Adjustment and the State: The Problem of Administrative Reform

E. A. Brett

The Problem of Administrative Failure

State structures in the Third World are widely regarded as rigid, inefficient, over-staffed and corrupt — systematically exploiting their privileged status to provide minimal services to the public, and extract monopoly rents from their clients, while conducting their business in secret to defend their activities from public scrutiny and control. So extreme is the condemnation that fundamental restructuring is usually part of the adjustment programmes introduced by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) or World Bank (WB) where the remedy is often not just the reform of existing structures, but privatisation and the enforcement of control by 'market forces'.

Indeed, the problem concerns much more than adequate public sector performance in LDCs, since it is central to the major ideological debates now being conducted not only in LDCs, but in DCs and state socialist systems as well. From the late 1930s into the mid-1960s most theorists assumed that markets, and especially private capitalist markets, could not provide adequate basic services and guarantee long term economic stability. Both Leninists and social democrats called for planning, and relied upon large, centralised and monopolistic public service bureaucracies to control the economy and produce goods and services. This 'interventionist' orientation was extended to LDCs in its Leninist variant in the socialist countries and in a 'structuralist' variant elsewhere. This, as Wolin says, was 'the age of organisation' [Wolin 1960:352].

Only a few liberal 'dissidents' retained a commitment to 'the individual' and 'the market' during these years, arguing that a central planning committee could never take more rational economic decisions than the individuals and firms within the economic system; they also associated large-scale centralised organisation with rigidity and, in the libertarian version, with domination as well. The current populist and academic critique of the performance of public sector structures has therefore served to validate their intellectual analysis and the political authority of the radical right in many countries.

Thus, the question of administrative reform lies at the heart of the debate between liberal and socialist theory, and the solutions which it produces will set the constraints within which all forms of conscious social intervention must take place and, with them, the political options available to the left and the right. This article is therefore concerned to explore the theoretical and political implications of this issue, starting from the assumption that the orthodox form of public service organisation (the 'Weberian model') is seriously deficient in many ways and must be restructured, yet at the same time insisting that the role of the state must remain central in any effective developmental strategy. Many key services (for example roads and national defence) can never be privatised and the implementation of the adjustment programmes which now determine the framework within which public policy must function in many LDCs, is inherently administration intensive, since it involves an increase in centralised supervision over the delivery of services and the operation of the market sector itself.

Thus the current crisis imposes a greater, not smaller role on public administration theory, provided only that it can extend its range to take account of these new conditions and challenges. Orthodox theoretical models will now have to be re-examined, their relevance to the conditions prevailing in particular countries in the Third World will have to be reassessed. New ways will have to be found to make traditional structures work better in difficult conditions, and new structures — better adapted to local circumstances — will have to be devised where this is impossible. Here we can do no more than attempt to identify what is at issue, survey the more influential critiques of the orthodox model, and set out some of the more convincing alternatives which are now being tried.

Traditional administrative theory has been very heavily influenced by a functionalist orientation which took the existing structures as a given, and then attempted to specify the conditions required to maintain them in stable equilibrium. But the problem of bureaucratic failure is now so extreme that this approach is clearly no longer adequate. This article will therefore attempt to present a critical and dynamic analysis concerned to identify the sources of failure as well as preferable — and yet objectively possible — alternatives. It will begin with a quite detailed outline of the orthodox model which still

dominates public sector provision in most contexts, since all of the most important criticisms are directed against its logic, while any alternative must demonstrably be able to do a better job. Having done this, it will then look at the most important critical traditions, and conclude with an outline of the alternatives which their analysis suggests.

The Orthodox Model

This article is mainly concerned with public sector organisations, directly subject to political control, which provide a service over which they have a monopoly or near-monopoly, either free or with a public subsidy. As Weber noted, both public and private corporations use the same internal principles of organisation [Weber 1978:974,988], but we need to try to understand the differences which subjection to public control introduces into the allocation process for the public sector agency, since it is this which differentiates the field of public administration from economics and management science, and enables us to identify the most important characteristics of our model.

