INTRODUCTION

Robin Murray

One of the least contentious issues in post war development thinking was the form of public administration. There were disputes about the boundaries between public and private, but not about how the public sector should be run. Most newly independent states adopted a model based closely on metropolitan and colonial forms of administration, or, in the case of socialist countries, on the Soviet system. What is striking are the similarities between capitalist and socialist forms of administration, and the common influences which shaped them — earlier absolutist regimes on the one hand, and modern business organization on the other.

It is this old administrative order which has been challenged over the last decade. The collapse of the Eastern European regimes is the most recent and dramatic example of this challenge, but the neo-liberal restructuring of Western states is hardly less so. It is this new market model of the state which is being transferred to Eastern Europe, and — through structural adjustment programmes — to many countries in the Third World. Public administration, having been a marginal subject in the social sciences, has now moved to the centre of the stage.

Britain has been one of the most radical proponents of the neo-liberal state, and those of us living and working in Britain during the 1980s have witnessed the most profound changes to public administration in this country since the mid 19th century. It has not just been the shifting of the boundaries between public and private back towards the private. The successive stages of privatization have certainly done that. It has also been the introduction into the heart of the state of the principles and relationships of the commercial world.

In some instances like bus services, water or telephones the solution was relatively straightforward: private provision with tendering, regulation, and subsidies to take account of social need. Where the state was the purchaser, then contracts should be subject to compulsory competitive tendering (CCT), with any in-house service forced to compete against private competition. In local government this has meant many councils stripping down their core staff to lawyers, accountants and contract managers, gradually losing their in-house services as CCT takes effect. Where private market provision is not appropriate, the emphasis has been put on contracting. The central Government's Next Steps programme has redesignated 75 Government services and divisions as agencies, operating on contract to the slimmed down central departments. IDS itself now receives its government grant in this form, with a three year contract with the Overseas Development Administration specifying a range of outputs to be delivered during the contract period. Where possible competition is introduced for such contracts within the public sector — as is the case in the reformed health service where hospitals compete for contracts with the fundholders — District Health Authorities and general practitioners.

In all these instances there are common principles of re-organization: the separation of purchasing and provision, the specification of services as commodities which can be paid for on contract, the introduction of competition, the assurance of the public interest by regulation and subsidy rather than political or administrative intervention. Managers have been given greater autonomy with many of the contracts designed to encourage a particular concept of management. The emphasis of the neo-liberal reforms has been on measurement, and payment on the basis of measurement. Such arrangements have been good for accountants and lawyers, but have cut across the liberal professions like teachers or doctors whose professionalism is seen by the reformers as a constraint on trade.

The rationale for this large deconstruction of the state has been provided by public choice theory. This theory suggested that state administrations were not dutiful servants of the public weal, but had their own individual interests which they pursued at the cost of the taxpayer.

They had monopoly powers which they continually sought to expand. This was the explanation for the rise of state spending in the post war world. The answer was the same as Adam Smith's, introduce market or quasi market structures to ensure that in pursuing their private interests they also produced the public good.

This theory has meant that for the first time since the new scientific management movement spread through Western states in the first 30 years of this century, there is now a clear, confident idea of how public services can be radically re-ordered. It has provided both a critique of the old order and a blueprint for the development of the new.

The earlier scientific management had focused on the organization of administration: hierarchy, the division of labour, and the rule of the expert. The legitimacy of the system was provided by the theory of representative government. Citizens elected politicians who decided on policy. They determined what was produced. Administrative science was concerned only with how things were produced, effectively, efficiently and economically.

Public choice theory highlighted the weakness of this democratic circuit. It was producer dominated. Elections were a blunt instrument for determining what citizens wanted across a whole range of services. Many electors paid less than they received because of redistributive policies, and thus favoured an expansion of services, along with politicians and state workers. The system therefore lacked both choice and productive discipline. It was slow to restructure and resistant to innovation.

