

EXTRACT from Notes for Sir Edward Bridges' talk :-
"ON BEING A CIVIL SERVANT"

THE CIVIL SERVANT AND HIS JOB

Some qualities of a good administrator:

- (i) Ability to work with others. Tact - patience - readiness to listen - willingness to make concessions to achieve the best compromise solution - willingness to submit to overruling - sense of humour.
- (ii) Team Spirit. Importance of sense of belonging to a nation-wide service - departmental patriotism is not enough - this forms par allel, at official level, with doctrine of cabinet responsibility at ministerial level - "soloists", however brilliant, seldom successful in Civil Service - fatal to aim at personal prestige or limelight - it improves neither ones's work nor one's prospects.
- (iii) Intellectual honesty. Avoidance of prejudice and subconscious bias (or, if that is impossible, a recognition of bias will enable it to be consciously discounted) - balance difficult to preserve, especially in cases where a decision will affect oneself personally - risk of "falling over backwards" in endeavour to be completely upright - importance of not only being, but of being manifestly seen to be, uninflluenced by personal considerations. Nevertheless a slight risk of being influenced by pride in self-martification - the test (a difficult one) is to consider how you would decide the question for others if you yourself were completely unaffected. Any bias against a proposal that affects oneself among others is less than fair to those others affected - nevertheless, if one must fall at all, "falling over backwards" is a more honest process than the converse.
- (iv) Clear thinking. Preservation of a sense of proportion - problems to be considered not in isolation but in their context as part of a wider picture and a general line of policy - ability to dig down quickly to essentials and avoid entanglement in details.
- (v) Clear speaking and writing. Clear thought useless in practice without clear expression - be brief and simple - avoid cliches and "cleverness" - read before you think, think before you decide, decide before you write - don't "argue out" your own doubts on paper.
- (vi) Be positive in giving advice. Tendency to "Hedge" in self-protection in case view is rejected - no such black mark in such rejection - the administrative problem has no mathematically "right" answer - the rejected solution may in the end prove to have been the better - don't hesitate to disagree with views of others, even if of higher rank. Duty not merely to sum up pros and cons but to give a lead and push problem at least one stage towards action. (If you find your advice consistently rejected, ask yourself why? Are you ignoring, perhaps, one whole class of consideration - e.g. failing to consider proportion between means and end - suggesting steam hammers for cracking nuts - thinking too much of neat patterns where facts won't fit a neat pattern? - failing to consider the sort of approach which your Minister favours? - failing to consider the impact of your solution on related fields?)
- (vii) Use your delegated authority, to the full - your job to take the load off your senior officers, not to lean on them or shelter behind them - be willing to take responsibility wherever possible even at risk of making a mistake - keep senior officers in touch with developments, but consult them officially only on questions which cannot be resolved at your own level - they will tell you if you are taking too much on yourself.
- (viii) Delegate to your juniors. Don't keep all the work in your own hands - delegate to the maximum - consider the best allocation of work - this spreads the load, increases speed, makes life more interesting for staff, gives them useful training - but keep a check on what is going on - safety depends on your good judgment of juniors' capabilities - don't rely solely on their grading - remember you are responsible for their errors - accept your responsibility and keep their confidence.

- (ix) Welfare and training. You are head of a team - importance of a "happy ship" - take personal interest in your staff - be approachable and a good listener - know something of their personal circumstances, family surroundings, etc. - poor work or bad timekeeping may have its explanation outside the office - don't treat people as machines - training of staff on job and their welfare your responsibility - not to be left to Training and Welfare Officers alone - consider how they are getting on throughout the year, not merely when time comes to fill in report - point out faults when this will help cure them but privately only - never criticise one in the presence of another - don't forget to praise good work as well as criticise the bad - but avoid all appearance of favouritism.
- (x) Putting the job first. Be willing to work as long and as hard as the job demands - but long hours are a necessary evil, not a virtue in themselves - a tradition that it was "not done" for administrative class to work only normal hours, or to take their proper leave entitlement, would reduce the efficiency in the long run - but at present, and for some years to come, pressure bound to be high and some jobs (especially in orbit of Ministers and parliamentary work) must involve exceptionally long hours and call for stamina and dislocation of private life.

(Speed of working can be increased, without skimping, by careful organisation and planning, by delegation, by brevity of drafting, and by reaching decisions without excessive "brooding". Second thoughts are not necessarily improvement on first reactions).