

A NEW ADMINISTRATION:
BEYOND (HENRY) FORDISM AND THE SELF-DECEIVING STATE

Paper for the IDS Retreat on 11-12 December 1989

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(HENRY)

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Abstract

The emerging ideology and practices of reversals conflict with normal professionalism and normal bureaucracy. In India, change is impeded by culture, bureaucratic conservatism and corruption. Fordist reflexes are normal, in which standard solutions are imposed on diverse environments. Fordist programmes often misfit local conditions, but are sustained by the false positive feedback of a self-deceiving state.

Agricultural research and extension, canal irrigation and waterbed management present cases both of inappropriate large-scale Fordism and of new, though small-scale, approaches and opportunities for reversals. For the future, decentralisation, open communications of rights, and organisation of demand from the grassroots provide means to moderate Fordism, reduce falsehood in Government administration, and support a new style and mode of administration. For such change, personal reversals by influential officials are crucial.

Note

"Fordism" and "Fordist" are used in this paper to refer to organisations, processes, attitudes and behaviour analogous to Henry Ford's automobile industry, exhibiting hierarchy, blueprinting, standardisation, and inflexibility. There should be no confusion with the Ford Foundation which has often supported sharply contrasting approaches similar to those advocated in this paper.

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Changing Paradigms of Development

The 1990s start with recognition that past models of world order and development have been not only inadequate, but dangerous. Across a wide front, old beliefs and attitudes are questioned. Perhaps in all human history, there has never been a period as dramatic as the late 1980s for changes of view about the human condition. The more obvious aspects are political - glasnost, the cold war thaw, the dissolution of frontiers in Europe, and world-wide trends towards democracy; and environmental - the thinning of the ozone layer, the greenhouse effect, pollution, the loss of tropical rainforests, and other concerns contributing to green awareness as a mass phenomenon. Less striking and less obvious, but also important, have been changing views of the ends and means of development, of the social institutions to support and sustain them, and of the role of the state.

Regarding these, three clusters of view, paradigms or ideologies can be distinguished: neo-Fabian, neo-Liberal, and third, an ideology of reversals (Chambers 1989). The neo-Fabian ideology is a survival from the 1970s and earlier; the neo-Liberal is a creature of the 1980s; and the third ideology has been evolving and coalescing over a long period, but gaining support and coherence during the 1980s. The normative thrusts and themes of this third ideology include:

- putting people before things, and poor people first
- development through learning process rather than blueprint
- decentralisation, diversity and differentiation
- local knowledge empowerment participation and small group action
- individual and household self-sufficiency and self-reliance
- open and effective communications and access

There is much that could be added about tolerance, human rights, the rule of law, freedom from hunger and disease, and other ideals; but these have a longer history. What is especially new is the value placed on adaptive and iterative rather than linear processes, on learning and changing rather than implementing a set plan, and on diversity and differentness. By no means too soon, ecological thinking has influenced economic and social

thinking. Development is seen as divergent as well as convergent, as differentiating as well as standardising. Diversity of people, social systems, and ecosystems are recognised as both necessary and good.

Normal professionalism and normal bureaucracy

While these ideas gain currency especially among intellectuals and non-government organisations (NGOs), two massive forces maintain the status quo. These are normal professionalism, meaning the ideas, thinking, methods and behaviour dominant in professions, and normal bureaucracy, meaning the characteristics found in large, especially government, organisations (Chambers 1986,1988b). Normal professionalism reproduces itself through hierarchical learning, university curricula and examinations, textbooks written by potboiling middle-aged men, professional societies, journal editors, and the traditions and rewards of the government departments into which graduates pass after university and college. It values things more than people, numbers more than judgements, high technology more than low, and whatever is urban, industrial, clean, hard and odourless more than whatever is rural, agricultural, dirty, soft and smelly. For its part, normal bureaucracy reproduces itself in the Weberian idiom as professionals climb the ladders of hierarchy by conforming to convention, avoiding error and abjuring innovation. It values central authority, standardisation, regularity, conformity, and quantitative targets.

