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## FUTURE OF THE CIVIL SERVICE

ALTHOUGH the Civil Service in Great Britain has received a considerable amount of criticism in recent months, the basic qualities and technique which have won for it the admiration of the world cannot be discarded without imperilling the execution of that new conception of government which should inspire policy to-day. To develop and modify rather than to destroy tradition and technique should be the object, and while Lord Stamp may have been right as to the unsuitability for higher administration of the exactly trained Civil servant, given to the analytical application of a legislative programme in a statute, co-operating with other departments similarly bound, and working to the elaboration of a complete static programme to be generally applicable by principle and precedent, this is not to say that his essential qualities are not required. Thoroughness; accuracy of statement and precision of reasoning; a proper respect for precedent; the capacity to get quickly at the real gist of a situation and to set out the points briefly and lucidly; the power of writing for public consumption, both vigorously and cautiously; a strong dislike of muddle and irregularity in procedure; a wide acquaintance with the machinery of government and a close acquaintance with two or three parts of it; and a subconscious instinct for what can be said and done and what cannot—these characteristics will be valuable and essential whatever changes in organization and outlook are introduced.

The growth of the Service, and the struggles through which its tradition and strict code of conduct have developed, have been well set out by Emmeline W. Cohen in a recent work (see NATURE, Nov. 22, p. 601). Now Mr. H. E. Dale, himself a Civil servant with a distinguished career who retired in 1935, has given\* an interpretation of the mind of those higher ranks of the Service who are primarily concerned with policy and are in immediate contact with Ministers. He limits himself to the conditions which existed up to September 1939, and within that qualification his admirably written book gives a very human picture of the life and work of the administrative class, more intimate, indeed, than that given in such biographies of Civil servants as Bernard M. Allen's "Sir Robert Morant" or Lady Murray's more recent "The Making of a Civil Servant". Indeed, this most readable volume should be as welcome to those considering the Civil Service as a career as it is relevant to the discussion of the place of the Service in the machinery of government to-day.

Mr. Dale attempts to describe and analyse, first the nature of the original human material from which the higher permanent official is recruited, and secondly the processes which have contributed to his making. Facts and opinions are kept clearly apart, and although it might be held that Mr. Dale is a little optimistic in holding that the Civil Service will emerge relatively little changed from the present struggle, and some of his conclusions are tinged with com-

\* The Higher Civil Service of Great Britain. By H. E. Dale. Pp. xiv + 232. (London: Oxford University Press, 1941.) 10s. net.

placency, this does not detract from the merits of a really well-written book. The delineation of the positive merits of the Civil servant, which is the strongest feature of Mr. Dale's book, redresses to some extent the balance in controversies which have concentrated excessively on his weaknesses or deficiencies.

The basic qualities and technical craftsmanship acquired as the Civil servant rises in the Service lead to a habit of mind or a conscious or subconscious creed. Compressed by Mr. Dale into five propositions, it is probably shared in some degree by most professional men, and it gives a clue to some of the real weaknesses of the Service. First, pure reason is not at present the most important factor in human affairs. Second, even in the realm of pure reason, there is much to be said for both sides on any complicated question which is fiercely disputed. Third, in a vast and highly organized society, great social, economic and political changes cannot be made quickly without arousing widespread opposition, much of it natural and reasonable, and without causing some unmerited suffering. Fourth, a minority which feels strongly and shouts loudly will often prevail both against the majority and the merits, unless the majority itself feels strongly. Fifth, in this complex and rapidly changing world, the strongest intellect and the keenest insight cannot predict anything like the full consequences of important decisions.

Such qualities of mind and outlook clearly favour the doctrines of moderation and prudence rather than opportunism. They are not necessarily inconsistent with the capacity to accept responsibility, although Mr. Dale more or less admits the tendency to leave well alone, and that preoccupation to keep a department out of trouble may influence conduct more powerfully than a desire to promote far-reaching projects. Indeed, when it is maintained that the Service takes power rather against its will and because otherwise the government of the country could not be carried on, Mr. Dale tacitly admits that the dislike of the Service for bureaucracy has not altogether prevented its expansion from being attended by a certain growth of evils associated with bureaucracy.

