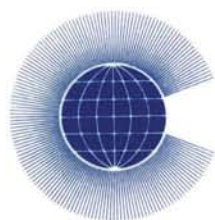


Techniques of Government within the Commonwealth

The Role of Principal Permanent Officials



Commonwealth Secretariat

TECHNIQUES OF GOVERNMENT WITHIN THE COMMONWEALTH

The Role of Principal Permanent Officials

Report on the Commonwealth Senior Officials' Meeting held in
Ottawa, October 1972

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Foreword

When Commonwealth Heads of Government met in Singapore in January 1971, Mr. Pierre Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada, suggested that Commonwealth leaders should discuss techniques of government within the Commonwealth and exchange views on the institutions and the methods they had developed to meet the complex challenges of contemporary government.

It was agreed that Heads of Government would take up this subject at their next meeting. Meanwhile, I was asked to convene a meeting of Commonwealth Senior Officials to prepare the groundwork for the discussion of this subject by Commonwealth leaders.

The Senior Officials' Meeting was held in Ottawa in October 1972. The officials were either Cabinet Secretaries or the official heads of the Offices of Presidents or Prime Ministers. They agreed on various aspects of the subject that required to be considered at the highest political level by Heads of Government, and themselves discussed in detail some aspects of government of special concern to the principal permanent officials in national administrations.

These discussions broke new ground in the wide-ranging processes of Commonwealth consultation and exchange of ideas and experiences. Principal officials from 29 countries took a thoughtful look at the way they organised the support processes for the central decision-making apparatus of their governments, how duties were allocated between ministries and how their activities were co-ordinated, how the administrative machine was geared to the development process, and to effective communication with the people, and on personnel policy at the seniormost level. Innovative approaches adopted by various countries, ranging from a "think tank" in one or a Conference of Secretaries in another, were discussed.

As Prime Minister Trudeau pointed out at Singapore, the Commonwealth provides a particularly favourable setting for discussions of this nature. Though political systems or administrative structures may differ, there are conventions, many administrative habits, and a vocabulary with which all are familiar, added to the particular ambience of Commonwealth gatherings.

The initiative taken at Singapore has not by any means been exhausted by the discussions at the Senior Officials' Meeting and later at the Heads of Government Meeting in Ottawa in August 1973. Discussion of other aspects of this multi-dimensional question of techniques of government will continue at such forums: it is significant that the Commonwealth now favours two-yearly meetings of Senior Officials alternating with those of Heads of Government. Other action includes a study by the Secretariat of financial control and forward planning, for the consideration of governments, and consultations, now in progress, on the establishment of a programme to provide new opportunities for study and exchange of experience among senior officials from the Commonwealth.

Commonwealth governments have agreed that material for the discussions at the Senior Officials' Meeting on the role of principal permanent officials should be made available to a wider public than its issue as an inter-government document would ensure. Hence this publication, which I hope will contribute to further discussion of a subject of substantial importance to all Commonwealth countries.

In its preparation, the Commonwealth Secretariat has had the help of Mr. M. J. Lee of Birkbeck College and the Institute of Commonwealth Studies, the University of London, to whom I express my thanks.

Arnold Smith
Commonwealth Secretary-General

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Introduction

1. This report summarizes the discussion on comparative techniques of government which formed part of the agenda for the meeting of Senior Commonwealth Officials in Ottawa from 16 to 19 October 1972. It also includes material taken from the papers circulated by six member governments.
2. The meeting considered a number of topics of common interest to the participants. It sought to identify the problems which it would be useful to discuss on future occasions. The following two chapters summarize the substances of the discussion on the five topics to which the most time was devoted. The concluding chapter covers two further areas of interest to which the main discussions were related, and suggests which aspects of the subject might appear on future agendas.
3. The section on financial procedures deals briefly with a topic on which senior officials have asked for further information; that on senior personnel policy takes points from different parts of the principal discussions, because this topic, although intended for consideration, was never formally taken.

I Different Titles - Comparable Roles

4. The institutions which provide a common pattern of administrative procedures throughout the Commonwealth do not by themselves provide an adequate framework in which internal political problems can be discussed on a pan-Commonwealth basis. The Commonwealth contains so many different internal political styles. Accordingly any discussion of specific political problems has to be related to the particular contexts in which those problems occur.
5. But Principal Permanent officials in Commonwealth countries play roles which each recognizes in the other. There are a number of situations which seem familiar when they are translated into the terms which have been developed within the Commonwealth idiom. The principal patterns of administration developed in the Commonwealth provide administrations with a common terminology as well as mutual understanding of each other's conventions. High-ranking civil servants can easily appreciate the judgement required in different situations to handle the machinery of government.

6. The most important element in this experience of mutual recognition is that the management of the administrative machine can never be wholly divorced from tendering advice on the use of administrative procedures and institutions for political purposes. The Principal Permanent official requires a certain sensitivity to the political climate in which he works. He cannot afford to hold a view of politics which is too rationalistic. So much of the business of government is about the maintenance of authority and order, and not just "the delivery of services to the people". The most senior civil servant cannot always but be closely involved with the identity of the regime in power.

7. Although the term, Principal Permanent official, covers a number of different titles*, it is possible to compare and contrast the different roles involved. The expansion in size of the Commonwealth has transformed the character of the senior officials' meeting. The older dominions were originally represented by Cabinet Secretaries who all seemed to hold strictly comparable posts. Co-operation between Cabinets during the Second World War depended partly on this fact. But in the modern system of Commonwealth consultation, the person designated as Cabinet Secretary is not necessarily the most senior career official. The Republican style of government has introduced fresh innovations. The differences in size between Commonwealth countries means that each Head of the Civil Service works according to the scope of his responsibilities.

8. In the majority of Commonwealth countries, the idea that a career civil servant should occupy a certain pride of place at the centre of government owes more to the administrative centralisation associated with the Chief Secretary in the pre-independence government than to any conscious decision by Ministers that the management of their agenda and decisions requires a full-time paid official. Two traditions seem to have been fused together. The tradition based on a distinction between the secretariat and field administration co-exists with the tradition of departmental independence and ministerial accountability to parliament. The first emphasizes responsibility for managing the careers of senior administrators and the creation of a "political service"; the second

*See Appendix P.36.

emphasizes departmental seniority rules in promotion and a technical ministerial responsibility for all administrative actions. The designation and function of the Principal official is an expression of the particular combination which his country has followed. Commonwealth countries have moved away from British practice and British colonial procedures in adapting their institutional inheritance to their own political needs.

9. The way in which the two traditions have been combined affects the field of recruitment for senior advisers. There is some ambivalence in handling the system of appointment. In the old-fashioned cabinet tradition, only the Cabinet Secretary remained in his post for a number of years; the staff of the cabinet office were recruited from other departments and served a short term on secondment from another job. This convention was never wholly transferred to the colonial secretariat, although secretariat officers and field administrators tended to follow different careers. Similarly, the size of the country affects the kind of machine which it maintains. There is a tendency for small countries to retain a centralized office on the lines of the old secretariat, with a series of technical departments undertaking the day-to-day executive work. The constitution also affects the designation of public offices which can be held by civil servants, and probably reflects in many cases the authority of individual politicians.

10. But whatever variations in designation of title and formal position, the role of the Principal official can be studied in three dimensions which reflect the political development of his country. These dimensions were revealed in the course of the conference discussions.