Normal professionalism and normal bureaucracy are antithetical to the new views of development. Combined, they oppose the characteristics of the new paradigm. In spite of this, some changes are occurring in development professionalism. These are reflected in a burgeoning literature on indigenous technical knowledge, on development alternatives, on the NGO sector, on women's issues, people's participation and the like. In contrast, government development bureaucracy has changed rather little. In an attempt to understand why, and how change might be sought, recent and current Indian field bureaucracy, meaning mainly rural administration by government departments, will be examined, seeking to identify characteristics likely to be found also elsewhere.

Administrative Stasis

In its activities, Indian field bureaucracy both changes and does not change.

It changes in the programmes which it carries out. The books by retired administrators about rural development in India during their lifetimes make this clear. In devising and promulgating programmes there has been imagination and inventiveness. Special programme has followed special programme - for different types of disadvantaged district, for different types of disadvantaged person, for the development of water and wastelands, for social forestry, seasonal employment, credit, productive assets for the poor, midday meals for schoolchildren, housing for vulnerable groups, adult literacy, and much, much else. The range of activities undertaken has been impressively wide.

At the same time, Indian field bureaucracy changes rather little in its structure and norms. These reproduce themselves. Innovations are absorbed and transformed with reversion to type. The same District administration headed by a Collector or Magistrate, and with a hierarchy of Block Development Officers and lower staff, implements many of the programmes. Planning is top-down. Ideas are conceived in Delhi or in the State capitals and promulgated as instructions with funds to be disbursed and targets to be achieved. Districts and blocks are told what to do. Whatever the programme, the style is the same, or becomes the same. One programme, DWCRA, for women's employment, was initiated in the early 1980s with a planning workshop in Delhi. It was agreed unanimously that no targets should be set; but within a year targets were there. Central conception is transmitted for peripheral implementation, and in the process, as though subject to a magnetic field, it becomes standardised and target-oriented like all other programmes. How things are done is determined by a dutiful homeostasis.

Combined, the progression of programmes and the stasis of style have achieved much. In trying to understand the stability of the top-down mode, the tone of what follows will be largely negative. This should not detract from what has been achieved, especially in extending and maintaining rural infrastructure, in dealing with natural calamities, in supporting the poor, and in administering and attempting to develop a country of some 850 million people.

In explaining the stable continuity of Indian administration, we can start with three pervasive aspects: culture, conservatism and corruption.

Cultural dimensions appear significant. Hierarchy is a deep structure in Indian culture, thought and behaviour. Linked with this, the Hindu concept of dharma, or roughly "duty", is a strong force. Stanley Heginbotham's observations fifteen years ago may still apply quite widely, more notably at the lower levels of administration:

"..the dharmic tradition provides its adherents with a set of norms relating to work that differ in many important ways from the norms of a growth- and change-oriented society. It does not prepare an individual for situations of work overload. The concept of setting priorities is a foreign one, as is the notion of calculating costs and benefits in order to determine optimal work strategies. One does not strive to achieve results, nor does one feel concern if the performance of one's duty produces what appear to be undesired consequences. One keeps to established procedures and standards - neither seeking innovations nor quality of work that exceeds the traditional system-maintaining norms"

(Heginbotham 1975:34).

Hierarchy and the dharmic tradition reinforce the second aspect, the conservatism found at the lower levels of most bureaucracies. A reverence is shown for behaviour which is correct and approved. Rules and procedures may be bent or used in ways not intended, but the outward form is respected, giving a sort of liturgical pleasure to those who master its sequences and observances, even when it is exploited for private rents. Procedures tend to be additive: new ones are superimposed upon old, while the old are preserved.¹ Rules and lists tend to be for ever, reproduced

1. The effect can be maddening, or sometimes, for the antiquarian, an intriguing delight. In 1989 courteous and helpful officials of the Government of Andhra Pradesh have issued me with an International Driving Permit. The contracting states for which this is valid are a litany from my stamp-collecting childhood, including French India, Curacao, Lithuania, Sambilan, Pahang, Colony of Gold Coast and Ashanti, Free City of Dantzing (sic) (annexed by Hitler in 1939) and Saar Territory (annexed by Hitler in 1935). To the duplicated list of countries have been added the United States of America and Canada; but no country, it would seem, has been deleted or updated.

more or less faithfully, unless there is strong reason to change them; and when there is reason to change, adding and patching are preferred to abolition or restructuring.

