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## BUREAUCRATIC REFORM - A BUREAUCRAT'S PERSPECTIVE

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### ABSTRACT

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Continuing bureaucratic reform of a positive and fundamental kind will occur in tandem with the progressive elevation of the political consciousness of the community at large.

### INTRODUCTION

I have chosen to address the Society about bureaucratic change not only because I need an occasional change of diet from energy issues but because it is a subject of particular personal interest and one which is, I believe, central to any discussion of the kind of society we shall enjoy, tolerate or dislike in future decades. I offer no particular expertise as an analyst in this area - only interest and some measure of experience and direct involvement, having served under Ministers as disparate as Casey, Menzies, Barwick, Hasluck, McEwen, Wright, Howson, Stewart, Batt and Lowe. Three of those Ministers I never met, with some of them the contact was only fleeting and yet there are others whom I knew, or know, well and with whom I was in close professional contact. Perhaps my interest in this area has also been stimulated by service in both Federal and State Governments, as well as in fully-fledged departments, small so-called "policy units" and in a statutory authority. There is merit, you see, in being a nomadic administrator - a sort of Bedouin bureaucrat!

I should emphasise, too, that when I speak about bureaucrats and bureaucracies I shall be doing so by reference to the public sector. This is not to suggest, however, that there are not many more similarities between public sector and private sector bureaucracies than is perhaps usually conceded. I shall also mostly be talking about Government generally in Australia - at both State and Federal levels - rather than by reference to a particular Government, unless I indicate otherwise. Obviously, however, my chief reference points are the situations in Canberra and Hobart.

### THE NEED FOR CHANGE

It seems to me that we should concern ourselves with the quality of our bureaucracies - with their modernity or otherwise, with the extent to which they adequately reflect broader socio-economic change - quite simply because the environment in which they operate has changed quite dramatically in only the past decade or so. The industrial revolution may have heralded the increasing involvement of the State in the affairs of ordinary citizens, whether as employers or employees, but at least in our kind of society the notion of Big Government is essentially a phenomenon unique to the middle decades of the twentieth century. Sadly, however, many of our institutions continue to reflect structures and attitudes more appropriate to earlier decades.

Government is now bigger, more complex and - largely in response to demand - much more heavily involved in our everyday affairs than was the case before the Second World War or even than in the fifties and early sixties. The various instruments of fiscal and monetary policy touch us all more often and more severely. Urban planning and welfare policies and environmental standards and energy policies and various other new initiatives or expanded activities in established areas, are the manifestations of big contemporary Government. The situation has been further complicated by the rapidity of technological change and, related to this, the information explosion. Associated with accelerating

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international inter-dependence, inflation and unemployment are more readily "imported" and the policy-maker's information base grows daily more immense. Moreover, this ever-increasing data base may also contribute to some alienation of the ordinary citizen from the institutions which purport to serve him - to the development, if you like, of a "them and us" syndrome. The Government has a mass of data to which the citizen does not have effective access and which he may not readily comprehend - and the politician is confronted with the awesome task of explaining the rationale for a decision which, however well researched and equitable he considers it to be, does not appear to be sensible to Joe Bloggs. Joe is unlikely to be impressed by a Ministerial statement expressing confidence in a decision because it is based on the inverse matrix of the third generation of the input-output model developed for the Derwent Valley sub-region of the Tasmanian economy - particularly if it means that Joe is now out of a job!

I am not passing judgments about the rapidly changing environment in which Government now operates - I think the facts are self-evident. What is important are the consequences of this situation, for our institutions and the community at large. The immediate consequence is the immense pressure that is placed on our policy-makers, particularly Ministers.

## THE BUREAUCRAT AS POLICY-MAKER

But who are they, these policy makers? I have already inferred that they do not include the ordinary citizen. It is true that the citizen may influence the process by virtue of his vote but it is arguable that he is casting his vote by reference to policy issues, even assuming that competing "policies" may be readily discerned - and their relative merits readily weighed - in the particular circumstances of an election campaign. Lindblom (1968) prefers to talk about proximate policy-makers. He asserts that "... not all citizens can be immediate or proximate, makers of policy. They yield the immediate (or proximate) task of decision to a small minority." Lindblom makes it very clear that he sees officials - bureaucrats, permanent and impermanent - as being very much part of this group.