11. First, the Principal official is affected by the degree to which the government is dependent upon one central administrative machinery of which he is head. There seems to be a number of positions along a general spectrum which ranges from the work of a Cabinet Secretary at one end, responsible to a collective body of Ministers, to the work of a Private Secretary at the other end, who is regarded as an official handling the work of only the chief executive Minister. This spectrum is in some measure related to the parliamentary tradition. Where the Cabinet is primarily conscious of the need to organise a collective front in the management

of a parliamentary majority, the senior official is much less likely to identify with the leader of government.

12. Second, the Principal official is also affected by the degree of centralisation. The development of Federal structures in the Commonwealth, as well as various kinds of decentralisation, have transformed the highly centralised style of the British system. Several Commonwealth countries now have provincial ministers, or provincial civil servants of Permanent Secretary rank. The machinery of central government has therefore had to accommodate some special treatment of central-local relations.

13. Third, responsibility for the promotion and posting of senior administrators does not always lie in the hands of the chief policy adviser. Britain itself separated the office of the head of the civil service from that of Cabinet Secretary. There are many permutations in the transformation of the public service commissions which were established at independence to supervise the management of the public service. Permanent Secretaries of departments may still exercise considerable influence over the selection of personnel, but the Principal official is not always associated with decisions taken on the promotion of his colleagues. In those Commonwealth countries which have established one-party traditions of government, the line between a senior administrator and a senior politician is sometimes difficult to draw.

14. All three dimensions represent changes in constitutional convention, rather than fundamental revisions of the constitution. In fact, it is still rare for a Commonwealth country to depart radically from the general range of possibilities within the Commonwealth tradition. For example, few governments run a dual executive, with the two offices of President and Prime Minister on the lines of the French Fifth Republic. Recent changes in Sierra Leone are an exception. The normal Commonwealth convention is for a President to replace a non-executive Governor-General, while the Prime Minister retains the main executive authority; or alternatively to abolish the post of Prime Minister when the office of an executive President is created. Nor have there been any significant attempts to develop the office of Deputy Prime Minister.

15. The most marked change in constitutional organization has been in those countries with military regimes. Far from diminishing

the importance of senior administrators in managing the machinery of government, a military regime appears to emphasize the value of a strong administrative frame. In Nigeria, for example, civil servants have continued to tender advice to the military government as they did to the earlier civilian administration, and have not become substitute Ministers. Each of the twelve states has a military governor (a civilian Administrator in one state) and an executive council nominated by the governor, as in the federal executive council. The Supreme Military Council is made up of state governors and the heads of the arms of the defence forces. In Uganda, however, civil servants have themselves in some cases taken on Ministerial roles under the military regime.

16. Whatever the pattern of arrangements, the scope and nature of the responsibilities of the Principal officials are identified by a rather unique combination of roles. They bring together the management of the machinery of government in its purely administrative aspects with the tendering of advice on how that machinery might be used for national political ends. The shape of this conference report follows these two different aspects of the work of Principal officials.

17. Chapter II deals with two items with which the conference was particularly concerned, the "Support System" for the central decision-making, and the problems of administrative co-ordination. These items cover procedural instruments which try to ensure that what has been decided is implemented. The Principal official presides over the machinery of government as a "transmission system". This often means evaluating the consequences of particular decisions.

18. Chapter III deals with three areas of administrative expertise which are vitally important in giving the machine a sense of political direction. The allocation of functions between different government agencies illustrates the general orientation of the regime and the problems which it would like to tackle. Effective financial procedures are vital to any mobilisation of resources. The relationship between government agencies and the people determines the success or failure of many policies. On all these questions, the Principal official has to bring his technical expertise to the service of the regime in power.

19. The final chapter deals with areas where the Principal officials' tasks in administrative management join his work in furthering political programmes. Economic planning is a major concern of all governments, whether they are part of the "developing world" or not. Senior personnel policy is the area in which par excellence the Principal officials' influence is felt.

20. The Ottawa meeting established that Principal officials, whatever their formal designation, have a degree of mutual understanding based on the obligation to look at organisation from both an administrative and a political point of view. The political content in their work may or may not be regarded as partisan. The scope and nature of their responsibilities involve interesting questions of judgement about the strategies which it is appropriate for full-time permanent officials to advocate. A central interest of the conference was to develop an appreciation of the judgement which Principal officials display in choosing between the options available.

II Managing the Machinery of Government

21. The first rule of the Principal official is to manage the machinery of government in the purely technical sense of ensuring that the arrangements which have been made can carry the load placed upon them. Because that load is largely an expression of political judgement, it is not always easy to separate this role from the second role of tendering advice on how the machine might be given a direction, but if the technical aspect is discussion first and separately, it makes it possible to isolate more clearly how Principal officials work.

Support for Central Decision-Making

22. The role of the Principal official has most frequently been associated with the post of Cabinet Secretary or Secretary to the Executive Head of Government. The management of the central arena of decision-making has called for the most skilled administrative advice from senior officials. The Commonwealth contains many different "support systems" at the centre of government. Their character varies according to the style of planning which is being pursued, and to the basic pattern of institutions. Principal

officials are usually faced with a recognisable set of alternatives when they are asked to give advice on the design of the most appropriate "support".

23. The conference considered some of the possible systems. "Support" might have to go beyond the necessary organisation for the routine submission of papers to the centre of government. The degree to which this might be necessary and the kind of analytic work which anything more than routine requires, were both subjects of great interest to Principal officials.

24. Cabinet office influence is traditionally associated with its general function of servicing all inter-departmental meetings of importance, whether they consist of civil servants or of ministers. The Cabinet Secretary plays an important part in advising what committees might be set up, and what items might be included on their agenda. It is also part of his general functions to ensure that appropriate decisions, once they have been taken, are properly conveyed and understood. This role on occasion cannot avoid touching questions of substance. But in general the cabinet offices of the Commonwealth are not organised in such a way as to provide a separate channel of advice to ministers, outside the routine briefings which they receive from their departments.

25. In countries where a separate Ministry of Planning has been established, there is a tendency for the planning machinery itself to develop its own "support system" separately from cabinet. There is also a tendency in all countries for the Ministry of Finance to undertake forms of inter-departmental co-ordination which might otherwise fall to the cabinet office. If there are any inter-departmental committees which do not fall under cabinet office jurisdiction, they tend to be in the financial field.

26. Where Planning Offices exist, there is also a tendency for them to be 'expansionist' and therefore to be opposed by a more 'restrictive' Ministry of Finance. Disputes between departments of finance and planning may only be settled by some arrangement under the Prime Minister or associated with a central cabinet office. In Swaziland, for example, the Ministry of Planning was taken into the Prime Minister's Department. It looks as if a planning unit is more likely to be found in those Commonwealth countries which

retain something of the strong secretariat tradition associated with pre-independence administration.

27. The conference identified two rather different kinds of support. The first arises by extension of the cabinet office into fields of planning; the second is an elaboration of the secretariat system, which is particularly likely to handle planning questions separately from cabinet work. These two styles of support are closely related, because they both rely on inter-departmental meetings. But in the secretariat tradition, the cabinet secretary is less likely to be the principal adviser to government.

