," in Ferrel Heady and Sybil L. Stokes, *Papers in Comparative Public Administration* (Ann Arbor: Institute of Public Administration, University of Michigan, 1962), pp. 97-98.

²*Ibid.*, p. 98.

³Irving Swerdlow (ed.), *Development Administration: Concepts and Problems* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1962). See the introduction by Swerdlow, p. xiv.

⁴Merle Fainsod, "The Structure of Development Administration," in Swerdlow, *Development Administration*, p. 2.

⁵Paul Meadows, "Motivation for Change and Development Change," in Swerdlow, *Development Administration*, p. 86.

Development administration is therefore defined as carrying out planned change in the economy (in agriculture or industry, or the capital infrastructure supporting either of these) and, to a lesser extent, in the social services of the state (especially education and public health.) It is not usually associated with efforts to improve political capabilities.⁶

Development administration is that aspect of public administration which the focus of attention is on organizing and administering public agencies in such a way as to stimulate and facilitate defined programs of social and economic progress. It involves the adaptation and application of management skills directly to the development process. Development administration thus encompasses the organization of new agencies such as planning organizations and development corporations; the reorientation of established agencies such as departments of agriculture; the delegation of administrative powers to development agencies; and the creation of a cadre of administrators who can provide leadership in stimulating and supporting programs of social and economic improvement. It has the purpose of making change attractive and possible to farmers, industrialists, businessmen, and to the population generally.⁷

It is clear just from these illustrations that development administration means different things to different people. For some it is simply public administration in developing countries; for others it is mainly the administration of social and economic development programs in developing countries. Some seem to suggest that it is administration which is goal achievement oriented, never mind the country context; and others would link development administration with social and economic development, but in no specific country context. What indeed is the meaning of development administration? All that is clear is that it is related somehow to the action of governmental agencies.

III

We come now to the chosen title: "Public Administration and Development: Notes on Their Relationship." An obvious first essential is some consideration of the meanings of public administration and development. We can begin by

⁶John D. Montgomery, "A Royal Invitation: Variations on Three Classic Themes." in John D. Montgomery and William J. Siffin, *Approaches to Development: Politics, Administration and Change* (New York: Mc Graw-Hill, 1966).

⁷George F. Gant, "A Note on Applications of Development Administration," in John D. Montgomery and Arthur Smithies, *Public Policy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966), p. 200.

dividing *public administration* into two parts, public administration as academic discipline and public administration as governmental activity, and inquiring briefly into the meaning of each. In the past, academic public administration, public administration as a field of study or as a discipline, has focussed mainly on three things: 1) the description of the structure and administrative procedures of government agencies; 2) the evaluation and attempted improvement of existing organizations and their procedures; and 3) the preparation of men for what can be thought of as administrative staff jobs— — —that is jobs in personnel administration, finance administration, and organization and management. In the United States preparation for city management has also received a good deal of emphasis. But academic public administration has devoted little attention to the study of specific program areas, such as public health, education, transportation, social welfare.

Three examples of these generalizations will suffice. During the early 1960's the required core curriculum in public administration at the University of Michigan consisted of personnel administration, fiscal administration, and organization and management and students were encouraged to take work in municipal administration as well. Half a world away, the curriculum of the Institute of Public Administration at Thammasat University in Bangkok (organized in the 1950's by Indiana University) reflected the same emphasis—personnel administration, finance, organization and management, and local government. And this was continued when the Institute of Public Administration became the School of Public Administration at the National Institute of Development Administration. A final example of the content of academic public administration in the latest edition (1967) of a popular American text book of public administration.⁸ Its major subdivisions are titled:

- The Environment of Public Administration
- The Function of the Administrator
- Organization
- Personnel Administration
- Financial Administration
- Administrative Law and Regulation
- Administrative Responsibility

Such examples could be multiplied, but to do so would be pointless. It seems obvious that academic public administration has been narrowly defined. Has public administration as an activity been defined more broadly? I think not. It might appear that public administration as activity could be defined simply as what is done by government administrators or government executives, but this is not what has been done— — —or so it seems to me. My observation is that public

⁸John Pflifner and Robert Presthus, *Public Administration* (New York: The Ronald Press, 1967).

administration as activity, is often defined to mean simply staff support activity— — — personnel administration, financial administration, and organization and management. In effect the relatively narrow focus of academic public administration has reinforced if not encouraged a narrow definition of public administration in practice.