The third factor is corruption. This includes informal fees for services, division of spoils, and the transfer trade. Informal fees for services rendered vary by region but are sometimes almost formal - with a well known and well understood fee for obtain a form, registering a land title, and so on. Division of spoils from kickbacks reportedly follows well established "bureaucratic" norms, with set percentages from contracts and other illicit monies which are distributed as rents to different officers, especially at the lower levels. At higher levels, as analysed by Wade (1984) and corroborated by articles in the press, the transfer trade is widespread. Officials buy posts from the politicians who control them. Partly in consequence, the frequency of transfer from post to post "is typically so high as to make difficult any engagement between the official and his particular responsibilities" (ibid:1). There are officers who courageously stand out against this system. But generally, in these circumstances, there is little incentive or opportunity for an official to institute reforms. Indeed, where they do so, a penal posting is the usual prompt reward: Arun Bhatia, the Collector of Dhule District in Maharashtra who exposed corruption in the Employment Guarantee Scheme was quickly given the opportunity to exercise his talents as officer in charge of the Maharashtra Government's filing system. The transfer trade is a slipping clutch in development, oiled by money and preventing engagement and effective drive.

The effects are conservative. Lower-level staff have a strong financial stake in the status quo. Almost any reform would reduce their incomes (Chambers, Saxena and Shah 1989:232). For their part, middle-level and senior officers involved in the transfer trade need to recover the outlays and redeem the commitments made to obtain their posts, and to make a profit. If they threaten vested interests, or stay outside the system, they are vulnerable to transfer to penal postings or backwaters. The incentives and disincentives of the system make it a model of sustainability.

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Fordis: Planning and Execution

In these conditions, in which structural reform is so difficult, the dominant option perceived has been Fordist planning and implementation. In the neo-Fabian tradition, Indian governance is outstanding for the faith it

manifests in planning and in direct administration for development. Plans and programmes are conceived centrally and instructions and incentives issued to states; and the same pattern occurs at the State level. Uniform prescriptions are made centrally for whole regions or for the whole country. A striking example has been the Technology Missions set up in the Prime Minister's Office under Rajiv Gandhi - for adult literacy, telecommunications, water supply, immunisation, oilseeds, and finally wastelands development. In Fordist style, they have sought to transfer and implement standard technologies and treatments.

Other examples can be found in other specialised programmes which have been implemented and studied over longer periods. Three to be examined here have been associated with the World Bank as well as the Government of India. They concern the Training and Visit (T and V) system of agricultural extension; on-farm development and the warabandi system of canal irrigation water distribution; and standard treatments in watershed management.

First, the Training and Visit system represented an attempt at bold and radical change. Earlier, agricultural extension was the responsibility of Village Level Workers responsible not only to the Department or Ministry of Agriculture, but also to other departments. They were often expected to implement an impossible number and variety of programmes. They were overwhelmed and buried under geological layers of instructions from different masters. Reporting requirements alone took much of their time. The T and V reform sought to make them responsible only for agriculture and only to one department, to programme their work so that their supervisors would know each day where they were and what they were doing, and to institute regular meetings and training. They were to propagate and popularise appropriate packages of practices through contact farmers. T and V was introduced in most Indian States and had strengths, but is now spoken of in the past tense. A major shortcoming it revealed was that good standard extension recommendations were often not available or not possible for the diverse and difficult conditions of much Indian farming.

Second, on-farm development and the warabandi system are two examples from canal irrigation.