For economics, the 'central behavioral relationship is ... that among freely contracting individuals' where they enter into voluntary exchange relationships in which prices are fixed impersonally through competition, and efficient allocation guaranteed by the fact that only least cost producers will survive. Public provision, however, presupposes centralised organisation with resources allocated to producers out of compulsory taxation. It depends upon social rather than individualistic decisions, and upon rational planning rather than competition to ensure equity and efficiency. This presupposes an asymmetrical relationship between a social authority able to exercise a monopoly of force, and a citizenry upon whom this force can be brought to bear, mediated by the system of law and justice. Force enables the state to provide its agencies with monopoly powers, so that individuals are bound to pay the wages of the officials and to make use of their services, whatever their quality.

The modern state system must then assert the necessity for democratic control from below to offset this coercive element in the political system and avoid the tyranny of absolute power. Hence the right to vote is exchanged for the obligation to pay taxes and avoid the temptation to break the state's monopoly. Almost universally, therefore, modern societies recognise (although they less commonly actually ensure) that legitimate administrative authority can only be derived from a democratic constitution.

Yet this is not the only principle at work. While democracy serves to discipline public officials, it is their *expertise* which actually justifies their monopoly powers. As Weber notes, 'the decisive reason for the advance of bureaucratic organisation has always been its purely *technical* superiority over any other form of organisation' [Weber 1978:973]. Where the technical conditions of production or service provision make a monopoly inevitable, or where market failure imposes the need for centralised intervention, then optimal allocation can only be achieved by creating a large-scale bureaucracy in which the necessary technical skills of a wide range of people can be effectively coordinated and directed towards socially determined goals. As Weber puts it:

> The ruled, for their part, cannot dispense with or replace the bureaucratic apparatus once it exists, for it rests upon expert training, a functional specialisation of work, and an attitude set on habitual virtuosity in the mastery of single yet methodically integrated functions. If the apparatus stops working, or if its work is interrupted by force, chaos results, which is difficult to master by improvised replacements from among the governed. This holds for public administration as well as for private economic management [Weber 1987:988].

Hence, political accountability must not interfere with the officials' right to perform their duties in an impersonal and technically appropriate manner. Neither the patient nor his/her political representative must be able to tell the health service surgeon how to organise the hospital or to perform the operation. Political accountability must not be allowed to turn into political interference. While the overall objectives of the service and its adherence to basic norms of efficiency and honesty must be ensured by the political process, its technical functioning has to be left to the experts. *An adequare public service bureaucracy has therefore to depend upon a complex and invariably tense system of checks and balances which requires the close interdependence, yet relative autonomy, of both the political and the administrative elements in the state system.*

This condition, then, also requires that political control be vested in a Minister whose powers are subject to the law, to whom the official must defer in the last analysis, and who must ensure that the services to the citizenry are provided on a least cost basis. Now for this relationship to be a meaningful one, the citizens must be able to get rid of Ministers who have failed to do their job. Yet the principle of equity in public provision also depends upon impersonality in allocation — service provision must not favour particular groups or individuals. Thus Ministers should never interfere with the technicalities of service provision, and must also defend their officials from the particularistic demands of potential clients seeking unfair advantages — through nepotism, corruption, etc. This requires an adequate degree of autonomy between Minister and official, between elected representatives and their own constituents.

Securing this balance between technical autonomy, Ministerial control and democratic rights is likely to be very difficult in single party systems because of the operation of the 'iron law of oligarchy' [Michels 1949]. Thus the orthodox model presupposes a competitive party system in which elections can serve to break the monopoly control exercised by a particular group over the system as a whole, together with effective mechanisms of parliamentary supervision of the executive.[1] Indeed, effective control over both Ministers and officials probably requires the development in 'civil society' of a complex structure of free investigation and autonomous pressure groups able to develop a general expertise and maintain constant watch over the state apparatus. This is thought to require a strong and autonomous sphere of economic organisation based upon market competition and private property rights, since only this will give citizens the *real* capacity to resist the power of a state which will otherwise monopolise all avenues to social preferment.[2] This, in turn, of course, presupposes effective mechanisms for integrating the state and private sectors as a system of relatively autonomous exchanges of money, goods and services and a corresponding need for a science of *political economy* to deal with them.