The problem has been that the new neo-liberal model in practice has not only highlighted some of the weaknesses of the old order, it has also, by omission, brought out some of its strengths, at the same time exhibiting new problems of its own. The articles in this Bulletin explore these themes, with a view to identifying issues which need to be taken on board for any post neo-liberal administration.

Maureen Mackintosh on the British National Health Service Reforms, suggests that there are two key problems with the new structures. First the new purchasers are not the final clients of health care but their representatives. Second these representatives, particularly the District Health Authorities, share an interest with the hospitals, in maximizing throughput as against quality because of the system of incentives. The problem of quality has been one of the most difficult problems for the tradition of scientific management in the private as in the public sector, and remains a critical weakness in the neo-liberal state.

As far as the NHS is concerned, Maureen Mackintosh suggests that the only reason that quality has been maintained has been through the operation of professional networks and values inherited from the old NHS. In theoretical terms, if NHS workers had been merely self interested, the service quality would have been more seriously hit. It is because they have a commitment to their service and the patients that many services are still running. But there is a danger that if a new moral economy and its system of incentives continues to treat state workers as solely self interested individuals, they will become so, and the service will break down (something of the kind has happened in British school teaching which has been subject to similar reforms).

The neo-liberal response on quality has been three fold: first, to institute external audits and assessments, preferably by those outside the providing professions; second, to allow consumers to decide on quality through their choice; and third, to institute measures of quality and penalties for failure to meet certain standards.

These go some way to meeting the point. Householders now receive compensation if their telephone or gas appliance is not mended on time, or their refuse not collected. Travellers get a rebate for late trains. These penalties have an effect on providers but bias the system away from service qualities which cannot be measured.

There remains a problem of knowledge. Can an inspector or a purchaser always tell what is the quality of a service? It has been one of the long standing problems of public housing that defects appear long after the contract has been completed and paid for. Maureen Mackintosh points out that one of the problems of health care is that patients lack the knowledge both about what is wrong with them and what treatment they need. In many instances professional skills are needed to advise purchasers and assess services. Consumer associations have grown up in part to fill this gap.

But the point about knowledge goes further than this. Robert Chambers argues that civil servants and development professionals, because of their position in bureaucratic systems, promote Fordist development programmes centred round the mass delivery of standard packages, and are shielded from the poor results of these programmes by a complicated 'diseconomy' of knowledge. The latter includes misreporting, selective perception, misleading questionnaires, diplomatic prudence on the part of the knowledge workers, and various methods of self defence against unwelcome news of failure. Robert Chambers refers to this syndrome as the Self-Deceiving State, and thereby problematizes the whole process of bureaucratic knowledge. This is in addition to the issue of bureaucratic perception, what John Berger calls 'the ways of seeing'. The issue is not just one of technical information systems, it is about paradigms and the ways in which paradigms filter information and shape choices.

What we should note here is that both the Weberian and the neo-liberal models had specific theses on knowledge. In the former the information and expertise necessary for control was held by central management assisted by experts. In the latter, it was argued a) that it was the consumer who knew best, and b) the central state could never know enough to adequately plan a system. This had been one of the

principal arguments for a private economy used by 18th century political economists against centralized cameralism, and then as now what it did was to solve the problem of information through decentralization. Yet it is one of the paradoxes of the current neo-liberal reforms that they are information heavy. The accountants, examiners, assessors, inspectors, regulators, and auditors, along with the new management information systems are all concerned with generating information for the sake of control. Equally paradoxical is the fact that this model of control is close to that of traditional scientific management.

One of the points made in Robin Murray's article is that these Taylorian systems of control are being intensified for state services at the very time that private industry is recasting its management structure around a post Taylorist view of organizational knowledge. Operational responsibility is being decentralized to those with immediate operational knowledge. There is a new emphasis on how to socialize knowledge horizontally — amongst groups of workers, between departments engaged on common problems, and between firms and their suppliers and customers. Flows of vertical information (and hierarchical commands), on the other hand, are being reduced, and with them the number of middle managers. Against this, the neo-liberal reforms with their individualizing systems of incentives, the narrowing of the skills of front line workers, and the use of tenders and contracts that serve to weaken the long term relations between supplier and purchaser, have moved the providers of public services in a contrary direction.