I would further submit that this policy-making function is necessarily being yielded increasingly - in various ways and to varying degrees, depending on the system and the situation - by elected policy-makers to non-elected policy-makers. It is happening for all the reasons that I mentioned earlier in this paper. This process should be seen as sinister only if it is not recognised and not accommodated in adjustments to existing arrangements. If we are cavalier or apathetic about effecting such adjustments we shall put at risk the very system itself. One is reminded of Apter's observation (1970) about: "How urgent it becomes to civilize the civilizers, that is, to give those who know something about science and the public welfare a sensitivity to human rights and values. Without such sensitivity, the new technocrats will have little attachment to democracy." Apter was writing about the dangers inherent in the ethic of science becoming the ethic of man but the sentiments seem to me to be equally relevant to the situation of the bureaucrat as policy-maker.

I shall mention later some of the prescriptions that have been canvassed to accommodate this situation. What I am seeking to do at this point is to lay to rest the simplistic notion - the fiction, in fact - that Governments make policy and bureaucrats administer it. As Emy (1974) comments, "We can no longer (if we ever could) distinguish between policy (initiatives and goals laid down by the elected Minister) and administration (the application of policy by the public servant.) The public servant has become a policy-maker..." There are those who might respond to this by asserting that bureaucrats are concerned with facts and Ministers with values but, as Professor Spann (1976) observes, this "... is attractively simple, but over-simple." Do bureaucrats - both as individuals and as corporate beings - not have values? Do they not intrude those values when they select their facts or put pen to paper or talk to their Ministers? Of course they do. To deny this is to deny that Patrick Shaw was not influential in the change of Australian policy regarding Indonesian claims on West Irian or to deny that the creation of the Australian Industry Development Corporation was not heavily influenced by Sir Alan

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Westerman or to suggest that John Stone, Secretary of the Treasury, is some kind of ideological eunuch.

The facts never speak for themselves. Somebody selects them. Somebody speaks for them.

Suffice it to say that bureaucrats are among the proximate policy-makers. They do wield immense influence on the policy-making process - because they are very bright or thrusting or have strong views or simply because they are there, proximate to the point of decision; because they are custodians of the data base; because Ministers are busy men and need to be serviced; because they, the bureaucrats, are also custodians of the precedents - they are always there, whereas Ministers come and go - and to know what has gone before and to know about the feasibility of implementing alternative proposals is crucial information; and finally, among many other reasons, because the very volume of public business has required that more and more of the decision-making be formally or informally delegated to non-elected officials. While ultimate control remains, as it should, with elected Ministers not all these delegated functions are small and, taken as a whole, they are certainly not insignificant. Let us be quite frank about this: it is quite possible for a bureaucrat to send a company "to the wall" or to cause a pensioner immense discomfort quite simply because he interprets his mandate in a particular way and because, subjectively or otherwise, his own prejudices intrude into his response to a legitimate enquiry. In these circumstances, is it not crucial that we be concerned about the quality of the bureaucracy and the accountability of bureaucrats?

What all this also means is that not only is the distinction between policy and administration blurred but that the traditional notion of Ministerial responsibility has become eroded. The Royal Commission on Australian Government Administration - the Coombes Report (1976, p. 12) - addressed this point in the following terms: "Thus in a system which combines the anonymity of officials with an inability of Ministers effectively to accept responsibility, effective and economical administration can fall between the stools of the theory of ministerial responsibility and of the practice of management by anonymous officials." I shall pursue this point later in the paper. It is one which the Royal Commission canvassed at some length for it was concerned to balance "... the demands of Ministerial responsibility and official accountability." (1976, p.13). To do this - to accommodate reality and yet preserve and protect the ultimate supremacy of elected Ministers and elected Parliaments - is surely fundamental to the maintenance of the kind of democracy we presently enjoy. It is also directly related to the nature and quality of policy-making.