Hence the indispensability of *relative* autonomy for each element in this overall system. The government must be accountable to the citizenry but not to the particularistic interests of particular groups or individuals, however powerful. All must be obliged to obey the law, just as all must be entitled to vote for those who make and administer the law. The officials must be paid as of right, and be left free to exercise their expertise subject only to control by their peers (since laypeople cannot judge the performances of experts), but they must, in the final analysis, be made accountable for adequate performance through the controlled exercise of the democratic system. This latter condition in turn requires 'formal rational' internal organisation, with a single hierarchy, clear lines of command, recruitment and promotion by merit, impersonal performance indicators and so on, since only thus, in the Weberian model, can the span of control be maximised and political responsibility guaranteed.

This model provides the legitimating principle and the basis for the organisational competence of the modern state. Its immense success and corresponding influence should never be underestimated, yet its role is now subjected to increasing criticism. In what follows we will be more concerned with the criticisms than with the continuing validity of many of these established principles, but this should never lead us to underestimate them.

[1] Weber, again, provides us with the classic formulation of this argument in 'Parliament and government in a reconstructed Germany', *op cit.*, vol 2.

[2] The classic arguments are presented in Hayek 1944 and Friedman 1962.

Explaining Administrative Failure

1. Modernisation, Dualism and Bureaucratic Failure

Here, a fundamental distinction is made between modern and traditional forms of organisation, and the ideal model just described is accepted as the optimum form of organisation. Its lack of success is not attributed to its own weaknesses, but to the continued existence of incompatible 'traditional' values and structures in 'less developed' societies which produce a distorted 'patrimonial' system of bureaucratic organisation based upon particularistic and nepotistic principles. In this dualist model the traditional 'agrarian' is distinguished from modern 'industrial' social order, the former system is then said to produce an (inefficient) 'administrative ritualism', the latter an (efficient) 'administrative rationalism' [Riggs 1957:59].

In such circumstances of course, the western model is bound to fail, but this does not imply that there is anything intrinsically wrong with the model itself. Thus, since most LDCs do wish to implement the policies required for viable modernisation they must systematically 'modernise' the attitudes of both their administrators and political elite or give up these aspirations. The solution to the problem must then be better training — a combination at its crudest, of moral rearmament and exposure to the literature which sets out the principles of the orthodox model already described.[3]

Now there can be little doubt that the lack of a strong and extended public service culture stemming from dualism in many LDCs does contribute to bureaucratic failure, and that some improvements can be secured through effective programmes of training and socialisation. But very powerful criticisms of this set of arguments have been made in the literature, from perspectives which suggest that the most important problems may in fact arise out of the nature of the orthodox bureaucratic model itself, or out of social contradictions in LDCs which derive from their modern position in the international division of labour, and not from purely traditionalistic survivals.

2. Functionalism: Administrative Rigidity and Goal Displacement

While many functionalist theories are mainly concerned to spell out the equilibrium conditions required for effective operation, some important insights have emerged about weaknesses which can be shown to be inevitable where the appropriate conditions for its operation do not exist, or implicit in the logic of the orthodox model itself.

[3] See in particular Schaffer 1974.

(i) The Failure of Democratic Control

Our earliest discussion of the political context through which public servants must be controlled immediately suggests an obvious diagnosis of administrative ill-health, though one which appears relatively rarely in the scholarly literature and reform manuals. If an effective system of pluralist democratic control from below, with adequate mechanisms for public information on the deeds and misdeeds of officials is necessary for efficient functioning, then it is not surprising that officials function inefficiently in the many countries in the socialist bloc and Third World where government is authoritarian and autonomous institutions in civil society are actively repressed.