A second weak area of both Weberian and neo-liberal thought has been their conception of the social relations of bureaucracy. For Weber, the bureaucratic machine abstracted its members from patrimonial relations. By its insistence on arm's length relations with clients, on their having no outside employment or ties since their prime duty was to the state, it insulated administrators from their surrounding society. Neo-liberalism on the other hand, with its roots in methodological individualism and self interest, has little room for non market social relations at all, unless as the aggregated self interest of the professions.

There are three kinds of relation we can distinguish in this respect: those between administrators and the class and status structures in which they work; those between the front line operatives and the 'users' of state services, and those within the bureaucracy itself.

As to the first of these, Robert Wade's paper makes a fascinating comparison between the Indian and Korean methods of irrigation management. The first is quasi Weberian, the second what we can call socially embedded bureaucracy. In India the attempt at separating the irrigation workers from local social influence paradoxically encouraged opportunistic relations between agents (the field patrollers) and their principals within the bureaucracy. The system as a whole was centralized, with weak feedback from farmers using the irrigation or from the field patrollers.

In the Korean system, the field patrollers worked part time in the areas in which they lived, and received their pay from user charges rather than the state budget. Each year they were subject to annual reappointment by local headmen, while the full-time officials of the local irrigation agency were subject to random inspections by national inspectors. The whole system was therefore much more locally responsive but not 'particularistically' responsive. It had a rich set of overlapping and disordered information networks, and above all relied for its effectiveness on the long standing ties between the administrators and those whom they served and on external monitoring.

The point here is that an effective irrigation system is in the general interest of a locality. There have to be safeguards against particular interests subverting the general interest, but for the most part farmers have a common concern in seeing the system works impartially and well.

A contrasting case is presented by Anne Marie Goetz in her article on gender and administration. She shows how external structures of patriarchy are replicated and reinforced within bureaucracies and that this is one of the reasons for the failure of so many Women in Development policies. Administrations whose policies are determined by men, carried out by men, through delivery structures moulded round the needs of men, cannot be expected to adequately relate to the needs of women. Like Robert Chambers she emphasizes differences in 'ways of seeing', in this case between men and women, and how the knowledges to which they give rise are deeply bound into relations of power.

What follows from these examples? First that administrative systems, as many critics of Weberian practise have pointed out, can never be fully insulated from the social and political relations in which they are embedded, and indeed often use them for administrative purposes, either positively in the Korean irrigation case, or negatively with respect to women.

Second, the issue cannot be adequately discussed in terms of ideal types — whether of a Weberian or neo-liberal kind. Rather it is a question of administrative strategies, the direction of which will depend on the point of view from which the strategy is formulated. Where there is an attempt to use the state to transform structures of power inside and outside its own

administration, this will entail the development of new types of internal relations, and the creation of a strong collective ethic. Historically, such results have required long periods of socialization — whether in church, state or army — and cannot be achieved merely by formal procedures.

One particularly fruitful focus of discussion arising from the above has been the micro question of producer-user relations. This was one area where neo-liberal theory showed up a blind spot in the Weberian model, yet in doing so was limited in its own treatment of the subject. The Korean irrigation example brings out the potential advantages of producers being part of the same social networks as the users. There are other instances. Andy Batkin's discussion of the RDRS in Bangladesh describes how many of the organization's field workers come from the same social background as, and share similar experiences to, those whom they are organizing. He also shows how RDRS moved from being a relief assistance organization to one whose tasks were primarily educational. The former led to a culture of dependency, the latter encourages greater self reliance. In each case, there is a sharp contrast in the relationship between the provider and the user. We can make the point more generally by saying that much of development administration involves the user as an active producer — as a farmer, or industrialist, or member of a household. The role of the extension officer, or rural health worker, is like the teacher, to educate. The effectiveness of the education will depend critically on the quality of relationships established between teacher and taught.