The evidence of Mr. Dale's book supports the central theme of a recent P E P broadsheet that the weakness of the Civil Service flows essentially from an obsolete conception of government as a regulatory, policing and taxing mechanism. Until a new conception of the function of government as the nation's instrument for planning, safeguarding and developing the collective inheritance and the social and economic welfare is recognized and adopted, with all the changes it involves in both the outlook and in the organization and methods of the Civil Service and its relations to Ministers, we are unlikely to secure the more constructive type of administrator, who sees opportunities and possibilities rather than difficulties and dangers, and possesses creative ability and the capacity for rapid and energetic action. That positive conception of administration and government is poles asunder from the retreat to individualism and chaos masked under Lord Perry's attack in "Beware Bureaucracy"

On the charges of lack of foresight and lack of knowledge of the new techniques of large-scale organization and management, or of science and scientific method or technique, Mr. Dale offers no evidence. He dismisses as pure nonsense the notion that the administrators despise or disregard the technical, and he maintains that the idea that in the ordinary office staffed entirely by Civil servants there is any habitual lack of co-ordination has no substantial basis of fact. On neither point is he convincing. The reports of the Select Committee on National Expenditure have provided disconcerting evidence of the existence of departmentalism, and there can be little doubt that the fuller use of the technical expert is one of the major future problems of the Service, and thought should be given to it immediately.

The picture Mr. Dale gives, however, scarcely supports the charge that the permanent Civil servant is out of touch with affairs, though the Post Office practice of insisting on provincial service as a preliminary to administrative work at headquarters could obviously be extended with advantage. Nor does it suggest that there is anything inherently opposed to such charges as are outlined in the P E P broadsheet, provided there is no shirking of the issues involved in disseminating throughout the Service a new outlook and new methods, and cutting out 'dead wood' where necessary. Much more than the two periods of long leave suggested by Mr. Dale will be required if the Civil servant is to adapt himself effectively to the new conception of government.

Much stress is laid on the changing relations of social rank between the high official and his Minister. The diminishing degree of homogeneity of the Service as compared with forty years ago is probably a more important and beneficial factor, but it is a matter of opinion whether the homogeneity of the main body of high officials, in spite of their individual differences, is really a source of strength to the Government, or to the public advantage.

A less beneficial change noted by Mr. Dale, as well as by Lord Perry, is the tendency for brilliant men to leave the Government service for employment outside it while in the prime of life. Dr. W. A. Robson has already stressed the need for greater mobility between the Service and the outside world, but in this drift from the Service the footsteps all point one way. Continuance of this tendency would be a serious matter, and when we couple with it the fact that the effect of the War of 1914-18 on the Higher Civil Service is about at its maximum, and that the effect will only disappear during the next decade or so, the comparative impoverishment of the Service can be readily understood. Such considerations support Sir Arthur Salter's argument for reinforcing the personnel of the Civil Service at the top with leading men in industry and science, and throughout its ranks with young men of energy and constructive ability—a policy to which Mr. Dale is firmly opposed for reasons which could equally well apply both ways.

In this detached but somewhat complacent picture of the upper six hundred in the Civil Service, there is

evidence justifying the comment of *Planning* on the existence of chronic and avoidable overwork, frequently leading to breakdowns of health, not due to an excessive amount of work performed but to a failure to organize its performance. Such conditions lead readily to the lack of interest in and awareness of the technique of administration as a science, as well as to the absence of specialized services watching the working of the machine in relation to its current agenda and helping to keep it up to scratch in such matters as office organization, statistical methods, record-keeping and messenger services, and the failure to move the staff in accordance with changing demands. Very clearly we have as yet no thinking and planning organ free both from the immense pressure of day-to-day administration and from the intellectual tyranny of the departmental hierarchy and its departmental outlook, and at the same time in close enough relation with the responsible departments to keep it realistic and practical. The stress of war merely shows up limitations which were already becoming apparent in peace, and which are overdue for attention if the growth of the Civil Service is not to become a danger rather than a help to democratic government.