Edward Weidner has summed up the results nicely :

Public Administration both in its practice and in its scholarship has been distinguished by the fact that it has had almost no relationship to substantive policy. Turning the rascals out, discovering principles and reorganization formulae, seeking efficiency and economy, describing administration, and furthering the study of human relations are all worthy endeavors, and continued interest in them is warranted. They do not cover all the logical alternatives, however. Specifically, they lack a policy emphasis. As scholarly activities, they do not focus on substantive or policy goals. Practitioners and scholars have been primarily concerned with personnel, budgeting, and organization and management. The problem that has interested them is how to make these tools more effective, in a narrow sense. The test of effectiveness has been largely an internal one: how much control is exercised and how much efficiency and economy is enforced by the personnel, budget and O and M agencies. Public administration has not been a part of the policy sciences in the broadest sense of the latter term. Public administration has glorified the means and forgotten the ends. Good administration and good human relations have become ends in themselves, quite apart from the achievement of other values that they may or may not facilitate...⁹

Winds of change are perhaps beginning to blow through public administration— — —both discipline and activity— — —though they have scarcely reached gale force. Recent issues of the *Public Administration Review*, the journal of the American Society for Public Administration, have begun to give attention to public problems and public policy. A recent issue was devoted to crime and the police and another was devoted to environmental pollution and its control. Some books dealing with public policy problems and written by men identified more or less closely with public administration have recently appeared. Institutes of public administration are now beginning to style themselves institutes of public policy or institutes of public affairs. (The Institute of Public Administration at Michigan has changed its name, and the School of Public Administration at the National Institute of

⁹Weidner, *op. cit.*, pp. 102—103.

Development Administration in Bangkok is changing its curriculum.) The development administration movement has called attention to problems of economic development and the role of governments in solving them. But there is not yet a single satisfactory public administration text that has a public policy orientation. For that matter there is no text in development administration. The policy minded instructor in public administration must piece his courses together from assorted books, articles, and documents. (When a satisfactory text does appear it may not include public administration in its title— --for fear of being mistaken for an ancestor by those who judge a book by its title.)

A policy orientation seems to have developed furthest in the United States. Outside the United States traditional definitions still seem to rule. The *International Review of Administrative Sciences* and the public administration journals of particular countries still have a personnel, finance and O & M emphasis. And even as institute of public administration begin to disappear in the United States they continue to develop overseas.

IV

So much for the meaning of public administration. What does *development* mean? In the social science literature development is usually divided into economic, social, political, and administrative development. Economic development commonly refers to such things as rising gross national product, rising per capita income, and increasing equality in the distribution of income. It is harder, however, to find a meaning for social development. Although the phrase economic and social development is not an uncommon one, it is hard to be sure what social development really means. Sociologists themselves seem to prefer the term social change— --a term which can cover everything from urbanization to the disappearance of the extended family. Political development commonly refers to such things as increasing citizen equality, increasing citizen participation in the choice of government leaders, and increasing national integration or national cohesion. Administrative development refers to such things as shifting from a patronage to a merit system for civil service recruitment and the creation of a centralized, informative, and flexible government budgeting system. Economic, social, political, and administrative development are often drawn together in the phrase national development.

Development can be analyzed another way; it can be subdivided along the lines of government activities or along the lines of public problems and programs. Thus one might speak of agricultural development, educational development, highway development, urban development, and so forth. Clearly, development in any of these sectors of government activity may have consequences for social, economic,

political, and perhaps administrative development. Conversely, an economic development program may have agricultural, educational, and public health components— — —to suggest only three things. In a sense development can be viewed as a block which can be divided either vertically or horizontally.