#### OTHER DIMENSIONS OF THE PROBLEM

However, much of what I have been saying has related to the bureaucrat in a personalised, individual sense. He is, of course, also very much a corporate being and many of the problems requiring, and associated with bureaucratic change flow from this corporate role. In his book on "The Politics of Policy Making in (American) Defence and Foreign Affairs", Roger Hilsman (1971) observes that "... a distinction must be made between the role and power of career officials acting as individuals and the role and power of career officials acting collectively as organisations." Elsewhere (1971, p. 45), he notes the fear of Congress - which he observes as having been sufficiently potent to influence legislation on foreign service matters - that the service "... is manned not by typical Americans but by 'striped-pants cookie pushers' - socialites from effete, Eastern seaboard upper class families - and that their long service abroad leads them to become too cosmopolitan to represent the United States effectively."

This illustrates an eternal problem in all bureaucracies and the irony is that the causes and motives may, in other circumstances, be positive and healthy. The trouble is that the line between a positive esprit de corps and a negative ghetto mentality is a fine one. So, too, is the line between a positive preoccupation with function and the provision of service on the one hand and, on the other, introspection, conservatism and "fear of the dark" - whether the dark be represented by change, innovation or challenge.

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In short, all bureaucratic organisations develop their own particular ethos, the special characteristics of which will flow from any or all of such factors as the nature of the leadership, the function, the predominant discipline, geographical location, degree of autonomy and so on. National Development has a view of the world that is quite different from the Treasury view and the Trade and Resources view is different again. There is nothing new in this. It is natural and inevitable but - particularly in those cases where an ethos is well entrenched, where autonomy has been jealously preserved and where external intrusions have been minimal - it invariably leads to a disproportionate preoccupation with the status quo, with a resistance to change. Even this may be healthy - particularly where change is being promoted, for its own sake as it were, without adequate forethought - but it may often also be very unhealthy.

Dror (1978) comments that: "Many studies have indicated that most people in most cases strongly resist change, especially when the changes would be in institutions that have an emotional and ideological significance, as most components of the public policy-making system do..."

One of the consequences of this phenomenon is that, where Governments perceive a need to provide new services or to accommodate new demands for policy initiative, they invariably have to give organisational effect to these needs and demands by way of arrangements that are essentially cosmetic. Special policy units or new statutory authorities are often manifestations of this organisational engineering and, where a new Department is created, it may often take a long time before it is accepted - and becomes effective - as an integral member of the family of departments and instrumentalities. Whatever its precise form, it is an object of suspicion; it is new; it will impinge upon, or erode, the responsibilities of others in the family.

Put another way, I would cite the example of Government's stance on environmental issues, on which I have been the recipient of countless representations from conservationists. It seems to me - assuming there is substance to the conservationists' case - that he can only expect greater sensitivity to environmental issues to become the order of the day in Government when the values and principles involved more thoroughly pervade community attitudes generally and hence become part of the baggage carried by policy-makers at all levels of the system. When we talk about changes to entrenched value systems we are talking about change which is at once both fundamental and necessarily incremental. Hence the need for organisational surgery of the cosmetic variety while bureaucratic institutions move slowly and cautiously towards reflecting changes in established value systems. One is reminded of Schaar's (1971) observation that "Before there can be a democratic organisation there must first be a democratic mentality ..."

Problems that impede orderly policy-making may also flow from such factors as bureaucratic power struggles which may, in turn, derive from various factors - some of an historical nature; others relating, for example, to political disputation. The Department of Foreign Affairs is perhaps a case in point. Traditionally, this Department has had a generalist orientation in its staffing and the nature of Australian society - where the political emphasis has been on domestic and developmental issues - would seem invariably to have resulted in the department having less influence than some other departments, in Cabinet and in the resolution of inter-departmental conflict. The result has been that the Department of Foreign Affairs has not, in my view, acted as comprehensive a co-ordinator of foreign affairs as has generally been the case with the State Department in the United States or the Foreign Office in the United Kingdom. Trade and Resources retains primacy in the field of trade policy and trade negotiations, as does Treasury in the area of foreign exchange policy, as does Transport in the area of international civil aviation policy, as does defence in the area of defence policy and so on - and, in many of these areas, Foreign Affairs is only hovering on the margins in the development and administration of policy in these various fields which impinge directly on the totality of our foreign policy. We thus tend to have a pigeon-holed foreign policy based on various bureaucratic fiefdoms and the opportunity for policy "trade offs" is diminished accordingly. For example, I can recall - as an officer in the Department of Trade - negotiating on commodity matters with United States officials from the State