These problems of organization and of the adaptation of the Service to serve the increasingly complex needs of modern society are among the important tasks awaiting attention. A further problem is that of establishing such a relation between the Civil Service and the new semi-public services that there shall be no danger of a conflict between the two, or of a creeping back of abuses from which the Service was freed by strenuous efforts in the past. Both Emmeline Cohen and Mr. Dale, like Mr. T. H. O'Brien in "British Experiments in Public Ownership and Control", point to the dangers attendant on the great disparity between the salaries of highly placed Civil servants and those in control of these recently created bodies. In many ways, the responsibilities of these two groups are comparable, and steps should be taken to deal with the matter before an unfortunate precedent is established.

The first step must clearly be, as the P E P broadsheet insists, the adoption of a new and positive conception of government. That is fundamental to the establishment of the organization and machinery for planning ahead, for adjusting continuously the working structure and technique of government to the problems with which it is called upon to deal, for overthrowing the domination of financial and accountancy considerations, for the neglect of scientific and technical advances and timidity in taking responsibility. Although the initial stimulus may come from without, the Civil servant should be grateful for the evidence which these recent sympathetic but balanced studies afford that, given the necessary measures of reform in personnel and organization, the main bulk of the Higher Civil Service will prove fully competent to grasp boldly and imaginatively the immense opportunities before them, and to discharge the more positive functions demanded to-day without impairing the high traditions and code of conduct they inherit from the past.

## PROTOZOOLOGY IN THE UNITED STATES

### Protozoa in Biological Research

Edited by Gary N. Calkins and Francis M. Summers. Pp. xli+1148. (New York: Columbia University Press; London: Oxford University Press, 1941.) 66s. 6d. net.

SINCE the title of this heavy volume is somewhat vague—and its cost prohibitive, in present circumstances, to most British biologists—a brief description of its scope and contents will be more serviceable than a detailed criticism. The book actually contains twenty chapters of unequal length and quality, by as many American authors, dealing with a score of miscellaneous topics of more or less urgent interest to present-day protozoologists. According to the preface, the work is not a "textbook" on the Protozoa, but is intended "to stimulate further research on these unicellular animals".

Chapter i is entitled "General Considerations", and is by the senior editor. Chapter ii, by H. W. Beams and R. L. King, deals with some physical properties of protozoal protoplasm. Chapter iii, by R. F. MacLennan, summarizes recent work on cytoplasmic inclusions. C. V. Taylor discusses the fibrillar systems of ciliates in Chapter iv; and S. O. Mast deals with the motor responses of various protozoa in Chapter v. Chapters vi (on respiratory metabolism, by T. L. Jahn) and vii (on contractile vacuoles, by J. H. Weatherby) are also physiological. In Chapter viii G. W. Kidder—under an ambiguous title—describes some recent attempts to obtain bacteria-free cultures of Protozoa. Food-requirements and growth-factors in cultures are analysed by R. P. Hall in Chapter ix; while growth in general is discussed by O. W. Richards in Chapter x. C. A. Kofoid then (Chapter xi) discourses on the "Life Cycle of the Protozoa". The four following chapters (xii–xv) are of genetical interest, and discuss fertilization (J. P. Turner), endomixis (L. L. Woodruff), sexuality (T. M. Sonneborn), and inheritance (H. S. Jennings). F. M. Summers next reviews some "morphogenetic problems" (Chapter xvi); and the volume concludes with four chapters (xvii–xx) on subjects of parasitological importance—pathogenicity (E. R. Becker), immunology (W. H. Taliaferro), host-parasite relationships (H. Kirby), and the parasites of the Protozoa themselves (by the same writer). The authors' names will afford sufficient indication of their present status in the protozoological firmament.

Each chapter is followed by a list of references, and there is a copious index at the end. There is also a lengthy "list of abbreviations" (of titles of journals cited) at the beginning (pp. xxvii–xli): but as these are mostly identical with those in the generally accepted "World List", the reason for their inclusion is not evident. It must be added that the get-up and printing are good, and few serious misprints have been detected. (On p. 449, however, "irradiation"—for eradication—presumably reverses the author's intention.) The text is fully illustrated with 21 tables, 226 figures, and four half-tone plates. It is, in fact, what is commonly called "a mine of information" on the various subjects dealt with, and will undoubtedly be of great use to those who can refine the precious metal from the dross—a laborious and perhaps impossible task which the present authors can scarcely be said to have achieved everywhere.