Once democratic controls break down, either political leaders or officials or, more probably, both in collusion with each other, are almost bound to misuse their positions. The state then becomes an 'instrument of plunder' with a vested interest in maximising the difference between the monopoly prices it sets (for example of foreign exchange) and those which would prevail on a free market, since it is the exploitation of this difference which gives them their power to accumulate resources at public expense.

(ii) Rigidity, Compartmentalism and Goal Displacement

The monocratic model enforces control from above and allows officials the freedom needed to develop a highly specialised skill through the creation of a 'clearly defined hierarchy of offices', and rules, filled by appointed individuals 'selected on the basis of technical qualifications' with security of tenure and 'subject to strict discipline' [Weber *op cit.* 220-1]. Because they must serve public purposes and not their own, their wills must be subordinated to that of the organisation. The rational official 'is, and must be, an organised and institutionalised individual' [Simon 1957:102].

This structure then becomes very good at the tasks for which it is originally designed, but gives its officials a vested interest in continuing to perform the actions associated with their own specialisation, since it is this that guarantees them employment and perhaps promotion. Then, by giving them security of tenure, it also makes it very difficult to get the structure to change sufficiently to perform new or changed tasks. Because Ministers at the top depend on the officials for information and expertise their power can be minimised. As Weber says, control of the bureaucracy is only fully possible for those who are 'technical specialists', so that the senior official 'is more likely to get his way in the long run than his nominal superior, the cabinet minister, who is not a specialist' [Weber *op cit.* 224].

This is bound to create rigidity, since the creation of a complex and interdependent system based on skill may, as Merton suggests, 'result in inappropriate responses *under changed conditions*. An inadequate flexibility in the application of skills, will, in a changed milieu, result in more or less serious maladjustments' [Merton 1980:22]. Even more forcefully, Kanter shows that organisations based upon 'segmentalism' or the compartmentalism of the orthodox model, systematically smother innovation because they discourage people from seeking change which will disrupt their existing roles, reduce cooperation between departments and the flow of information from below, and intensify 'specialist biases and political conflicts' [Kanter 1984].

Then, given the relative influence of the officials as compared with the Minister, and the insulation of both from effective control from below, the organisation is likely to perform its function in ways quite different from those originally intended. Thus Selznick shows how this process occurred as the Tennessee Valley Authority absorbed 'new elements' into its 'policy-determining structure . . . as a means of averting threats to its stability or existence' [Selznick 1952:259]. The relevance of this problem of 'goal displacement' to LDCs becomes quite clear when we recognise Scott's point that influence on policy is characteristically exerted at the enforcement rather than the policy-making stage, and 'often takes the form of corruption' [Scott 1972:24]. Thus, once insulated from effective surveillance, (and here the emphasis on 'official secrets' is very useful) the bureaucracy can do deals with special interests and substitute its own goals for those originally intended. This therefore suggests serious weaknesses in the functionalist model itself,[4] since it is bad at innovation, prone to self-interest, and liable to be taken over by powerful social groups.

3. Public Choice, Individualism and Bureaucratic Deformation

In traditional administrative theory the official is merely an instrument for the rational achievement of the normative goals set by the political system. But it is in fact dangerous to assume that officials do indeed behave in ways which are governed by organisational needs and goals, and ignore any personal interests which contradict what they are being expected (and paid) to do. As Buchanan puts it, this assumes 'that man becomes as a machine when he is placed within a hierarchy, a machine that carries out the orders of its superiors who act for the whole organisation in reaching policy decisions' [Buchanan 1987:2].