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Department. Our own foreign service officials were very much on the fringe of the negotiations whereas their American opposite numbers were presenting the US position. The bureaucrat caught up in this situation will develop a perception of his role that is attuned to the realities of his environment. Some will leave for new pastures; a few will fight for positive change; most will accept the situation.

This situation is unlikely to change while primacy in the foreign aspects of a particular portfolio is coveted by the Minister concerned - as it doubtless always will be. Besides, where the Minister's stance shows signs of weakening, there is likely to be compensatory pressure for maintenance of the status quo from his departmental advisers.

While I am not familiar with the detail, I suspect that the current difficulties being experienced in relation to air-fare policies with Europe and ASEAN countries is probably a further example of this problem. However, perhaps the best example - as well as being the most public and acrimonious example - of political disputation intruding into the bureaucracy and causing distortions of one kind or another occurred in the late 1960's. I refer, of course, to the antagonism between Messrs. McEwen and McMahon - and, to a lesser degree, between their respective departments - which resulted in much normal policy conflict being resolved more by political muscle than by rational analysis.

Another problem for Australian bureaucracies is I believe the over-emphasis on what is described as the notion of "preference for relevance". This may often have unfortunate consequences in terms of the quality of management and it manifests itself in various ways. For example, it has been the tradition in Australia for departments dealing directly or indirectly with economic issues to be staffed overwhelmingly by officers with basic tertiary qualifications in economics. This compounds the problem of ethos to which I have already referred. By diminishing the variety of discipline, training and experience it narrows the overall departmental view of the world. It seems to me that we should remind ourselves that one with a degree in economics is not necessarily an economist - any more than, as a history graduate, I am an historian. At best, one can only assume that the economics graduate has acquired some reasonable degree of intellectual discipline and some reasonable grasp of the basic concepts associated with that discipline. Besides, as a proximate policy-maker, the issues with which he is confronted - certainly as he is elevated in the hierarchy - will be handled less by reference to accumulated academic knowledge and more by virtue of less tangible attributes such as judgment and common-sense and analytical capacities which are the preserve of no particular kind of graduate.

In recruitment to departments and authorities concerned with socio-economic policy formulation, the overriding criteria should surely be intellectual capacity, along with those other attributes to which I have already referred. Special expertise - in economics or anything else - may be required (or hired on an ad hoc basis) to meet the particular needs of the particular department but we should not delude ourselves that a basic degree is representative of specialist expertise.

In terms of broader management - about which I will make further observations later in this paper - the notion of preference for relevance may often lead to skewed management and myopic policy making. It may be helpful for the Head of a particular department or authority to have expertise in the relevant area but only if he is also a good manager. In big Government, the quality of management is fundamental to the quality of policy output and it should not necessarily follow that a diplomat is necessarily the person best equipped to head the Department of Foreign Affairs, or a teacher the Department of Education, or a doctor the Department of Health, or an agricultural scientist the Department of Agriculture. Extension of this thesis into the private sector would suggest that a geologist or mining engineer should necessarily be the head of CRA or that a pilot should necessarily be the executive head of an airline or a pharmacist the head of a drug company. For preference for relevance to be taken to this extreme - as has so often been the case in the public sector - is a nonsense. There are examples of excellent specialist administrators and of appalling generalist administrators. There are also examples of the reverse. The key point surely is that

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the head of a department in big Government - like the head of a large enterprise in the private sector - should be chosen primarily for his skills in management and policy formulation.

## REFORM AND REFORMERS

It is only two or three years since the Coombs Report was the most topical document in Australia on public service reform. It is a useful starting point for discussion of reform.