28. The basic tool of "support" in the secretariat tradition is the Conference of Secretaries. This has perhaps been most fully developed in India and Sri Lanka. The Heads of Departments in India meet together regularly to cover such broad policy areas as internal affairs and economic questions. The cabinet secretary may also call together special *ad hoc* meetings to thrash out particular problems. But the cabinet secretary has no total authority in this matter. Other Permanent Secretaries may also summon their colleagues to special meetings, or set up committees within a general framework of the conference of secretaries. The Sri Lanka Conference of Secretaries illustrates how the post of cabinet secretary can be transformed within the secretariat tradition. The Permanent Secretaries Conference used to be summoned and presided over by the Secretary to the Treasury, and its meetings were held at the Ministry of Finance. The Secretary of the Conference was an assistant secretary to the Ministry of Finance. But in 1970 the Cabinet of the present government decided to create the post of a Director of Cabinet Affairs, who is also secretary to the cabinet. This transferred the servicing of inter-departmental committees under the general umbrella of the Conference of Secretaries from the Ministry of Finance to the Cabinet Office. Meetings were henceforward held at the Cabinet Office, and the Director of Cabinet Affairs began to act as the prime link between the Cabinet and the conference.

29. These two traditions of management in the central arena therefore formulate rather differently the questions which might be asked about the development of support for the central decision-making process. Where Cabinet Offices have established their pre-eminence, and where planning has not been made the subject of a

separate institutional responsibility, there are suggestions that the cabinet office itself might develop a separate capacity to offer advice to ministers collectively. Elsewhere, in countries which have at the same time retained a strong central secretariat and established a separate planning department, the technical questions for improving the quality of decision-making tend to be framed in terms of improving the office of the President, the Prime Minister, or the Chief Secretary, rather than in terms of the Cabinet Secretariat.

30. The Ottawa meeting showed a strong interest in the 1968 reforms of the Canadian Privy Council Office. These seemed to represent a clear range of options in developing the role of the Cabinet Secretariat.

31. Canadian officials saw recent developments in terms of three levels of complexity. They postulated that Cabinet Offices elsewhere would be obliged to move from the second to the third stage, as Canada had done. At the first level, the administrator in the Cabinet Office is required to do no more than organise and circulate the appropriate papers; but at the second level, the staff is expected to ensure that Ministers have sufficient information to feel satisfied that they have considered all the possible options. At the third level, in addition to this responsibility for information, the Cabinet Office is concerned with providing a system of long-term planning and of monitoring policy implementation. A central part of this third stage is that the Cabinet Secretary is expected to supply some kind of overall analysis. The Canadian Government associated this transition to the third stage with the development of more elaborate techniques in planning the use of resources. In Canada, the Treasury Board is part of the Privy Council Office.

32. The meeting considered the Canadian and British experiments in this field. The Canadian reforms of 1968 included setting a time for each of the Standing Committees of Cabinet to meet on a regular basis. They also removed as many questions as possible from the over-burdened meeting of the full Cabinet. Ministers were issued with agendas and documents, whether they were members of a committee or not; and decisions taken in committee were not implemented until after they had been included in an annex to the main cabinet agenda, from which any Minister could give notice that he wished to have a particular decision reopened.

The Cabinet is divided into Standing Committees to deal with specific policy areas, and coordinating committees, of which the priorities and planning committee has received the greatest publicity. This committee is not an "inner Cabinet", but it deals with long-term questions, and the officials in the Planning Division who service it bring new expertise to the decision-making process.

33. The British equivalent is in a more experimental form. The central policy review staff under Lord Rothschild is designed to act as a unit within the Cabinet Office which can brief Ministers collectively on the overall strategy of the Government. Perhaps its most valuable function is the presentation which it makes two or three times a year to Ministers, relating what they said in their election programme to what they achieved in office. The staff are asked to monitor the performance of the administration as a whole, and to forecast future difficulties. The central policy review staff is accessible to all Ministers, and not merely a private instrument of the Prime Minister. It can be commissioned to undertake specific reviews of controversial areas of policy. Lord Rothschild himself has made several public statements about the kind of research work which his staff are able to do. But their position in the cabinet office rests on co-operation with other departments. Their function is to undertake long-term reviews, and they cannot therefore in any sense be regarded as a system of "counter-briefing" to the briefing already given to Ministers by their departments.

34. Those working within the secretariat tradition found it more difficult to identify the three levels of complexity which the Canadians had suggested. They were less inclined to see the kind of analysis being performed on policy review as part of cabinet office functions, and were accustomed to regard the complexity of the support system as a function of the office of the chief executive, served as it often was by a Chief secretary of government. The Commonwealth contains several different forms of combining the Prime Minister's Office with the Cabinet Office.*

35. Although some countries have followed Britain in retaining a very small private office for the Prime Minister, attached rather loosely to the Cabinet Office, the majority of countries have

*See Appendix P.36.

brought the Cabinet secretariat functions within the general ambit of the Chief Executive's Office, President or Prime Minister.

36. The Commonwealth therefore contains several examples of a "support system" based entirely on the Chief Executive's office and centralised in a secretariat style. The Chief Secretary of Government in Malaysia, for example, has in his office a separate Cabinet division, as well as units dealing with general planning and economic planning, which come under a junior minister within the Prime Minister's Office. The main inter-departmental committees of co-ordination are therefore not so much Cabinet committees in the strictest sense, but departmental committees of the Prime Minister's Office. These include such Ministerial committees as the National Action Council, and a meeting of heads of departments called the National Development Planning Committee. In some cases this style of support involves creating junior ministers within the office of head of the executive, who work directly to him in the business of co-ordination, and are somewhat separate in their functions from those heads of executive departments who are not included in the central planning apparatus. In Swaziland, for example, it is suggested that the heads of the four major co-ordinating ministries should be Ministers of State in the Prime Minister's Office. The Planning Council would then consist of the Prime Minister as Chairman, and the respective Ministers of State with their Permanent Secretaries, including the Secretary of the Cabinet. In this kind of arrangement, the Secretary to the Cabinet need not necessarily be the Chief Secretary of the Prime Minister's Office. Some of the difficulties of identifying the Principal official arise in administrative reforms of this kind.

37. The design of the "support system" is therefore closely connected with the designation of the post which has the recognised status of Principal official. In those countries where the conference of secretaries is not entirely under the management of the Cabinet Office, it may be difficult to identify one individual who carries the full weight of responsibility both for the design of the machinery of government and for general policy advice on its use. But a developed cabinet system or an elaborate executive office usually provides a post which is unequivocally the head of the paid career civil service.

38. The constitutional problems raised by the development of the decision-making system also reflect the mixture of administrative habits to be found in the Commonwealth. In those countries which consider moving their Cabinet secretariats into the third stage of complexity outlined by the Canadians, there seems to be a danger that Ministers will lose their traditional sense of personal responsibility for the affairs of their departments. A Cabinet Secretariat which presents the analysis of departmental policies on some sort of collective scale to a Cabinet Committee seems to be weakening departmental responsibility. But in those countries which cannot see the Cabinet Secretariat developing on these lines, with a suitable analytic capacity, this danger seems remote.

39. Similarly, those countries interested in reforming the decision-making processes of Cabinet are likely to associate them with some form of reconstruction in the Prime Minister's Office. There are a number of rather delicate problems surrounding the relationship between the Prime Minister's Office and the Cabinet. No Prime Minister could tolerate bad relationships between the two. The Secretary to the Canadian Cabinet distinguished the two sides of the work in the following terms: "The Prime Minister's Office is partisan, politically oriented, yet operationally sensitive. The Privy Council Office is non-partisan, operationally oriented, yet politically sensitive". The difficulty of relating these two parts of the centre of the machine arises largely in those countries following the British tradition. Commonwealth countries in the secretariat tradition find it easier to fit a Cabinet division into the Prime Minister's Office.