'Public choice' theorists, however, use the notion of individual self interest as opposed to collective rationality to explain both the inner workings of bureaucracies and their relationships with the rest of the social and political system. Thus Niskanen sees

[4] For a more extended review of its ramifications see Burrell and Morgan 1979, ch 5.

senior officials as 'not entirely motivated by the general welfare', but committed to budget maximisation because this maximises their own interests, so that there will be no *internally* generated desire to maximise output while minimising costs [Niskanen 1973:20,22,25]. Instead, overstaffing and unnecessary tasks will continue until effective controls are enforced from the outside.

If this is so, then efficient collective provision depends entirely on the adequacy of participatory political organisation, and here the public choice logic suggests that few individuals will be prepared to take the trouble to defend their common interest in securing a competent service from the state, because none of them singly has very much to gain, and each of them can assume that someone else will take on the responsibility of doing so. Yet, a small number of individuals who do have a lot to gain from state provision (for example, in the corrupt allocation of contracts or import licences) will have a strong interest in organising themselves to ensure that this occurs, and will be able to exploit public apathy and bureaucratic secrecy in order to do so.[5] Thus when we combine this argument with the possibilities of goal displacement set out in the previous section, it becomes probable that the creation of large structures accountable only to the state will lead to irrational and exploitative forms of service provision.

When we then apply the concept of pure individual self interest to the relationships between inferiors and superiors inside the agency, we must assume that individuals will attempt to maximise their own status and power in the system without reference to its efficiency, but by hiding information, manipulating their superiors, and so on. With no coincidence between individual interest and that of the organisation, effective services will only be obtained from inferiors through close supervision by superiors. This must significantly reduce the advantages derived from size (one of the major advantages used to justify any form of bureaucratic organisation), so that growth must soon produce declining 'marginal efficiency' and 'guarantee that a point would be attained at which the further gains from expansion would be less than the added cost'. This then leads to the even stronger claim that 'in general, efforts to set up administrative structures to perform sizable tasks will always fail' [Tulloch 1987:151,157].

4. Marxist Theory: State, Bureaucracy and Class Conflict

Few Marxists have confronted the problem of administrative failure directly,[6] perhaps because their attitude to the state has been ambiguous and contradictory. Marxism is based upon the assumption that all organisations in capitalism are essentially collective and exploitative, and this distinguishes it from both functionalism and individualism.[7] However, these differences are not absolute — functionalism accepts an essentially collective orientation (note Merton's comment that 'one must be employed by the bureaucracies in order to work in order to live' [Merton 1980:23],[8] while, as we have seen, liberalism also assumes that there is no necessary coincidence between the interest of the organisation and the individual worker. But it is much easier to develop a consistent theory of exploitation for the private than the public sector, and Marxists have therefore focused most of their attention upon the 'capital-labour relation' there.

But perhaps more importantly, where Communist and Socialist parties have used state power to take over private producers and to extend public provision on a non-marketed basis, they too have adopted the monocratic model to do so. Then, because these agencies are controlled by the party and exclude private profit, their functioning is equated with socialism, and any problems of internal hierarchy and rigidity are ignored. Thereafter any criticism appears to justify the liberal condemnation of collective public provision, and corresponding assertion of the individualistic market principle. Paradoxically, therefore, Marxist theory has found it difficult to criticise the formal Weberian model, even in the form of the extreme 'Taylorist' version created by Stalinism, and is now finding it very difficult to come to terms with the issues raised by the crisis in public sector provision.

Yet we can look for insights in Marxist theory which are not available in the other traditions set out already, because it does draw attention to the real conflicts which exist within society, between the state apparatus and private interests, and within the state apparatus itself. These problems tend to be misinterpreted by modernisation theory, ignored by functionalism and attributed to purely individualistic motivations by liberal theories which ignore their collective elements. Hence it does serve as an important corrective to each of them, without necessarily denying the importance of many of their insights set out above.

Thus, to the extent that society is seen as composed of essentially conflicting interests, it can be assumed that dominant groups will be able to impose their needs upon the state apparatus and undermine its claim to impersonal neutrality. Hence problems of goal displacement, corruption etc. cease to be the outcome of purely 'traditional' values, and become a highly

[5] The argument here is derived from Olsen 1971.