On-farm development under the Command Area Development Programme has entailed survey, design and construction of field channels to connect

canals with farmers' fields. Based on a top-down diagnosis and implemented in a top-down, non-participatory mode, the fit with local conditions has been poor. The programme has, however, persisted, even though analysis has suggested that the first priority in canal irrigation lies not in on-farm development but in management of the main system of water distribution.

For its part, the warabandi system of canal irrigation water distribution entails timed turns for farmers to take water. (For a fuller account see Chambers 1988a:92-99). Warabandi is successfully practised in parts of Northwest India where four conditions are met: water is scarce and rainfall low; landholdings are consolidated with clear ownership; channels lead to individual fields; and a constant flow can physically be assured through the outlet which supplies a group of farmers. In these conditions, farmers will accept timed turns proportional to their land, and will irrigate at night. Unfortunately, these same conditions are rare in India outside the Northwest. This did not deter the Seventh Five Year Plan from setting a target of 8 million hectares to be brought under new warabandi during the plan period. The blueprint was to be transferred and imposed in widely differing environments where it did not fit. Rarely did the necessary preconditions exist. The outcome was almost universal failure. Boards giving names and times for taking water were erected on canals; but they were a facade. Almost everywhere, farmers ignored them.

Watershed management is a third example. Deforestation, erosion, the siltation of dams and lakes, the drying up of springs, and other environmental concerns have focussed attention and priority on watershed management. Over the years there have been at least 40 pilot projects where watersheds have been treated, more recently with World Bank support. As the programmes have been scaled up, treatments have become more standardised, physical and disbursement targets have been set, and despite a rhetoric of participation, implementation has been top-down, with little consultation and sometimes not even consent from farmers for their lands to be treated. Whereas farmers live with their land through the seasons and years, soil conservation engineers come once or twice, move the earth or plant the grass, and then leave, without further responsibility. At the

level of micro-topography, the fit between the works and the land is often poor. Engineers tend not to consult farmers about detail, and even to ignore their advice and requests.

An example is the Maheshwaram watershed near Hyderabad. There, the standard treatments have changed over a few years but not the style. Contour earth bunds on farmers' fields were at first put in. In areas treated later, these were replaced by vegetative bunds of khus grass (*Vetiveria zizanioides*), a technology promoted enthusiastically by the World Bank over large and diverse areas in India. A special study of the Maheshwaram programme (Sitapathi Rao et al 1989) has found many shortcomings, including lack of consultation and participation, ploughing in of bunds by dissatisfied farmers who did not want them, erosion actually resulting from anti-erosion bunds, and cause for doubt about the universal efficacy of khus grass. Nevertheless, the Planning Commission is said (November 1989) to be proposing a target of 5 million hectares per annum for watershed management treatment during the Eight Plan Period.

As with T and V and warabandi earlier, so now with watershed management, the tendency is to transfer and imprint standard technologies on diverse conditions. The likelihood is another massive programme on a vast nationwide scale, with targets for expenditure and implementation disaggregated down to low levels of administration, and reported on, monitored and evaluated, but without major changes or adjustments, until it is superseded by a new priority in the next new Five Year Plan. Yet field level investigations suggest that this will not work well, and may well be a disaster.

There is a question to be answered. When field level realities suggest widespread misfit and failure, how is it that such inappropriate programmes continue to be planned and implemented? There is something to explain.

The Self-deceiving State

Answers can be given in terms of normal bureaucracy in its many aspects, of traditions of planning, of hierarchical culture and of sheer Fabian conservatism. But perhaps more important, because more open to change, is homeostasis based on false positive feedback, on misperceptions and misinformation. There are dangers here of exaggeration. The Programme Evaluation Organisation of the Planning Commission, for example, has had a

good track record with its investigations and reporting which Northern countries could do well to emulate. But most of the time, for most organisations and programmes, normal misinformation cloaks the truth: the King, though naked, is reported by sources close to him to have clothes.

Five types of impressions and information combine to give this positive bias.