40. Finally, countries which have developed their Cabinet Office to the third stage of complexity in policy review machinery may find that they are beginning to change the relationship between Ministers and civil servants. In Canada, civil servants and Ministers sit together in Cabinet committees. But it is more common in the Commonwealth for countries to follow the British tradition of separating official and unofficial committees. On occasion, officials other than the Cabinet Secretary may attend meetings by invitation. The design of new kinds of support for the Cabinet or other central decision-making bodies may begin to affect these conventions.

41. The Principal official in recommending changes at the centre, may easily run into political questions of some importance. Much of the emphasis in the reform of Cabinet Office structure, both in Canada and Britain, has been in favour of developing a stronger sense of collective responsibility for the Government in power. The Canadian reforms of 1968 were deliberately designed to give Ministers a greater sense of participation in a collective programme. The design of the support system can never be strictly a matter of administrative efficiency alone.

Administrative Co-Ordination

42. Whatever support system is used, the day-to-day running of the machine requires the Principal official to concentrate on managing the system of internal communication inside government. The task of co-ordination requires an intimate knowledge of the machine. Traditionally, the Cabinet Secretary has been responsible for preparing the agenda for Ministers to consider, and once they have issued their decision, for conveying them to the appropriate agencies responsible for execution.

43. But many Commonwealth countries see problems of communication inside government largely in terms of development policies. Most governments are concerned with economic growth, as well as the distribution of wealth. Chapters III and IV below indicate the degree to which many of the management problems experienced at the centre of government can be related to the overall responsibility for economic development.

44. There is always a danger that the Principal official will be asked to develop his own office more than it is reasonable to expect. Some may suggest that the centre should be developed as a counter-weight to departments. Officials at the centre may often doubt whether specific options have been raised and assessed in departments before submissions are prepared. The work required to act as a check on departments may entail more expertise than a Cabinet Office can provide. Each variation in the support system described in the last chapter may develop its own method of policy review, and form of staffing at the centre. But many problems of co-ordination have common features, whatever the system.

45. Principal officials see three major types of problem. First, submissions made to the centre of government by departments may be deficient either in form or in content. It may be difficult for Ministers to secure the appropriate information from departments other than their own, if they are to participate in a proper collective decision. Some submissions appear deliberately to ignore a series of options. Secondly, there may be deficiencies of structure, which make it difficult to secure a smooth co-ordination of policies. It sometimes seems particularly difficult to relate planning departments, finance departments and other offices servicing central inter-departmental committees, such as the Cabinet Office. Development questions particularly require their own form of co-ordination. In Jamaica, for example, the planning office was brought directly under the Prime Minister's department. In countries such as Britain, where large departments have been created in order to bring together under the same Ministerial responsibility certain allied areas of policy-making, there is a new kind of difficulty. The Cabinet Office may find it hard to persuade a large department that some questions should be considered in the Cabinet arena. There is a tendency for large departments to regard their own structure as sufficient for handling the major questions.

46. Thirdly, the most important kind of problem in co-ordination is the formal disagreement between departments or agencies. This may take place as a result of lack of communication between departments, or perhaps more frequently in the disputes which take place at the lower level of the administrative hierarchy.

47. The Principal official can try and remedy some of these difficulties by informal methods. He may, for instance, act as "Devil's Advocate" in Cabinet, in order to put a case which he thinks has not been properly argued in the submission made by the department. Alternatively, he may act before a particular submission is considered, by consulting with his fellow Permanent Secretaries, or by calling special meetings. He might even speak to Ministers and ask them to arrange informal meetings themselves. It may occasionally be necessary for a difficulty which has arisen lower down the hierarchy to be brought up to the top, even to the Ministerial level.

48. But the principal formal methods of handling problems of co-ordination lie in using the network of inter-departmental committees

which come under the Cabinet Office, or belong to the Conference of Secretaries. It may be possible to create a special committee to examine papers submitted for Cabinet consideration. For example, in Botswana, the Cabinet Secretary joins the Attorney-General and the Permanent Secretary of Finance to form a Cabinet “business committee” which has the power to refer papers back to departments if they consider that they need amplification.

49. The Principal official frequently acts as the prime link between Ministers and the departments of government. The Cabinet Secretary is responsible for making sure that the decision taken is transferred to the appropriate place for action. Some decisions may need explanation, and in these cases, the Permanent official may need to have informal discussions. The Conference of Secretaries provides an excellent meeting place for such expositions. For example, the Chief Secretary to the Government in Malaysia reports Cabinet decisions to meetings of Permanent Secretaries, even though they have already been communicated directly. This kind of informal discussion enables senior officials to gain an overall view, and to understand the spirit in which the decisions are taken.

50. But the written word was still valuable. Important decisions have to be recorded with accuracy and clarity. A good discussion, well recorded, with decisions set out and attributed to the appropriate Ministers, is an authoritative record of what government has decided to do.

51. On occasion, the Principal official may find it necessary to issue notes for guidance of departments. Written instructions, or circulars, represent attempts to codify the rules to be followed in the submission of papers. It may also be possible to inaugurate a system of progress reports. For example, in Sri Lanka, a tabulation of cabinet decisions and departmental progress achieved is regularly circulated to Ministers. A similar list is also circulated on matters being considered in the central department of Finance and Planning. These reports mean that Ministers and officials have some indication of the speed with which decisions are implemented and can spot where delays occur.

52. But too elaborate a system of formal meetings and written instructions issued by officials for officials is sometimes criticised

by the politicians. Many of the methods employed to solve matters of co-ordination rest on confidence and trust between Ministers and civil servants. On occasion the Conference of Secretaries itself might be looked upon with some suspicion. In some situations, meetings of Permanent Secretaries might also fail to create an appropriate atmosphere of trust. The minutes of such meetings are recorded in some countries and sent to the Prime Minister. In others, formal meetings of this kind are limited by their terms of reference to establishment matters, such as leave, housing, pensions, and therefore do not stray into policy areas which are the responsibility of Ministers. But in general, the conference of secretaries' mechanism may be more difficult to develop in a formal way as a means of bringing a regular routine into discussions involving the co-ordination of the activities of different departments.

53. In countries where Conferences of Secretaries are confined largely to discussing public service matters, there is a further danger that they might be regarded as being too powerful by trades unions, or by junior civil servants. It was important to avoid letting the formal machinery which might be used to improve the quality of communication inside government fall into staff association disputes.

54. The first role of the Principal official in managing the machinery raises two interesting sets of problems. In the first place, it is not always clear what kind of policy analysis is required in any given administrative system, and where experts in long-range forecasting should be placed. Different parts of the machine need different kinds of 'analytic capacity'. It is important to discuss what provision can be made for having the appropriate results available when they are most needed. The institutional arrangements for taking advantage of techniques which improve the intelligence available to decision-makers can be very perplexing.

55. In the second place, many of the technical difficulties in improving co-ordination seem to stem from the fact that officials at the bottom or in the middle ranks of the hierarchy do not necessarily share the views of those at the top on the role and function of the organisation to which they all belong. The scarcest resource of any organisation is the time of its most senior members, and this cannot easily be harnessed in order to educate junior

staff in the basic purposes which are being pursued. Yet some promotion of a greater sense of common effort is essential to any system of management. The machinery requires a doctrine of public service.

III Administrative Advice for Political Purposes

56. The second role of the Principal official is to offer advice on how the machinery might be mobilised by the government in order to follow the political objectives which it wishes to pursue. Administrative instruments carry different connotations according to the context in which they are used. Ministers and heads of government have predilections for particular methods. The Principal official has a high sensitivity to the full implications of alternative courses of action in administrative arrangements.

