BUREAUCRACY IN PAKISTAN

Muhammad Hasan Shaikh
Associate Professor: Department of Pol:Scince
and Chairman Public Administration
Department, University of Sind, Jamshoro

Pakistan is a developing nation. It has faced many problems in establishing a workable and viable government structure. Major among these problems was the establishment of agencies collectively known as bureaucracy. Bureaucracy in Pakistan is based on the British model which had been imposed upon British India prior to Pakistan's independence. It will be the purpose of this paper to describe and analyse the characteristics of Pakistani bureaucracy and suggest measures to minimize certain bureaucratic tendencies in our administration.

The basic purpose of an administrative machinery and the various cadres of officials within its fold, is to serve the people and their needs. In democratic countries bureaucracy has become highly institutionalised. It works within the discipline of an all-embracing national purpose, as determined by legislature, and in accordance with a well-defined system of accountability in which the government is finally and democratically answerable to the people. For a greater part of Pakistan's career as a State this fundamental requirement has not been met. Often in our conditions the bureaucracy is the government rather than being an instrument of government.[1] As President Ziaul Haq remarked in 1981 that the administrative machinery generally suffered from inefficiency, it was corroded by corruption in its various tiers, and it remained isolated and alienated from the people.[2] The state of affairs, as President had felt, was disturbing. The malaise is deep-rooted. In fact, some of the reasons for this could be treated back to the origins of the bureaucratic system which was established by the British rulers in the subcontinent to serve their colonial interests. The needs of their administration in the subcontinent were entirely different from what they were in Britain. Here bureaucrats were to govern rather than to serve the people. So they were known as, and in fact remained, government servants rather than public servants and their attitude, behaviour and operational methods were accordingly cast in the imperialistic mould. They knew which way their bread was buttered. They were serving their colonial masters.

During alien rule, such a state of affairs was inevitable but unfortunately the system could not be wholly reoriented even after our independence. On the contrary, a situation developed in which bureaucracy instead of being accountable, became unchallengeable when under weak civilian governments, bureaucrats became makers of the policy in addition to being its implementers, and during the past spells of military rule, they took up active political roles.

These problems pertain to the past but they have to be kept in view to provide a clear perspective for the process of reorientation of the administrative set up which the President Ziaul Haq wanted to resolve. In this context, President had reminded the people of the early Islamic code of conduct which set the highest standards for public accountability. This is an ideal which officialdom should aspire to attain. Today the role of the bureaucracy has greatly expanded and no matter what one does, one has to deal with the ubiquitous public officials at one time or another. Lapses from efficiency, propriety and integrity affect vast masses of the people and their well being. The people do not judge a government's worth by what it says but by what the officials do. In democratic countries the governments are answerable to legislature for the conduct of the permanent officials. The officials are thus responsible through government and legislature to the people. Being subject to the institutionalised verdict of the people makes all the difference to the outlook and conduct of public officials. Then there are legal and administrative checks which operate effectively against graft and inefficiency. An assertive public opinion and fear of exposure by the press are equally vital instruments in the hands of the community. It might be worth recalling here that in the past a 'cleaning up' of the administrative machinery was attempted.[3] Thus bureaucrats remained accountable to other bureaucrats. The process itself remained suspect, and the people were not always convinced that only the delinquents were ousted, and those who remained were like Caesar's wife, above reproach. In Pakistan we not only lack an institutionalised system of accountability, but are also largely devoid of the other instruments of corrections available to the community in a democratic set up.

The President Ziaul Haq had made a pointed reference to the problem of administrative inefficiency. This is a vast and complex matter, and only a few aspects of it can be mentioned here. On aspect related to organization and methods, and improvements in this area should be a continuing process. Every department should be encouraged to engage in self-criticism. Criticism aired verbally or in writing by ordinary people should be properly attended to. Special attention needs to be given to the claims of competitive merits in recruitment, placement and promotion. These claims are sometimes disregarded, causing frustration to the right person and placing an incompetent man in ajobe he is bound to bungle. Nepotism is a great subverter of administrative efficiency and must be combated. The training programs need to be strengthened and diversified. The needs of a district administration are entirely different from those of a public sector, industrial enterprize or financial organization, and a specialist would be preferable to the generalist for the latter job. It is necessary, therefore, to give greater attention to selecting officials for the particular jobs in terms of their aptitudes and also arranging specialized courses and training programs for them.