The first is rural development tourism, the brief rural visit by the urban-based senior officer. Such visits are carefully orchestrated and planned by local-level staff. Block development staff often have a special village, and special "tame" people in that village, to solve the problem of what to do with visitors and how to give them a good impression. Canal irrigation staff have special "islands of salvation" which receive privileged water supplies and systematically mislead visitors, and through them planners and international development specialists (Chambers 1988, chapters 3-5). Farmers are even rehearsed in the answers they are to give. A warabandi committee is mustered, even though it only exists when visitors come. Only the best is shown and seen. Tarmac bias is pronounced. On a stock visit to a watershed project, for example, no erosion caused by earth bunds is visible, although a walk of a few hundred metres from the tarmac would quickly discover it. A World Bank visitor is taken to a special place where the latest technology, now Vetiver grass, is seen to be doing well. Soil and Water Conservation staff will be shown the demonstration area, chosen because like the research station, it is on an even sloping plane. It is suitable for contour ploughing, unlike undulating land with small gullies where contour bunds and contour ploughing can cause, rather than prevent, erosion. That undulating land, and that erosion, are not seen. Rural visits thus often leave misleading impressions which visitors rarely recognise. Worse, the more senior and influential the visitor, the more elaborate the preparations will be, and the more biased the impressions gained. The glowing words of the VIP in the visitor's book then reflect not the wider reality, but atypical hothouse conditions of the island of salvation, and the skill and care with which the visit was arranged.

The second source of bias is subsidy. Most rural development programmes in India are subsidised. The arguments for subsidy are several: that it is equitable, providing assistance to a target poor group; that without a

subsidy, farmers would not adopt a practice; that a subsidy is needed to allow poor people to accumulate working capital so that they can afford subsequently to sustain a practice. Whatever the merit of these arguments, the effect of subsidies is often to induce farmers or others to adopt a practice which they otherwise would not, later abandoning it when the subsidy is withdrawn. The subsidy gives a misleading impression that a practice fits a need, and is what people want; and it inhibits learning by staff about the true priorities of poor people. The sustainable outcome of subsidies is then not adoption of technology but professional ignorance.

The third source of bias is lies, meaning deliberate and conscious falsification. Subsidies play a part here too. In practice subsidies support corruption, providing a surplus which can be extracted as rents. Subsidised assets or inputs are also patronage as the hands of staff can make them available to those for whom they were not intended. Reporting cannot, however, reveal this. As more generally, information has to be falsified to conceal corruption; and when corruption is endemic and widespread, so is false information. So work is reported done which has not been done, and workers reported paid who have not been paid. Costs are inflated. In a recent (1989) case this was by a factor of four: a Forest Department was accounting a cost of Rs40 per running metre of protective stone walling, when an NGO working on the ground found the cost to be only Rs10. Or again, administrators receive figures which they know are false, and are then ordered by politicians to falsify them further. In one technical department, the annual meeting of some 500 senior staff is said to have been confronted by their Chief Statistical Officer who asked: "Why do you all lie?". There was no reply. The question was repeated. There was still no reply. Perhaps the truth was that truth does not pay.

The fourth source of bias is the very methods used for investigation. Perhaps especially in rural India, informants give prudent, defensive and deferential replies to avoid trouble, ridicule or being lectured at, to present themselves in a good light, and to secure benefits. An individual questionnaire survey in the Maheshwaram watershed near Hyderabad recently found only one farmer out of 272 (0.4 per cent) who admitted to the traditional method of crossploughing which is not recommended by Government staff. Since extensive crossploughing was observed in the fields, this lack of response was checked in group interviews. After group discussions of ploughing practices, 28 per cent then said they crossploughed (C.

Sitapathi Rao, pers. comm.). More seriously and more generally, Dreze (1988) has shown through analysis of evaluation methods for the major anti-poverty programme, the IRDP (Integrated Rural Development Programme) that errors generated by the methods themselves are likely to have inflated the performance figures. The IRDP is intended to raise households from below to above the poverty line. To take but one illustration, in the Concurrent Evaluation of the IRDP in Gujarat, investigators had to assess retrospectively whether beneficiaries had been below the poverty line three years earlier, with the testimony of respondents as the dominant source of information. It is difficult to imagine that they did not know the "right" answer. Not surprisingly almost all (96 per cent) said that they had been below the poverty line, a finding which conflicted with micro-level evidence that the programme did not substantially involve the most vulnerable groups but to a large extent supported those who were relatively well-off.