Allocation of functions

57. The allocation of administrative duties and responsibilities is much more closely associated with political dispute than the day-to-day problems of co-ordination. The Principal official treads on most delicate ground when he gives advice on who should perform what function. Yet all administrative machines must be geared to the political purposes of those in power, and the Principal official is primarily responsible for advice on the instrumentation of the government machine.

58. There are two conflicting requirements. On the one hand, all governments have to create suitable political offices for their supporters. In systems where the tradition of parliamentary accountability is strong, the number of offices created may be regulated. On the other hand, all governments have to decide which set of functions can best be grouped together, either for specific political reasons or to improve the effectiveness of the machine. It is often very difficult to see the wisest course of action because the needs of policy administration are always changing. In countries particularly concerned with development planning, the administrative machine must also be able to handle all communications between the top and the bottom of the hierarchy, in order to relate planning goals to actual achievement in the field.

59. There are also important questions of scale. A small country does not need the same administrative structure as a large one. For example, in Swaziland the Government is considering making a distinction between policy departments and executive departments. The first would be managed by Ministers of State within the Prime Minister's Office. Such a distinction would place policy questions at the centre, with a Cabinet Office, a Ministry of Finance, a Department of Planning, and a Department of Establishments, leaving a series of executive departments to cover the specialised functions, such as local administration, physical planning, housing, or roads.

60. Larger countries have attempted to simplify their machinery of government. Where there are a large number of ministries and agencies, it is sometimes possible to reduce the size of the Cabinet, or the number of Chief Ministers, by various forms of amalgamation. For example, the British Cabinet has now been reduced to about 18 Ministers. These amalgamations also make it possible to resolve some of the inter-departmental differences which arise when the principal agencies of government are more numerous. Related functions can be grouped together inside a large department. But such departments create new problems. A single Minister in a large department finds it difficult to cover the whole range of issues for which he is responsible. Large departments therefore develop "Cabinets" of their own, which consist of meetings between the Minister and his junior Ministers as well as senior civil servants. In these conditions there is some danger that problems which need to be discussed externally are swallowed up in the internal processes of the large department itself. It is difficult to draw the dividing line between departments in such a way as to do the minimum damage to their essential inter-relation. For example, it is difficult sometimes to devise the most appropriate organisation for giving effect to the concept of regional policy. All the aspects of applying a regional policy, such as land use, communications, industry and employment, cannot possibly come underneath the same department.

61. The creation of large departments has increased the need for effective machinery of co-ordination at the centre. This is particularly true in the allocation of resources and assessment of priorities. For example, the British Government now includes

three major departments of State at the centre – the Cabinet Office, the Treasury, and the Civil Service Department. As explained above, the Cabinet Office has now enlarged itself by taking in a new body called the Central Policy Review Staff. Much of this work in reforming the centre of government has to be related to the concept of collective Ministerial responsibility, while at the same time retaining the sense of individual responsibility for the work of departments, which is particularly important where parliaments entertain a strong sense of the need to make Ministers accountable. The central machinery of government has to be designed in such a way that it is possible to examine the whole programme of the administration in power.

62. But there are important political pressures in favour of keeping a large number of separate agencies of government. In the first place, it seems easier to keep a large number of small units in check, if they are to be held accountable for their actions to Parliament. In the second place, governments find it difficult to retain a sufficient sense of personal responsibility for individual Ministers if the scope of their responsibility is too large. One solution is to create agencies in which civil servants can be held responsible for management. For example, in Britain this delegation has taken two forms. First, work is transferred to bodies outside departments, particularly where it is of a sufficiently commercial character to enable the organisation to be regarded as wholly or largely financially self-supporting. When this is the case, efficiency can be measured by the price mechanism or some other form of performance test. Large parts of the public sector have been handled in this way, particularly through the nationalised industries which comprise all the major public utilities. Second, there are certain blocks of executive work where the degree of ministerial accountability can be reduced, insofar as issues of policy are rarely involved and there is little need for day-to-day ministerial supervision. In such cases, management can be devolved as far as possible to the officials in charge of the organisation. Such agencies have been created to deal with the provision of advice about employment opportunities, and to handle credit facilities and guarantees for exporters.

63. But in some countries it is impossible to reduce the number of departments, and to make civil servants responsible for the

management of agencies without making them into some kind of 'political' association of Ministers. Many pressures are in favour of a greater fragmentation of government. Leaders like to be able to create offices for their supporters. Only in military regimes have there been conscious attempts to reduce the number of offices available. The military regime in Ghana for example tended to group the ministries which it took over when allocating them to members of the National Redemption Council.

64. Federalism also tends to multiply the number of units in government. The head of government usually has to satisfy a number of regional interests in his Cabinet. In both Canada and Australia there is a tendency to have larger cabinets for this reason. The Indian Prime Minister is also under some pressure, and has to find a way of reconciling different parts of the country with the central regime by allocating certain offices on a regional basis. Unitary systems which have strong regional identities may also experience similar difficulties in reducing the number of central government offices.

65. It is also difficult to prevent professional and technical departments from defending their own interests, which they often see embodied in a separate autonomous existence within a single agency. Some professional civil servants are very loyal to the organisations to which they belong, and are reluctant to see them amalgamated into any larger units.

66. The machinery of development planning adds its own dimension of difficulty. It usually contains two sets of requirements which are in conflict. First, there has to be some central body marshalling all the figures on available resources in order to make decisions of allocation; second, the government requires a fairly decentralised system of administration to be able to involve the people at the lowest level in the implementation of local plans. Several governments have experimented with ways of decentralising the central machine, while at the same time building up at the village level institutions which can co-operate with regional or district agencies. In those Commonwealth countries where a sharp distinction between the secretariat and the district was the most notable feature of the pre-independence system, it has often been possible to adapt the system of field administration for new political purposes in economic planning.

67. Governments interested in economic planning may also exploit the use of statutory corporations. This is comparable to the form of delegation to nationalised industries explained above. But statutory bodies have themselves to be grouped and supervised, and it may sometimes be difficult to relate their work to economic planning at regional level without creating a special separate central agency.

68. Malaysia has tried to solve all these different problems by creating a "national operations room". This is a point in the system serviced by the implementation and co-ordination unit in the Prime Minister's Office which can at any given point in time express some view of the overall position in economic planning. But its effectiveness depends largely on the fact that the unit responsible is part of the Prime Minister's department and services the executive committees of the National Action Council. The latter's decision can be made binding on other Ministers and departments, and can therefore transcend the lines of Ministerial jurisdiction. This degree of centralisation is combined with a system of local committees, so that the National Action Council at the centre is paralleled by state and district 'action committees'.

69. Another method is to build upon the system of provincial and district commissioners. One way of decentralising the system of economic planning is to give greater responsibility at the provincial level. For example, in Tanzania and Zambia, regional officers enjoy ministerial rank, and their secretaries, Permanent Secretary rank. In Tanzania the regional commissioner and regional development director come directly underneath the President's Office, which is responsible for co-ordinating regional affairs, and their submissions for local planning are sent by that office directly to the Ministry of Economic Affairs. This means that regional officers have direct contact with the centre of government. Similarly, in Zambia, the provincial secretary serving the provincial minister has been given more responsibility for financial control. The Zambian hierarchy of development committees parallels the civil service hierarchy. At the bottom the village leader is chairman of the village productivity committee, while at the top the provincial minister is chairman of the provincial development committee. Each village sends two representatives to a ward council, which also has a ward development committee, and the district governor is respon-

sible for grouping the wards in his district for the district development committee. Zambia has also made provision for traditional chiefs to participate in this system of development planning by making them responsible for the supervision of the system at ward level.