First, however, I would like to canvass some of the negative aspects as I see them. I think the terms of reference were too wide and that it was unfortunate that they were interpreted accordingly. The report is too big, too indigestible, too cluttered with hundreds of minor recommendations. It is a blank cheque for confusion and resistance. Attention on the fundamental is constantly diverted by the Commission's forays into minutiae. The approach is too much that of the blunderbuss; too little that of the rifle. I also believe that the membership of the Royal Commission was deficient in a number of respects but most notable because of the absence of a direct representative of users of the public service - whether those "users" be from commerce or welfare recipients. I believe, further, that too much time and money was spent on consultants, academic and otherwise, to produce esoteric theses on all sorts of issues marginal to what I regard as being the central issues of responsibility, accountability and professional management.

Weller and Smith (1977) in discussing relationships between the Commission and the Public Service, tell us that the Commission "... had to try to square the circle and combine co-operation with incisive questioning." The Commission's overall task would, in my view, have been rendered easier had it not also tried to re-invent the wheel! As an aside, one must also observe with relief that their questioning was incisive.

I believe that the issues of responsibility, accountability and management should have been the prime focus of the report - by a Royal Commission or Parliamentary Committee - with the detail being pursued on a planned and continuing basis by small task forces (including outsiders) working with, and within, the Service. It is in this latter context that specialist studies would have been more appropriate.

For all this, however - for all the deficiencies and while the Report may have resulted to date in more Ph.D's and book royalties than substantive implementation - it is nonetheless an immensely valuable document. It is valuable as a source document and in its prescriptions - the major problems are aired, along with the solutions seen as desirable by the Commission.

Certainly, as a practitioner, I am more comfortable with the Royal Commission's prescriptions than with those of some others. Dror (1978, Ch. 16) for example, canvasses a rash of improvements he perceives as being needed in the area of public policy-making - more metapolicy-making (ie. more knowledge about the process itself), more learning feedback, more systematic determining of strategies and goals, more searching for alternatives, more development of rational and extrarational components, more knowledge, more equipment, more energy - more everything. Among his many suggestions there are some that are - in his own words - "realistically idealistic"; others that may be unrealistically idealistic; and some that are plain commonsense and the subject of ready application. However, while his thesis provides us with a useful analytical model, it seems to me to reveal an over-emphasis on structural change and a pre-occupation with the seemingly arbitrary allocation of various intangible factors that are not rendered more tangible by being popped into Dror's tables and charts. One emerges from a reading of his work wondering what one's number should be!

The recommendations of the Royal Commission to which I would like to make particular reference are those that relate to responsibility, accountability and management. I shall also refer to the matter of public participation in the policy-making process.

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The approach adopted by the Royal Commission in relation to ministerial responsibility and bureaucratic accountability was to advance a network of recommendations which, taken together, seek to serve the twin aims of clarifying and strengthening the Minister's authority in relation to his department and of strengthening the accountability and managerial freedom of the permanent head. The major recommendations in this context include proposed amendments to the Public Service Act to incorporate direct references to the responsibility of the departmental head; the proposals for triennial, rolling forward estimates, with associated goals, objectives and priorities; the introduction of efficiency audits; a cautious approach to the creation of statutory authorities; the regular submission of annual reports; the rotation of officers between policy and management areas; and the rotation of, and improved selection procedures for, permanent heads.

The Commission attached particular importance to its proposals regarding forward estimates which it saw as a vehicle for the effective co-ordination of manpower, money, priorities and programmes. It was also seen as the best way of bridging the gap between political objectives and executive achievement.

These are sensible proposals which, with sound management, should mostly be capable of fairly ready implementation. However, there can be many a slip twixt the good sense of the proposals and the reality of implementation. Besides, one can reasonably ask whether you can in fact "make a silk purse out of a sow's ear." Do Ministers want the predictability and the planning and the more ordered responsibilities inherent in the Coombs proposals? Or might they feel more comfortable in the old system with its advantages of options being kept open and of Ministers perhaps being able to claim authority and responsibility without necessarily exercising it? There is the added question as to whether - particularly with three year Parliaments - politicians want to plan beyond the next election. Indeed, is it possible effectively to do so, given the reality of the political environment?