[6] An exception is Westhues 1980.

[7] Burrell and Morgan, *op cit.* provide an excellent review of the divergencies and complementarities between the main traditions involved.

[8] For a good examination of the parallels and contrasts between the functionalist, liberal and Marxist paradigms see Burrell and Morgan, *op cit.*

rational and *modern* attempt by capitalistic interests to appropriate monopoly rents through privileged access to officialdom. Equally, officials who engage in these processes are doing so because of their own desire to exploit their positions for purposes of 'primitive accumulation' of a clearly capitalist kind, in societies where a fully fledged capitalist class with a developed political culture has yet to emerge.

Secondly, to the extent that officials in public service are also wage workers, it can be assumed that there will be no automatic correlation between their interests and those of the managerial structure. The inherently antagonistic 'capital-labour' relationship in the private sector is also likely to exist in the public sector, and to produce problems of discipline, control and motivation which are not looked at in the functionalist model and are misunderstood as 'traditionalism' in modernisation theory. Here there are close parallels with liberal theory, but the tension between management and labour is not attributed to individualism, but to the conflict between the *collective* needs of a working class which must, necessarily, accept the logic of a system based upon cooperation and define their own interests in terms of the organisation, a view closer to functionalism than liberalism.

The problem of non-accountability of and non-compliance within the monocratic hierarchy itself can then be explained as the outcome of the authoritarianism of the bureaucratic structure and of the resulting 'capital-labour problem'. The state apparatus is part of a system which involves the centralised imposition of control on the direct producers from above. It must enforce an essentially inequitable system of production and property rights; its welfare provision must always be minimised in the interests of profit maximisation; the traditional rights of pre-capitalist small producers must always give way before the needs of capitalists. The agencies which enforce these needs must therefore be directly and unconditionally subordinated to the central authority of the state to ensure that they operate at minimum cost and with maximum discipline. The almost universal prevalence of the Weberian model, which provides maximum vertical control with minimal horizontal integration, can then be explained in Marxist terms as a function of its close compatibility with the needs of the capitalist system as a whole.

Yet, to the extent that collective provision under democratic social control is a necessary element in a socialist strategy, the assumption that large organisations must always fail has also to be rejected as simplistic and destructive. The socialist problem is therefore to find ways of ensuring that they do serve needs recognised by their workers, and create incentive systems which encourage cooperation and creativity. When this is so, they serve to extend the powers of the individuals involved and create a context within which their capacities and experiences can be enhanced rather than constrained.

Solutions: Towards the Flexible State?

Paradoxically, although the starting points for the various critiques outlined above differ fundamentally, the solutions which they suggest have a great deal in common. All of them are concerned with the need to create both efficiency and autonomy in organisations; all of them recognise that over-extended and compartmentalised hierarchies produce rigidity and subordination. Equally, their solutions presuppose various means of devolving power within organisations and of 'empowering' those outside them, whether as clients or citizens. We can therefore conclude with a brief outline of some of the more influential proposals.

1. Technical and Moral Training

The most pervasive and, in relation to the critique presented here, perhaps the least effective response to the problem of inefficiency lies in the attempt to increase the compliance and capacity of staff by simply training them more effectively in what is expected of them in the orthodox model. No-one would wish to deny the importance of good training, but one should also never over-estimate the extent to which even the best intentioned official can behave 'rationally' in an irrational context. Thus, better education cannot be seen as a substitute for forms of restructuring intended to create an effective system of rewards and sanctions for public sector agencies and the people who work in them.