70. The use of provincial and district commissioners in development administration is particularly characteristic of those states with a one-party system of government. The organs of the party are usually organised in parallel to those of the administration. In Tanzania, the district Chairman of the Party is also Chairman of the District Planning Committee. Similarly in Zambia the political committees of the Party are organised in parallel to the development committees of the community.

Financial Procedures

71. Principal officials are required to consider important procedures which lie at the heart of politics, giving effect to decisions on the use of resources or to judgements about priorities. Finance is an important field of government activity. There seem to be two essential parts in the necessary instrumentation. First, governments need to find suitable procedures for assessing future requirements. Secondly, they need to control the pace and scope of public spending.

72. The meeting therefore decided to commission a study of the two aspects of the question: "forward planning" and "financial control". These two topics appeared several times in the course of the discussion, particularly in connection with the design of an appropriate "support system" for central decision-making. But financial procedures also throw an important light on the difficulties of allocating government functions, particularly in those countries concerned with development planning.

73. The debate on financial procedures varies according to the particular context of economic planning. There appears to be a significant difference between those countries which have no separate planning apparatus, and those which have inherited their procedures from a colonial system. The former are increasingly concerned to improve the real standard of living in terms of education, health, leisure, the environment, and governments are compelled to compare claims on resources which are not strictly

comensurable. It is difficult to make the procedures of macro-economic budgeting responsive to judgements about the quality of life. But in developing countries the principal concern is to avoid delay in the implementation of decisions, and to promote methods which "cut the red tape".

74. It is very doubtful whether the British colonial tradition of financial procedures is now appropriate for the work of economic planning in developing countries. The colonial system of accounts was primarily concerned to produce a balanced budget of recurrent expenditure that made the colony self-sufficient, and to separate into a development budget all those items which involved long-term investment. This meant that the major concern of colonial governments was to make sure that there was an effective system for the collection of revenue, and that officers responsible for disbursement were not able to make private gains. Development budgets usually meant a separate development programme, with projects which could be managed independently of the main structure of government.

75. It is equally doubtful whether an Exchequer system is appropriate to development planning. It may be that making a Permanent Secretary accountable to Parliament for the vote of his department produces a system for authorising expenditure which is too highly centralised. It might be better to adapt the colonial system of accounts and audit.

76. Developed countries do not find a centralised system such a handicap. Indeed, they are frequently so concerned with central arrangements for the review of on-going policies that they have been able to separate the planning process from the machinery of financial control. Their main anxiety is about the control of future commitments. The strict financial control of day-to-day disbursements can be brought underneath a Ministry of Finance or Treasury, and departments can be obliged to keep within approved spending limits. Difficulties arise not so much within the system of controlling disbursement as in the system for monitoring policy making, which has to ensure that the resources will be available for any proposed switch in priorities.

77. But developing countries working within the framework of national plans experience rather different dilemmas. There is often

a lack of trained personnel for an extensive system of financial control. Delays seem to arise largely because of the need to secure authority for expenditure, which is usually vested at the centre, and not in the regions where development officers are working. The authority to purchase material, for example, may be delayed by several months. Development planning also involves a process of education, in order to get people in the village and on the shop floor to understand the aims of government. Too rigid a system of financial control may inhibit the business of communication.

78. In most Commonwealth countries there are therefore two basic dilemmas. First, the "forward planning" process requires some kind of reconciliation between the conflicting needs of securing local co-operation in planning and making an accurate budgetary assessment at the centre. The centre must know where the local pieces fit in, and the locality must understand the overall plan in order to be able to implement their part of it. Second, an extensive public sector investment requires a deployment of staff within the regions, and probably over a wide range of differing areas, as well as some kind of system at the centre for holding all staff accountable. Each country has to strike its own balance in the solution of these problems.

79. Several schemes are under consideration for the delegation of authority to provincial centres. For example, it is possible to delegate more of the routine financial control procedures to provincial secretaries, and at the same time to allow provincial authorities to develop their own staffing organisations and programmes. It might be possible to develop a system of local committees or to adapt the existing pattern of local government to allow communities at the village level to mobilise their own resources. The action of central government would then be to supplement local initiative.

Communication with the People

80. A key area of responsibility for the Principal official is the effectiveness of government machinery in communication with the people. Governments need to establish that their actions have been understood; they also wish to secure support for their policies. The Principal official is concerned with many priorities in administrative action which have political overtones. He is expected to make sure

that the government machine is responsive to political initiatives, and that appropriate procedures can be found to put a decision into practice.

81. There is always some suspicion that civil servants are themselves too isolated from the people and that they therefore do not understand the most strongly held political opinions. It is sometimes argued that public servants are not particularly good at projecting their ideas to a mass audience, and that therefore their organisations are not geared to giving popular explanations, or getting a widespread support.

82. Some Commonwealth countries have shown an interest in forms of communication used by governments outside the Commonwealth. For example, there has been some interest in the methods employed by China. Some admire the Chinese method of sending senior civil servants and other officers to work in factories or in the field, and believe that such methods provide an opportunity for bureaucrats to appreciate the problems of the common man. The Indian Foreign Office has now initiated a course for trainees which requires them to spend nine months in rural areas. This helps diplomats to understand the development aspects of foreign policy.

83. There is also some doubt about the convention in those countries where the role of parliament in communication with the people is accepted. Ministers, who are anxious to mobilise opinion, may be tempted to by-pass Parliament. The constitutional doctrine that Parliament is the basic channel of communication does not seem sufficient in days when new means of communication are available. Ministers nowadays tend to make important political statements by themselves before television cameras. If policies are openly reported to Parliament, Ministers feel that they are at the mercy of the journalists who explain their policies to the public. In some countries parliamentary sessions are often very short, and as a consequence departments are accustomed to preparing important statements for consumption by the press or television.

84. Military regimes have found that they need to provide opportunities for government to make its policies and programmes known to the people, and at the same time to identify the avenues whereby the reactions of the people to these policies can be effectively

brought to government attention. In providing administrative procedures for a military government, it is important to pay particular attention to the creation of "consultative committees". Military governors in Nigeria established a communication system between themselves and the people by appointing to their regional cabinets a number of civil commissioners from each of the divisional areas and from each of the major interests. There are also a large number of consultations at various levels between all ministries of the various governments in the Federation. The commissioners for each of the major services in the region have regular meetings at the national level.

85. A particularly important area of responsibility for the Principal official is to ensure that government speaks with a single voice. This means that he is sometimes required to initiate procedures which help the government to avoid the embarrassment of contradictory statements from two or more separate sources within the administration. For example, it is occasionally necessary to issue a number of circulars calling for all statements which Ministers intend to make to be cleared in the Prime Minister's Office before being released. Another problem was that spokesmen while abroad may be tempted to talk to students about jurisdictions which are not covered by their own responsibilities, and they therefore issue statements which have to be contradicted later.

86. An important agency in securing a common format for public statements or presenting popular versions of complicated matters is the Government Information Service or the Ministry of Information. Some governments own newspapers which they can use, and ministries in the communications field sometimes operate their own broadcasting services, which also arrange seminars in which people can discuss government policies and projects on the air. The Minister of Information himself might specialise in touring the country in order to explain what the government is doing.