The recommendations may find their way on to the statute books and into the performance of everyday executive activity. However, one suspects that, in the ultimate, the issues of responsibility and accountability may well rest more on the vigilance of Parliament and of outsiders than on structural and legislative refinements. The further development of Parliamentary Committee arrangements will serve this end. In this context, the establishment of the Senate Estimates Committees at Federal level was a positive step forward.

Given the temper of the times, it is perhaps not surprising that social change, and its consequences for the bureaucracy, should emerge as a major theme in the Coombs Report. The Commission thus saw a key thrust of the report being directed towards making the bureaucracy more responsive and more sensitive; more accessible to members of the public and to client groups; more representative in structure and personnel of the society which it is supposed to serve; more open and less hierarchial. In other words, the report is talking about bureaucracy being, or being made, more contemporary.

To these ends, there was a further package of recommendations. The proposals in this context related to improved service delivery, including the fixing of specific decision-making powers on counter-staff; more delegation to field officers; various measures for inter-departmental co-ordination at the regional level; broader representation on advisory bodies; better information services; and so on. I believe the Commission was somewhat tentative in canvassing the implementation of some of these lofty and commendable proposals.

Related to these proposals were others which canvassed such matters as open reporting on staff; exchange schemes between the Public Service and other occupations; more mobility within the Public Service; and the need to reduce inbreeding in certain areas, notably the Departments of the Treasury and Foreign Affairs. A related recommendation was for the establishment of a Department of Industry and the Economy which, in the event, was rejected in lieu of other changes, including the splitting of the Treasury into the

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Treasury and Finance Departments and the expansion of the role of the Prime Minister's Department.

Because it was the subject of considerable attention by the Royal Commission - and remains a topical issue at both State and Federal levels - it is appropriate to make some observations about public participation in the policy-making process. Besides, the subject is directly relevant to my thesis - that of the need for reform that focuses on the quality of bureaucratic input to the policy-making process - if only because to accommodate the demand for greater public participation in the process must inevitably place greater demands on the proximate policy-makers.

The notion of public participation is a commendable one although it is perhaps arguable as to how widely such participation is in fact demanded. It seems to me that it is something which needs to be kept in its proper perspective. It may merely mean pandering to those who make the most noise and, importantly, public participation needs to be managed, administered and interpreted - a subject of policy-making in its own right. When conservationists demand participation in decision-making on power development in Tasmania their demand may be entirely legitimate but I am not sure that they are necessarily having an attack of altruistic pluralism. They mean surely that they want a say in the matter - not boiler-makers or pensioners or shopkeepers or members of the Royal Society but themselves, conservationists.

Government is, I believe, correct in promoting the notion of public participation but it is one thing to grab the tail; quite another to control the tiger. Unless you approach this question of public participation with great care, problems of equity in policy making may well be compounded rather than alleviated. For example, a public opinion poll, commissioned by conservationists, may reveal that a majority of people do not want the Franklin/Lower Gordon area flooded for power development. The fact that the same people were not asked if they would be prepared to pay substantially more for their electricity may be overlooked by the busy politician unless he is supported by competent professional advisors. As the staff of the Royal Commission pointed out: (Hazelhurst, C. and Nethercote, J.R. p. 186 in R.A.C.A.G.A.) "In the end the official must be guided by the weight his Minister attaches to various forms of participation, but in turn it should be recognised that in making a judgment the Minister will be influenced by departmental advice and that, in practice, much will be left to decisions by officials themselves."

So, we are reduced again to considerations of bureaucratic professionalism - to the need to sift and interpret and analyse and collate and, above all, to distil the complex into some balanced and digestible form. And all that is to be undertaken by people; by fallible human beings. It is art rather than science and it reveals again the importance of the bureaucrat in policy making. This role is the more sensitive in a situation in which, as Payne (1976, p. 311) reminds us, "... the planning process is concerned with power and, as such, the participation of certain groups of society has come to take precedence over others almost to their total exclusion." Payne may have been writing about public participation in relation to urban planning but this observation is no less relevant when applied to other areas of policy making.