Many government officials, assigned to economic duties and to industrial, financial and commercial organizations, begin as novices and try to learn their work on the job. A conscientious and hard-working official often makes the grade if he stays long enough, but only after he has made quite a few costly mistakes. The awarneness which the President had shown of the problem of corruption is heartening The malaise has assumed serious proportions, and it is no longer possible to sweep it under the rug. Though it is by no means easy to stamp out graft and corrupt practices. ways can and should be found curb them. Lapses from integrity should be firmly dealt with. A public forfeiture of ill-gotten gains is a punishment which is rarely visited upon officials who are found guilty of acquiring illegal financial gains. Why this should be so is beyond comprehension.[3]

There is another problem that Pakistan is maintaining a high-cost bureaucracy. In Pakistan, the number of people employed in government and semi-government offices has been increasing too rapidly. Such employees are consuming too much of the nation's resources. Bureaucracy is increasing the number of regulations and restrictions in the country instead of promoting a more rapid economic development and socio-cultural progress. Mr. Ghulam Ishaq Khan, the Finance Minister, had made a statement in 1982 that the families benefited by the enhanced dearness allowance were 3.73 million.[4]

This came as a surprise to many who believed that the number of people working in the federal and provincial governments and autonomous bodies is about two million. Mr. Aftab Ahmad Khan an Economic Affairs Secretary had placed the figure at two million in 1980 at a Television press conference.[5] If 3.73 million people are working in the official sector they constitute about 15 per cent of the entire labour force in the country, including those engaged in agriculture. And this is an alarming figure for a poor, developing country which should be spending more and more on development and less on the bureaucratic incubus.

Employment statistics in Pakistan are generally too poor and utterly unrealiable While the figures of employment are disputable, and seem to belong more to the area of conjecture than hard facts, the unemployment figures are even more debatable. If the labour survey (1974-75) showed the unemployment figures in Pakistan as low as 1.7 per cent, and the housing and demographic survey placed that figure at 13 per cent, the tentative nature of our employment figures is easily understanable.

While the Finance Minister places the number of families benefiting by the enhanced dearness allowance, which will cost the Federal Government alone Rs. 2,482 million, the Pakistan Economic Survey (1981-82) shows the number of administrative workers as 210,000. The number of clerical workers is shown as 1.14 million

out of a total of 25.24 million workers in the whole country. This figure probably includes both official and nonofficial sectors. The manpower division figures show that the labour force participation in Pakistan is only 30 per cent of the population, with only 4.3 per cent of the women workers. But the figures of industrial workers are not available. The production workers are stated to be 5.2 million while those engaged in manufacture, including mining and quarrying, are shown to be 3.23 million. The number of persons engaged in large scale manufacturing is not specified, but is said to be around one million at best.

The number of persons working in the public sector corporations is not very large, about 80,500 including Pakistan Steel. Evidently an extremely large number of people from among the 3.73 million in the state sector is working on the adminstrative side. Does that not explain in part the extent of the poverty of the country after 36 years of independence and the poor progress we have made in the sphere of education and public health? If around one million are working in the lage scale industry, 3.73 million are working for the government, will that not place a tremendous burden on the economy of the country, wrap its capacity to save, invest and accelerate the development?

Mr. Nani A. Palkhivala, a noted economic analyst of India, wrote recently that while no less than 8.8 million persons were employed by the Federal and State governments in India for merely administrative purposes, 7.2 million persons were employed in organized industries in the private sector. Economic stagnation is inevitable as a resulte of such gross disproportion between the productive and non-productive jobs, he said.[6] If we consider the situation in neighbouring India we find that although Pakistan's population is only one-eight of India's—the number of people in the administrative sector in Pakistan is about 43 per cent of India's bureaucracy. And this dead weight is bound to slow down Pakistan's economic progress and socio-cultural advance. The economic burden such a bureaucracy is enormous on a developing country like Pakistan. On the one side the size of the bureaucracy is expanding and on the other they have to be paid more and more. So the administrative expenditure of the country has been increasing enormously and aggravating the inflationary pressure.

The larger the bureaucracy, the larger will be the pension burden, and in inflationary conditions we have to enhance the salaries of the currently serving as well as those who have retired. Hence the size of our bureaucracy, Federal and provincial, needs careful looking into and a steady pruning is required particularly if we cannot restrain the inflationary pressure in our midst but only contribute to it officially and then understate its impact.

If Northcote Parkinson showed how bureaucracy proliferates, other studies have shown how a great deal of the public expenditure goes waste. In Britain Leslie Chapman, an ex-civil servant, in his book "Your Disobedient Sarvent" showed how if only the public servants were more responsible and economy-conscious they could save 30 to 40 per cent of the public expenditure in Britain in administrative sectors. Mr. H.V.R. Lengar, a former Indian Civil Servant and ex-governor of the Reserve Bank of India has indicated that his 40 years in government had convinced him that about 40 per cent of the government expenditure went down the drain. Increasing salary or dearness allowance is not the only burden the officials are placing on the nation. They now being given more and more tax-free privileges. Earlier the government thought that it was wrong to give tax-free benefits to managers in the private sector. That rigid approach was relaxed later. But now it is the senior officials in the government sector who are getting tax-free benefits, including domestic servants for Joint Secrataries and above, drivers for Additional Secretaries and above, and tax-free cars to some top people and even retired officials. Now the distinction between the public sector and private sector has been removed.