A final source of bias is the consultancy or research report. Few who have been consultants will wish to throw stones with confident enthusiasm. Most of us have sinned. There are many shades and subtleties, conscious and unconscious, of self-censorship and choice of words. Even in writing an academic paper one may hesitate to offend, as I did above before using the word "lies". For those whose livelihoods, and whose institutions, depend on a flow of commissions for consultancy and research, the temptation can be strong indeed to pull punches and edit out unpalatable truth which might prejudice future contracts.

The compounded effects of these biases are conservative. They maintain the status quo, and reinforce top-down reflexes. The single universal solution when inspected on rural visits is seen to do well; routine reports rarely dawn; though local conditions differ, evidence of misfits is filtered out. So the standard blueprint seems sound; warabandi to be implemented on all irrigation systems; contour earth bunds, or Vetiver grass, for most or all watershed development. Positive misinformation supports standard programmes. Fordism is sustained by false feedback. The state deceives itself.

A New Administration: reversals and local diversity

The new paradigm for development reduces or removes false feedback. It reverses normal top-down, centre-outwards, uniform Fordist prescriptions, with their demands for standardised data from below. The reversals entail decentralisation, participation, and diversity. Diagnosis occurs locally, face-to-face with field reality. Those who investigate and analyse have an interest in truth and accuracy, since they are the users of the information.

These reversals, and the new administration they imply, can be illustrated by applications in the three fields already discussed - agricultural research and extension, canal irrigation, and watershed management. In each case, new patterns with better local fit are being evolved.

i. farmer first

"Farmer first", also described as farmer participatory research (Farrington and Martin 1988) refers to new approaches in agricultural research and extension which contrast with those of "transfer of technology" (TOT) (Chambers, Pacey and Thrupp 1989).

In the TOT mode, research priorities are decided by scientists; technology is developed by scientists on research stations and in laboratories; and recommended package of practices are then passed to Extension for transfer to farmers. TOT has had successes with some green revolution agriculture where environments are controlled and uniform, but has a poor record with rainfed agriculture which is more complex, diverse and risky. In the contrasting farmer-first mode, analysis is carried out more by farmers assisted by scientists; technology is developed much more on farm and by farmer; baskets of choices for farmers are presented to enhance their adaptability; and farmers' own experiments are supported.

Seed-breeding presents a striking illustration of the contrast between TOT and farmer first. In the normal professional mode of TOT in India, breeders make crosses, screen lines for good characteristics such as disease resistance and yield, and then select only a very few, perhaps two or three, out of as many as two hundred lines for assessment by a committee. This committee chooses material for multi-locational testing, following which those lines which do best are chosen, certified, and passed

for seed multiplication and transfer to Extension. Before "adoption", farmers play no part, and much promising genetic material is lost. In contrast, D.M.Maurya (1988,1989) of the Narendra Dev, University of Agriculture and Technology, Faizabad, has been making a wider range of lines available directly to farmers for them to try out, with the condition that if other farmers ask for seed, they will also give some back to him. Farmers thus themselves test, evaluate and disseminate. The results to date have been good.

Farmers' own diagnosis and analysis are another aspect of the farmer first approach. Usually these are undertaken by groups of farmers rather than individuals. To take one example, initially in the Philippines but now also in India, farmers have been enabled to use systems diagramming to identify problems and solutions (Pedro and Repulda 1987; Lightfoot et al. 1989).

ii. community organisers

With canal irrigation, participatory approaches have been developed in the Philippines (Bagadion and Korten 1985), in Sri Lanka (Uphoff 1986) and now on a small scale in India. Young staff are recruited within Government to act as what are variously known as Community Organisers or Institutional Organisers. Their activities have varied, but in all cases they have acted as catalysts for the formation of irrigators' groups which have taken responsibility for physical and managerial improvements.