## CONCLUSION

I believe that changes to structures can be important, very important. So, too, will improved arrangements for the collection, dissemination and use of information be important. Public access to the process is important, too. So is the need for appropriate and contemporary legislation to buttress such principles as responsibility and accountability. All these things are indeed important. For my part, however, they are nothing if the basic thrust of any reform is not people. I am not suggesting that Coombs ignored this factor - he paid it close attention. I am merely asserting its overriding importance. The recruitment, training, counselling, encouragement, mobility, secondment, terms and conditions of and for people is quite fundamental - to enhance their contribution as individuals, not as numbers; to elevate the quality of policy-making by



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democratic officials responsible to democratic Government in a democratic society.

Regarding recruitment, I am aware of countless examples of people with brilliant academic records proving to be inept as administrators and as policy analysts. Regarding training, I am familiar with countless examples of those assigned to training courses being those who can "be spared," rather than those in most need of further training. This is a particular problem at the senior management level - too many senior officers simply do not recognise who needs training, including themselves. Indeed, insufficient attention is given to post-recruitment training in most Australian bureaucracies. Regarding conselling, I am familiar with examples of officers being denied promotion for reasons which have never been conveyed to them and yet the "problems" were mostly readily soluble. Regarding secondment - for example, to the private sector - recent experiments in this area at Commonwealth level are to be welcomed. Continuation and expansion of this approach may serve, over time, to alleviate the problems associated with Canberra's physical isolation. (In public policy terms, Canberra is akin to Whitehall on the Isle of Man!)

It is against this background that I would also like to make passing reference to a long held personal aspiration - that we will one day have a national administrative, or public affairs, staff college. As a joint venture by all three levels of Government it would draw on a permanent staff and on experts from all fields in offering a wide range of courses for people at all levels in many bureaucracies. It might achieve many things but, in particular, it would offer a change of diet for bureaucrats who need to see their role in its broadest context. It might also help to break down the elements of confrontation seemingly inherent between bureaucracies in a Federal system.

The precision and predictability of bureaucratic reform will surely always be influenced by the idiosyncrasies of people - people as both the tool and the target of reform. Reformers - appointed or self-appointed - will be people carrying their own particular package of values, passions and prejudices. So, too, will the bureaucrats. One is reminded of Isiah Berlin's (1957) essay on Tolstoy and history, "The Hedgehog and the Fox." According to Berlin, Tolstoy's concern was with "... that which alone is genuine, the individual experience, the specific relation of individuals to one another ... the rare flashes of insight, the ordinary day-to-day succession of private data which constitute all there is - which are reality."

One could apply the same sentiments to bureaucracy and bureaucratic reform. The considerations of which Berlin wrote - those basic human considerations - are at once the life-blood of a democratic bureaucracy and yet, too, they are the rock on which reform may so often founder. This is not to say that reform is doomed to failure - merely that the pinnacle will never be scaled. It will only come closer - whatever the particular perception of the particular reformer - and then recede again in the mists of new values and new technologies. And yet to tackle the pinnacle is still important - not simply because it is there but, given the inevitable ossification of institutions, because bureaucratic change must be the subject of constant direct attention. The staff summary of the Coombs Report (Hazelhurst and Nethercote in R.A.C.A.G.A. p. 175) addresses this point in the following terms: "If the spirit of our recommendations infuses the attitudes of officials, adaptation is more likely to become a continuous, self-generating process. It would not, however, be wise to rely wholly on such internal sources of self-criticism and adaptability. External stimulus is from time to time necessary, as is the 'lateral thinking' of persons with wide but difference experience."

To assume that our bureaucracies will change in line with broader social change without such constant attention is, I believe, likely to widen the gap between following change and truly reflecting such change as soon as it can prudently be arranged. And that is to speak from the viewpoint of more formal or "organised" reform. Reform of a more fundamental variety might occur in a variety of ways but it should occur, perhaps most of all, through our educational institutions which hold the key to disseminating a better, longer-term understanding of our political and administrative institutions. (I believe, however, that there is presently a considerable deficiency in this latter area.

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"Government" - with all that the word means - does not in my view receive sufficient attention in secondary school teaching programmes.)

In other words, continuing reform of a positive and fundamental kind will occur in tandem with the progressive elevation of the political consciousness of the community at large.

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