In the Gross Domestic Product figures of Pakistan while Agriculture contributes 30 per cent and industry 17 per cent, what is called other sectors or the service sector contributes 47 per cent. As full details of what constitutes this 47 per cent are not made available, one presumes that the salaries, allowances and privileges of the 3.73 million employees in the state sector contribute to that proportion (47%) significantly.

Undoubtedly the bureaucracy tends to proliferate more in an authoritarian set-up than under a democracy unless that is a welfare state with a large public industrial sector. Police, intelligence agencies, security cells, vigilance departments etc., increase enormously under an authoritarian system. The state media too expands rapidly under such a system. But we have come to a point where the growth of the bureaucracy has got to be checked and the number of government employees be kept as low as possible. The public has to be given the opportunity to save, and the entrepreneurs, the opportunity to invest and develop the country. That is possible only if the government does not resort to heavier taxation each year only to keep the bureaucracy going. Even within the official set-up there is an unfair distribution of the benefits. Hence, the strikes from time to time, like those of the young doctors and earlier of the teachers. When the number of people in the service of the State becomes too large the government is not able to pay all of them well often not even living wages to the low grade employees. So we reach the point of having numbers without quality, officers without commitment and workers without dedication.[7] A large bureaucracy is thus clearly counter-productive, and a deadweight on the economy. It is now worthwhile to hire a few management experts

to study how the governmental machinery be simplified and the cost reduced without resorting to retrenchment.

The developing nations like Pakistan face a serious dilemma. A competent modern, well-organized bureaucracy is required if public order is to be maintained and development goals realised. However, such a bureaucracy has a strong tendency to monopolize all decision-making of consequence and to prevent the growth of institutions which might ultimately compete with it. Without other institutions capable of controlling such a bureaucracy, the prospects for democracy are indeed dim.

The problem of dominance by a bureaucracy is increased when a developing nation like Pakistan believes itself threatened by aggressive neighbours. It does not matter much whether these threats are real or immediate, they provide the reasons for expanding the military forces to a point where they consume a large proportion of the nation's limited resources and prevent the accumulation of capital badly needed for investment in national public works and enterprizes. Even if the threat of attack diminishes altogether, it is hard to reduce materially the size of these armies. Usually there are inadequate employment opportunities for the discharged soldiers. Institutions resist actions that will diminish their strength and influence, and the armed forces in developing nations are no exception. In such nations there may be no combination of institutions sufficiently strong to impose a reduction in force on the military. Similarly, the bureaucracy will resist any contraction in their size or influence. The weapons at its disposals are more suitable than those of the armed forces, but they may be equally effective in the long run.

Pakistan requires a variety of institutions, no one of which in a position to dominate the others. When the power of a single organization becomes greater than the power of any feasible combination that might hope to restrain its authoritarian rule prevails. Furthermore, the bureaucracy seeks to stabilize its position so that it can govern without any serious opposition.

REFERENCES

1. Blau, Peter M., **Bureaucracy in Modern Society**, New york, Random Allen House, 1956, p. 112.

2. **Dawn**, an English Daily Karachi, July 17, 1981.

3. **The Civil Servants Act No. LXXI of 1973**, Karachi, Manager, Government of Pakistan Press, 1973, p. 6.

4. **Dawn**, an English Daily, Karachi, August 10, 1982.

5. **Jang**, an Urdu Daily, Karachi, July 10, 1980.

6. **The Washington Post**, March 19, 1982.

7. Dunnil, Frank, **The Civil Service-Some Human Aspects**, London, Oxford University Press, 1965, p. 11.

BIBLOGRAPHY

1. Blau, Peter M., **Bureaucracy in Modern Society**, New york, Random Allen House, 1956.

2. Corson and Harris **Public Administration in Modern Society**, McGraw Hill Book Co., Inc., New york, 1963.

3. Dunnil, Frank, **The Civil Service-Some Human Aspects** London, Oxford University Press, 1965.

4. Fougre Louis, **Civil Service System:Essays and Texts**, Brussels, International Institute of Administrative Science, 1967.

5. Finer, S.E., **The Man on the Horseback, The Rule of Military in Politics**, London, Pall Press, 1963.

6. Gladden, E.N., **Civil Service or Bureaucracy**, London, Staples Press Ltd., 1956.

7. LaPalombara, Joseph, ed. **Bureaucracy and Political Development**, Princeton, Princenton University Press, 1963.

8. Wilcox, Wayne A, **Pakistan: The Consolidation of a Nation**, New york, Columbia University Press, 1963.

Articles and Periodicals

1. Sayed, Khalid Bin, **The Political Role of Pakistan's Civil Service**, Pacific Affairs, 31, 1958.