In India, the innovator has been a senior officer who recruited, trained and supervised Community Organisers on the Lower Bhavani Irrigation Project in Tamil Nadu. Local groups have been formed to take over much of the work of on-farm development including influencing design and supervising construction.

iii. National Water Management Project

With World Bank support and encouragement, the Indian Government has initiated a National Water Management Project in which each canal irrigation project is treated as a separate entity (Chambers 1988: 238-9). This contrasts with the Command Area Development and warabandi approaches in which the same solutions and procedures were prescribed for all systems. In the National Water Management Project, the key activities are

participatory appraisal involving an outside team and local managerial staff. This concentrates on preparing an operational plan. Each plan is evolved separately and focuses on the software of management of the main system, including the scheduling and distribution of water. The plan may draw on the standard solutions of other programmes, but is individually tailored, and modified season by season as experience is gained.

iv. watershed management and participatory rural appraisal

The rhetoric of watershed management is participatory but the reality largely top down implementation of standard interventions. As in other domains of rural development, the fashion is to turn to the NGO sector for solutions. But the main challenge, as with canal irrigation on-farm development, is to evolve institutions and approaches within Government which can be both large-scale and truly participatory.

Although this has not been achieved, pilot participatory rural appraisal undertaken by MYRADA, an NGO, in Karnataka, has led to ideas for exploiting some aspects of normal bureaucracy to induce a reorientation of staff and a participatory approach. The participatory rural appraisal found that there was already much ingenious soil and water conservation and concentration undertaken by farmers. To help analysis, farmers made a physical model of the watershed on the ground. Following these experiences, the suggestion is that before Government staff undertake any soil and water conservation work in an area, they must be able to show:

- a. a set of photographs displayed in their offices of all local soil and water conservation and concentration practices
- b. similarly displayed, diagrammatic maps of all major nallas (large gullies and water courses) based on walking down through them, and observing and recording conditions and practices.
- c. a physical model of the watershed made by those who farm in it.

Whether such an approach would be widely replicable without being somehow subverted is not known; but it has the merit of trying to use a standard procedure and the norm of physical inspection by supervisors to induce

learning from farmers and farmers' participation. Aspects of Fordist administration would thus be exploited to promote its opposite, local analysis, participation, and differentiation to fit diversity.

Resources. Rights and Information

These programmes and proposals are specific and specialised - for agricultural research and extension, canal irrigation, and watershed management. Precisely because they are specialised, they throw detailed light on contrasting modes of administration. They present examples and opportunities for bureaucratic and professional change, with local differentiation and diversity. But there is also a much scope concerning resources, rights and information.

Wide scope for reversals lies in decentralisation of authority and control of resources. Karnataka State has already implemented a radical decentralisation. Nationally, the Congress (I) party proposed before the November 1989 election, a form of decentralisation in which funds would be made available for discretionary use direct to the village level. Such decentralisation raises questions of local power structures, and of who gains and who loses, but also promises a better local fit between needs and actions. It has the potential to develop local confidence and capacity to analyse and act, and to provide a supporting environment for reversals. If resolutely implemented and sustained, such decentralisation could prove the most significant reversal.

Communications are also a key part of the new paradigm for development (Jamieson n.d.). The information revolution of the 1990s can be expected to have profound effects on rural life, in India as elsewhere. Multiple channels of communication will continue to open up and become more accessible to rural people. These could be used for partisan or even totalitarian purposes, but such use would now be likely to backfire. One major opportunity lies in abolishing regulations and restrictions which lead to rent-seeking by officials, and making the abolitions widely known (Chambers, Saxena and Shah 1989: 238-9). More generally, whether it is water supply on canal irrigation systems, market price trends, rights to services, legal entitlements and protection against intimidation, exploitation and violence, access to credit, freedom from restrictions on

cutting and transporting trees and their products, or any other aspect of rights, reliable and authoritative information is empowering, and the more so when it is reinforced through multiple channels.