2. Decentralisation and Reintegration

Must organisations be as hierarchical, compartmentalised and centralised as the orthodox model suggests? In many contexts it now seems that far more direct responsibility can be given to workers, and their rewards related directly to success or failure, barriers between departments can be broken down and workers 'reskilled' through the integration of tasks, particularly where automated techniques enable routine activities to be eliminated and the span of control widened. These improvements will not be cost free. It is not easy to set clear performance indicators within organisations; increased flexibility can increase stress and conflict because the change which brings success for some will inevitably mean failure for others, and the traditional organisational form is probably the best way of operating in many contexts where change and flexibility is not required. Here 'the much maligned Weberian bureaucracy probably [still] constitutes the optimum form of organisational structure' [Perrow 1980:128]. Yet these costs are likely to be offset by gains which arise out of the elimination

of the need to enforce unconditional control on an unwilling labour force.

3. Privatisation, Marketisation

If public services can be paid for and strong arguments against private control cannot be made, state agencies can be sold to the private sector and brought under market control. As we know, many activities cannot be performed by the private sector for technical or political reasons, while privatisation can exacerbate existing problems where natural monopolies exist, cross subsidisation is required or 'infant industries' need to be created.

The key element here, however, is the introduction of effective competition into service provision, rather than changes in the form of ownership. And here 'market socialists', and notably those concerned with the problems of Eastern Europe, argue that we must find ways of subordinating public sector provision to these pressures without necessarily moving over to a fully-fledged capitalist system.

This means that consumers must be allowed to choose between public agencies, so that subsidies should be switched from producers (for example, of health or housing) to consumers, by giving the latter credits which they can spend where they get the best service. This produces a competitive market for the service in question and will radically change the balance of power between consumers and producers. Thus public sector monopolies (for example, in crop marketing) must always be subjected to close scrutiny and eliminated wherever possible.

Where cross subsidisation is required this can be provided, but it must be done openly, and not ncessarily at the sole expense of other users of the same service.

4. Cooperative and Voluntary Alternatives

Cooperative and voluntary organisations subject to market forces rather than the state, create the possibility of 'progressive' structures even in re-actionary contexts (for example, the Mondragon cooperative which developed in fascist Spain), and also eliminate many of the tensions between managers and workers. Such forms are far more difficult to create than many of their proponents would like to believe, because collective organisation requires greater degrees of overall competence than autocratic management. Voluntary organisations can also transfer the cost of providing services from the wealthy taxpayer to the poorest members of the community and increase inequalities in access to services.

But these methods can improve service provision and allow local groups to maintain their autonomy against powerful private interests and a distant and perhaps alien state. In most cases success will probably only occur where they are also given substantial degrees of support by state or aid agencies, particularly in the early stages before they have built up their resources and skills. Thus it is almost certainly the case here, as elsewhere, that the full development of autonomous agencies is not a substitute for effective public provision, but only possible where it can grow effectively in association with it.

5. Democratisation

Finally, and perhaps most obviously, our earlier analysis suggests that effective public provision cannot be expected in societies where the basic conditions of pluralistic democracy are absent. Bureaucrats will inevitably fail without effective political surveillance. And this means open access to public information, an expert and autonomous system of investigative research and reporting, developed pressure groups able to maintain a continuous and expert watch over the activities of their counterparts in the state machine, and a competitive political process which will get rid of governments which fail to do their job.

This does not mean direct public control over public structures but *autonomy* in the sense defined earlier. In the last analysis, this is only possible where the people in a country have been able to develop autonomous bases of social organisation in 'civil society' sufficiently powerful to counterbalance the immense power which the modern bureaucratic structure puts into the hands of the state.

In the absence of the political transformation required to create the effective democratic control over the state required by the orthodox model, reformers will have to remain satisfied with limited reforms designed to improve accountability and participation. These, of course, will often take the form of one or other of the options set out in this section, since some of them can be introduced in specific situations even where the overall political environment is very hostile. Fortunately, however, the effect of these, where they succeed, will be continuously to strengthen the general system of autonomous social organisation in society as a whole and, with it, the likelihood that effective countervailing powers will eventually emerge, to ensure that neither the regime nor the state apparatus will be able to continue to behave with the arrogance and incompetence which is now so common.

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