87. The Principal official might be directly involved in devising schemes through which the government can meet the people more directly. For example, some countries have experimented with the practice of arranging cabinet meetings in different regions four or five times a year. At such meetings the Prime Minister can hold press conferences and Ministers can collectively visit the area and talk to the people. A Provincial Cabinet in Canada has held its

meetings away from the capital, dividing them into two halves, one public and the other private. One country has experimented with a series of ministerial trips, in which ministers "exchanged areas", and each visiting parts of the country outside his own constituency.

88. Heads of Government may also devise their own forms of press conference. One Prime Minister has established the habit of making himself available on certain days without appointment to any member of the public who wishes to consult him.

89. A system of field administration offers the opportunity to provide communication with the people through the administrative structure. In some African countries the *Baraza* is a recognised institution by which groups of people in rural areas meet regularly with government officials to discuss local issues. This method is also used by Heads of Government and Ministers. In many countries district commissioners are the principal representatives of central government in all areas. They also have beneath them in the administrative hierarchy a number of chiefs or village headmen. People holding these offices can be asked to organise meetings at which policies can be explained and where complaints and ideas from the people can be examined. Appointed or elected councils might work alongside with such officials, and in several countries the system of development planning relies heavily on development committees within this administrative structure.

90. In those countries where traditional chiefs or members of the nobility play an important part in the system of government, people enjoying traditional status might be used as a means of communication. In some countries the churches are also important. The minister or priest using his pulpit as a vehicle for circulating information might be of great value.

91. Almost all these innovations in "meet the people" procedures run into difficulties over the use of official languages. In many Commonwealth countries English is not widely used outside government. If English is used in government communication, it may create barriers which keep the people at bay and obstruct the flow of communication between government and people. Some Commonwealth countries have decided to introduce the indigenous language into the procedures of Parliament, and also in government, in order to involve the people more actively and enthusiastically in the

country's affairs. Those countries which have a single national language enjoy a distinctive advantage. If there are a large number of languages, each spoken by a different minority, a great deal of time and energy is consumed in translation. For example, government news bulletins have to be produced in more than half a dozen languages.

92. The Principal official is frequently asked to advise on improving the general orientation of civil servants towards the methods of communication which the government wishes to employ. Much of the aid which civil servants can give to the projection of government information depends on the degree of confidence and trust inside the administration. When there are grievances about the behaviour of civil servants at both national and state levels, some countries have instituted the office of Ombudsman. This officer concerns himself with definitions of maladministration, and provides a useful channel of information about relations between civil servants and members of the public.

93. The meeting found that the three topics discussed which illustrate some of the difficulties in tendering advice on the use of the administrative machine led to a number of possible topics for future discussion in detail. The allocation of functions is an area of particular difficulty in getting the organs of central and local government working together for the development of backward regions in each country. There are awkward problems in getting central bodies to provide regional offices and points of co-ordination, and at the same time in persuading local authorities to work together. The manner in which functions are allocated at the centre has important consequences for those who wish to create regional "teams". Similarly, financial procedures tend to encourage centralisation and to delay the provision of adequate materials for regional development. One of the reasons why communication between government and people was a subject of such concern to the officials responsible for development policies is the genuine conflict which exists between what civil servants might legitimately do in promoting government views and what they might expect from their professional status. Civil servants who propagate expressions of political opinion, whether such views are personal or part of government collectively, are vulnerable to charges of bias.

IV Administration and Politics

94. It was recognised that the material covered in discussions on the five topics summarised in chapters II and III has a direct bearing upon another two which the meeting had time to handle only briefly, economic planning and senior personnel policy. A more extensive discussion of these subjects would have benefited from what had gone before. All the areas of interest have obvious inter-connections. In particular, the design of "support systems" in decision-making and the part played by financial procedures in administration are of great importance to considerations of economic planning. The style of the planning office is a function of the arrangements made for policy analysis and financial control. Furthermore, the difficulties to be faced in improving co-ordination between the agencies of government and in communicating official policies to the people cannot be separated from the major aspects of senior personnel policy. An explicit policy for the selection and training of civil servants is itself a method of improving co-ordination and communication.

95. The allocation of functions is an area of decision-making which touches directly on both economic planning and personnel policy. Indeed, one of the principal reasons why Principal officials do not always play the same part in tendering advice on these subjects is that heads of government vary the practice of allocating responsibilities for them.

96. The Commonwealth contains several distinct variations on the main forms of administrative action in these fields. The meeting found that the particular arrangements made in any given country to implement economic planning and senior personnel policy often illustrates the characteristic dilemmas of Principal officials. Such arrangements provide evidence on the different ways in which their two roles as the manager of the machinery and as principal adviser on policy matters can be combined. The most senior civil servant is always conscious of the many variations by which administrative procedures are linked to political purposes.

97. This chapter outlines the main points of the discussion on planning and personnel as well as the indications regarding the main areas of interest which might be included on future agendas, that emerged from the meeting.

Economic Strategy and Planning

98. The Principal official rarely has direct responsibility for economic planning machinery, except insofar as it is nearly always associated in some way with the office of the Prime Minister or President. Some authorities are convinced that the subject of planning should be attached to the responsibilities of the Head of Government. The degree to which it may be part of the "support system" at the centre of government is discussed in the second chapter. It is argued that a separate Ministry of Planning will always be at loggerheads with the Ministry of Finance or Treasury. Even where there are separate offices for the Prime Minister and the Cabinet, many advisers are increasingly aware of the need for a more positive role in co-ordinating government activity in economic matters.

99. An effective administrative structure for planning is politically important because it is associated with the development of "self-reliance". So much development planning and so many of the first planning commissions were staffed by expatriates that the subject was often associated with a dependence on outside countries for technical assistance. Even now, some smaller countries are obliged to send officials abroad as new trainees for education in the appropriate techniques, or for the experience of participating in conferences about the implementation of development plans.

100. Development programmes are also frequently dependent on overseas capital for investment. Part of the process of encouraging "self-reliance" is to reduce this sort of dependence on foreign assistance. For example, India had progressively reduced the proportion of foreign capital being considered in its development programmes from 25% to 8%.

101. The main internal difficulty in adapting the machinery of government is to find the most appropriate balance between central requirements and local agencies. All the necessary steps are concerned with the pattern of regional development. In a federal system there is usually a method of dividing resources between the constituent parts. But even centralised states have some kind of regional policy. The Principal official has often to consider recommendations on the use of the public sector to solve certain regional imbalances. For example, new industrial units in the public sector might be located on a preferential basis in backward

regions. Inducements can also be given to private capital in medium and small scale industries in order to persuade them to move into the less developed parts of the country, either through direct subsidies on capital investment or through subsidies for road transport or other forms of infrastructure. Most of the planning machinery involves area planning units. It is the job of the Principal official to see that such units are understood by and integrated with central agencies.

102. The main technical interest at the centre is the provision of an adequate information base for effective planning. The analysis of global figures is usually performed under the aegis of some central national council, such as the National Development Council in India or the National Action Council in Malaysia. Such a body usually sits under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister. It considers the appropriate new targets, and makes what it hopes are realistic forecasts of development. This kind of supreme central council makes it possible to consider the analytic work of the planning office.

103. It may also be necessary deliberately to promote research for science and technology through the central machinery. Some countries have established national committees in these fields, or have special research and development organisations inside the public sector. Each country needs machinery to consider the implications of new technologies.

104. But the main value of administrative procedures for politicians is their ability to transform the economic habits of ordinary people. Much of the work of development planning is seen in terms of educating people in standard economic practices. In many countries the rural sector cannot be modernised without the aid of government agencies in agricultural extension work or public health. The development of fertile land might be undertaken by government consolidation or rehabilitation authorities, and small-holders can be given capital assistance in finding the right seeds and farming machinery, as well as in improving marketing arrangements. It is sometimes particularly important to develop voluntary societies, on the lines of co-operative societies of farmers' or fishermen's associations, in order to organise and co-ordinate assistance in using new technologies and methods.