Potentials also exist for citizens themselves to obtain and use information, and for the lateral transfer of this "technology". Corruption at the grassroots sometimes appears an ecological condition as unalterable as climate, a fact of life to be accepted. But at Ahmadpur in Latur District in India, a voluntary agency brought out a handbill which said:

"Report a case of corruption and get the bribe-money back"

Villagers met on an appointed day and testified to payments made.

Officials were told that prosecution was not sought, only return of the money. The results were dramatic. Some officials asked for time to pay, but in all cases bribes were returned, the sums being designated as money that had been "lent" (Joshi 1989). Should lateral transfer of this approach prove feasible, the effects on administrative behaviour might be profound.

Information, organisation and empowerment at the grassroots are, in sum, correctives to rent-seeking officialdom and to the self-deceiving state.

Honesty and accuracy can be enforced by those with local knowledge when they have the power of solidarity and knowledge. The reversals implied will be resisted by those - mainly lower-level officials - who stand to lose their rents. But the control of policy and information resides higher up in the hierarchy, in central administrative places; and as with the Karnataka decentralisation, that control can be used to support reversals as and when political leaders and officials so decide.

Personal Reversals and a New Administration

In the evolution of a new administration, there are questions of who starts and where. Rights, information and empowerment depend on decisions to clarify rights, to disseminate information, and to encourage the formation of local organisations. Those in a position to take those decisions are then one of the keys.

The mental reversals required are not easy. The normal pathology of the self-deceiving state is mirrored by the normal pathology of self-deceiving professions. Even psychotherapists themselves, supposedly expert on psychological pathology, are unselfcritical, assume that patients benefit from their treatment, lack feedback on the effectiveness of their work, and, most significantly, do not seem interested in it (Howarth 1989). Officials, trapped in hierarchy and enveloped by a corrupt environment and misinformation, can seem to have little incentive for change and little room for manoeuvre. All one can say, is that again and again individuals do show courage and conviction. There is a question here of critical mass. As with the unpredicted (and five years ago unthinkable) transformation of Russia and Eastern Europe and of the Cold War, so with large bureaucracies like those of India, unpredicted and apparently improbable change may be closer than "realists" suppose.

In supporting reversals by individuals, two final thrusts can be indicated.

The first concerns officials. Methods of rapid rural appraisal have themselves evolved rapidly in the latter 1980s. They now present a wide repertoire of means for learning from rural people and about rural conditions. Besides requiring relatively brief periods in the field, using their techniques is also interesting and enjoyable. The question is whether they can be used by more officials, at different levels, to effect reversals of learning, from below not just from above, keeping up-to-date with change, and being sensitive to the priorities of people, especially the poorer, rather than the priorities perceived by normal professionals.

The second concerns outsiders to Government. The roles and actions of those working in NGOs, in aid agencies and foundations, and in social science research, all deserve more exploration and analysis. In the development of a new administration NGOs have a mode in forming and empowering groups, in developing procedures and approaches for adoption by Government, and in training officials. Aid agencies and foundations, most notably the Ford Foundation, have shown a capacity for professional and funding support for bureaucratic reorientation (see e.g. Bagadion and Korten 1985), but to be effective such support requires a continuity rare among aid agencies. For their part, social science researchers may be able to contribute more at the margin through action research, learning about the world by trying to change it, than through simply studying what exists.

Action science (Argyris et al 1987) has its own rigour, and its own comparative advantages in learning, not least in the understanding of the defensive routines of individuals and organisations that resist change. Psychology, which has played so little part in development, might come into its own with recognition of the primacy of individual decisions to change behaviour.

For Fordism to be phased out of Government administration will remain more difficult than in the private sector. Not least, the sanction of the market is missing. Many initiatives are needed, and many reversals. For the 1990s and beyond, information and organisation are a promising means for change. They could empower popular demand from below to moderate Fordism and reduce falsehood in Government administration. The discipline which market forces exercise for the private sector would then be provided for Government administration by people's awareness, organisation and action.

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