Readers of Theo Mars' article will see how this theme is taken up in a most thought provoking way in the analysis of relationships within an organization. He argues that the choices opened up for managers by the neo-liberal reforms can best be analysed in terms of the organization of work. On the one hand there has been a pressure for managers to use their new powers to intensify work as work, imposing Taylor's time discipline in areas of social production previously shielded from it. On the other hand, there is scope for them to interpret work in terms of technique, and technique as something which involves the whole body — the senses, feelings, skills, imagination, sensitivities and judgement. He argues that modern organization presupposes 'people equipped not merely with a specific body of technique, but a body in which all these human capacities are mobilized in learning, using, assessing and replacing any technique.' Because managers have too often seen work as work, and workers as parts of a machine, these wider aspects of the body have been perceived as hostile to production, rather than being recognized as a key contribution to it. He concludes that management has to be involved in the pedagogic task of modifying the ways in which workers perceive in order that they can be integrated into organizational intelligence. They also need to be aware of the more bodily conceptions of technique to help explain the resistance to this process. The emphasis on human centred administrative processes shares some of the perspectives of the human relations school of management, and has recently become a focus of corporate management attention. It is also one that has become entirely neglected by the neo-liberal reforms.

This discussion prompts a general theoretical point. There is one stream of administrative thought that has emphasized structures, whether they be rationalized hierarchies or quasi markets. It tends to abstract from broader social relations — from issues of class, gender and race — and to have highly restricted views of the nature of management and intra-organizational relationships. The articles in this Bulletin do not disregard structures — Mick Moore in particular makes an innovative proposal about how to secure a pluralistic administrative structure. But they insist that the issue of the social relationships involved in public administration cannot be settled by getting the structural blue prints right. The character of these relationships is at the very heart of policy and of effective implementation.

The movement then is away from a view of administration as a technical instrument, towards one that sees it as an economy of knowledges, of human techniques, and of social relationships. In this there are parallels to the themes of post modernism which have had so significant an influence on the humanities and social sciences over the past 25 years. Although only Anne Marie Goetz and Theo Mars explicitly refer to post structuralist writings, significantly in relation to the link of language and power, and of power and the body — all the papers share a number of post modern concerns. There is the recognition that power is decentred and should be analysed (and contested) as it works at the margins and not just at the formal locus of power. There is a concern with administrative practices before institutions, and with strategies rather than holistic plans. A number of the authors show a post modern preference for the multiple, for difference over uniformity, and of mobile arrangements over fixed structures (Mick Moore's article is in part a critique of dominant administrative thinking for its failure to think through the issues of pluralism). The theme of knowledge as it emerges in this Bulletin — its multiplicities, its architectures, its technologies and means of circulation — is significantly the subject matter of one of the most influential post modern texts — Jean Francois Lyotard's *The Post Modern Condition*, as of the work of Michel Foucault.[1]

Few of the authors included here would abandon the Enlightenment problematics of truth, justice, democracy, and the need for a shared communicative language as the post modernists have done. But for the study of administration there is much still to be drawn from the theoretical and conceptual spaces opened up by post modernism before its epistemological limits are reached. This is particularly important at a time when neo-liberal models of government and administration are being pressed on to the developing world in an uncritical form with the same vigour as Weberian models were promoted in an earlier period. The articles in this Bulletin prompt doubts about the claims made on behalf of these models. More important, they are intended to suggest new ways in which development administration can be thought about and its problems posed.

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[1] Jean Francois Lyotard, 1984, *The Post Modern Condition: a Report on Knowledge*, Manchester University Press. The notes on Foucault's lectures on government and administration have recently been translated and summarized in G. Burchell, C. Gordon and P. Miller (eds), *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, Harvester Wheatsheaf 1991. The introduction by Colin Gordon is particularly useful.