105. If there are subversive opposition movements, the security forces may also be involved. In some countries the armed services work on agricultural projects or road building. In Malaysia the Action Committee in each State is headed by the Chief Minister, but it consists not only of members of the State Executive Council and Heads of departments, but also of representatives of the army and police. The army and police are also represented at the district level in the action committee headed by the district officer.

106. One of the difficulties of incorporating so much government activity into the development process is that people in rural areas are likely to have their own expectations grossly inflated, and unless they are encouraged, they fail to contribute their own labour. In countries where a large proportion of the potential work force is unemployed, particularly if there are seasonal patterns of activity, it is important to utilize all manpower. Benefits sometimes come from labour-intensive public works, such as the construction of dykes and roads. In countries where many live close to subsistence level, taxation is difficult, but it is usually better to employ indirect rather than direct taxation.

107. From the point of view of the Principal officials, arrangements for economic planning can usually be placed between two ends of a spectrum, which runs from taking the first step in economic development at one end to managing a very complex economy at the other. Developing countries are principally concerned with modernization; developed countries with an adequate system of forward planning.

108. The Commonwealth contains a wide range of different experiences in this field. The previous chapter indicates how Principal officials may have to relate their activities to the scale, scope and state of their administration. Economic planning, more than any other area of policy, helps to underline the large number of different political contexts in which administrative activity is conducted.

Senior Personnel Policy

109. The identity of the Principal official is closely tied to the senior personnel policy which his government approves. Appointment at the top may often be as much a matter of personal commitment to the Head of Government or of political considerations as a matter of seniority in the public service.

110. There seems to be a difference of emphasis between those countries which maintain a non-partisan civil service, and those which acknowledge openly that senior civil servants must in some sense be partisan supporters of the government in power. This is especially true in those countries which have inherited a civil service based on the principle of a "political class", in which the senior administrators of the government machine cannot easily be divorced from the main political objectives of the regime in power. Administrators under the colonial system were taking what amounted to political decisions in their districts and departments. They were in a sense rivals to the politicians during the period of internal self-government. New states have therefore had to find their own set of solutions in the definition of a senior administrator's role, and thereby to establish the main lines of a senior personnel policy.

111. In those states with a one-party system, for example, it is possible to interchange the roles of ministers and senior civil servants. This transfer is sometimes openly encouraged. It is important to get the right balance at the top of any ministry or department between senior party members who are technically administrators and those who are elected representatives in a parliamentary system.

112. There are also advantages for civil servants wishing to protect their conditions of service if their senior colleagues carry weight in the party. For example, accusations made by departmental ministers against civil servants can be more fairly assessed if the Secretary to the Cabinet is himself a Cabinet Minister, as in Zambia. Chapter III shows that ministerial and permanent secretary status may be given to provincial officers. In Tanzania and Zambia the provincial administration is a recognised associate of the party apparatus.

113. An alternative in those countries which require commitment from their administrators but lack a sufficient number of experienced men, is for senior administrators to be recruited from the private sector. In Sri Lanka the Cabinet Secretary and 23 Secretaries to Ministries have been drawn from different fields, backgrounds, and age groups. Ten of them belong to the former Ceylon Civil Service; three have come from the recently constituted Ceylon Administrative Service; and the other ten are university professors, lawyers,

engineers, doctors, and economists. This experiment for bringing people into the top rank from outside the public service has produced very encouraging results.

114. It is always an important concern of the Principal official to ensure that the civil service is considered in some way “representative” of the people. Countries which have a strong parliamentary tradition usually have governments which are concerned to show that they are able to control the administration through the elected representatives. But senior personnel policy is really a reflection of political conditions. It may sometimes be necessary for senior administrators to organise their private lives in such a way that they are seen to be ‘neutral’ in politics. The non-partisan civil service is not necessarily incapable of responding to the pursuit of political objectives, if senior civil servants are scrupulous in their behaviour.

Conclusion

115. It seemed clear that future meetings of Principal officials would wish to discuss some of the problems which the Ottawa meeting found interesting, as well as worthy of further consideration across the different contexts which the Commonwealth provides. The Principal official’s role in managing the machinery of government involves him in tackling a range of complex problems. The meeting identified two areas of interest:

- (1) the style and type of long-range policy analysis and its proper institutional setting. It is not easy to guarantee that the appropriate units designed to support the process of decision-making can tender the results of their studies when they are wanted.
- (2) The best use of senior personnel in extending the understanding of more junior officials and in offering them opportunities to promote a better co-ordination of effort. Too prodigal an investment of time in trying to improve staff morale may endanger the effective functioning of the organisation.

116. The Principal official’s role in tendering advice on how the machinery might be given a sense of political direction was treated with three other areas of interest at the forefront of the discussion:

- (3) the most appropriate arrangements for relationships between central government and local agencies in the field. Too much centralisation creates delay, but too much local discretion prevents the maintenance of a planning system.
- (4) The most effective procedures for combining a control over day-to-day financial disbursement with an ability to review future expenditure requirements. It is difficult to avoid the rigidity of strict accounting and audit.
- (5) The part played by civil servants in projecting the political objectives of the government to the general public. There seems to be a set of tensions between retaining "career status" and providing an acceptable popular explanation of the government's intentions.

The meeting repeatedly touched upon these five topics in its discussion of economic planning and personnel policy.

117. As reported above*, the meeting commissioned a study on 'financial procedures'. It also agreed that future meetings might have a summary of organisational structures and procedures which member governments should make available to the Commonwealth Secretariat. Principal officials need to keep each other informed of the developments in public administration for which they are responsible.

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Type and Designation of Central Department

Country	President's Office	Prime Minister's Office	Other	Designation of office of Principal Official
Australia		X	No Cabinet Office	Secretary
Bangladesh		X		Joint Secretary
Barbados		X		PS Cabinet Affairs
Botswana	X			PS to President
Britain		Separate PMO	Cabinet Office	Secretary to the Cabinet
Canada		Separate PMO	Privy Council Office	Secretary to the Cabinet
Cyprus			Council of Ministers Secretariat	Joint Secretary
Fiji		X		Secretary
The Gambia	X			Secretary-General
Ghana			National Redemption Council	Secretary
Guyana		X		Principal Secretary
India		Separate PMO	Cabinet Secretariat	Secretary
Jamaica		X		Permanent Secretary
Kenya	X			Permanent Secretary
Lesotho		X	Separate Cabinet Office	Permanent Secretary
Malawi	X			Secretary to the President
Malaysia		X		Chief Secretary to the Government
Malta		X		Secretary to the Cabinet
Mauritius				
New Zealand		X	No Cabinet Office	Permanent Head
Nigeria			Federal Military Government	Secretary to the Federal Military Government

Appendix contd.

Country	President's Office	Prime Minister's Office	Other	Designation of office of Principal Official
Sierra Leone	X			Secretary to the President
Singapore		X		Permanent Secretary
Sri Lanka			Cabinet Office	Director, Cabinet Affairs
Swaziland		X		Cabinet Secretary
Tanzania	X			Principal Secretary
Tonga				
Trinidad & Tobago		X		Permanent Secretary
Uganda	X			Permanent Secretary
Western Samoa		X		Secretary to the Government
Zambia	X			Permanent Secretary

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