Either way it is clear that development is not limited to developing areas. The United States, which is perhaps as developed as any country, has many agencies concerned with urban development, with rural poverty and malnutrition, and with improving the educational system of the country. Extending the franchise to Negroes surely represents political development. The focus of development efforts may vary from country to country (after all the salient problems vary), but if development is understood as problem solution and the achievement of social, political, and economic goals it is hardly limited to Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

A common synonym for development is modernization, but this seems less than satisfactory if we assume that development is not limited to what we normally think of as the developing countries. A more useful synonym is change, but change is not entirely satisfactory either. Change is neutral with regard to direction; development is not. Development means positive change, desired change, change toward a goal. Samuel Huntington was pointing to this when he titled an article "Political Development and Political Decay."¹⁰ It would seem possible also to think of social, economic, and administrative decay, or at least decline. All development may represent change, but not all change represents development.

V

Now that we have considered separately public administration and development we are ready to think briefly about their relationship. The first point to be made is that public administration, as conventionally defined, is relevant only to administrative development. If one were interested in improving a country's or an organization's budget system or its personnel recruiting one might turn to public administration for help. If one were interested in improving the highway system or in introducing family planning, or in improving public education public administration would not be the place to turn. Recall the point made by Weidner— — —public administration has had no relation to substantive policy.

I should emphasize at once that administration and administrative development are important. Programs must be implemented and for this to happen organizations must be put together, personnel must be recruited and trained, resources must be allocated. But of course administration is not everything. What programs

¹⁰Samuel P. Huntington, "Political Development and Political Decay," *World Politics*, XVII (1965), pp. 386—430.

are going to be implemented is also important. In fact it may be most important. It is also worth remembering that the relationship between administrative development (improvement) and other aspects of development is not clear. It is not clear how economic and social and political development are related to administrative development; nor is it clear how agricultural development or educational development or urban development are related to administrative development. It may be possible to introduce administrative improvement— — —and have no effect on economic development. It is even possible that some administrative improvement could hinder economic or political development. It will not do simply to assume (and hope) that administrative improvement will lead automatically to greater things.

Important though it may be I would argue that administrative activity (as it is conventionally defined in public administration), and by extension administrative development, is on the periphery of what is important in the field of government activity and in the field of national development. If the performance of government agencies (and indeed the government as a whole) can be likened to a drama, then administrative activity is what goes on backstage. It is important, indeed essential, but not the heart of the matter. Perhaps one of the reasons public administration as a discipline has had such a dull image is because it has dealt with essentially dull and routine things. The important things— — —the basic missions of organizations, the programs they are supposed to carry out, the problems they are supposed to solve— — —have been ignored by the field of public administration. (Perhaps this is because such matters are often controversial and public administrationists have tried to avoid controversy.)

Perhaps I should qualify the linkage between public administration and administrative development. Even though scholars and practitioners in public administration have been interested in improving public administration they have not always been successful. In the past their efforts have often been characterized by marked political naivete and cultural narrowness— — —and they have often met resistance. Even when they have been successful and administrative improvement has apparently taken place it has often been purely formal or symbolic and had little connection with behavioral reality. A budget system can be completely redone on paper, but the allocation of resources can follow the same pattern as before. An organization can be reorganized, but decisions can continue to be made the same way and by the same people.

The basic point, however, is that even if administrative development occurs it may have little or no effect on other sorts of development. At least we do not know what the connections may be. This leads me to the conclusion that conven-

tional public administration— — —both the discipline and the practice— — —has little if anything to contribute to economic, social, or political development.

To be directly relevant to social or economic or political development or to be able to contribute to development in specific program areas public administration must be given new meaning. It must be enlarged substantially and made more congruent with what governments as a whole and particular agencies do. Public administration must be redefined so that it no longer means simply administrative staff activity, so that it no longer means simply what goes on back stage, but so that it means primarily problem definition and program development, implementation, and evaluation. If public administration is not focussed on public problems and their solution then it will be at most tangential to development. If it is not redefined then students of development and concerned officials will ignore it. The task of government is the development and implementation of programs designed to cope with public problems. Public administration should support this task.

One further point needs making. A constant problem in public administration both in practice and in theory has been a confusion of ends and means. Personnel procedures come to be ends in themselves — — — and are carried out even when they may interfere with program accomplishment. Accountability is enforced until the end seems to be the reports and the records — — — rather than what has actually been accomplished. In more general terms administrative development may come to be an end in itself. But it should be a means, and when it is not a means to economic and political development then it has little justification. And of course there is no justification for administrative "improvements" that hinder development in other sectors.
