

**SHOULD WE HAVE SPECIALIZED DEGREES IN PUBLIC
ADMINISTRATION GIVEN BY UNIVERSITIES?**

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Mr. President and delegates, I notice that the subject which the programme committee has given me, "Should we have specialized degrees in Public Administration given by Universities?" is the only topic on the programme in the form of a direct question. I am sure that if the planning had been in the hands of more efficient administrators they would have put after the question two neat little boxes, indicating "Yes", "No", in which I might have put a check mark, thereby saving me some inconvenience and you some discomfort. If they had had, further, the forethought to put on the other side, "Oui", "Non", I might have been able, in a very tiny way, to make a polite gesture to our French-speaking colleagues.

If, however, I am forced to give a direct answer to this question it would on the whole be "No", with some qualifications and some exceptions. If I am asked why, I have a number of reasons. The first one is that I would not know what requirements to set up for a specialized degree in public administration. I would have to ask, "What is the administrator to administer?" Is it a revenue branch or the Entomological Branch of a Department of Agriculture? Is he going to administer a companies' act or perhaps a municipal board? a geological survey or a mental hospital? an embassy or a post office? The range of requirements is so varied, the fields so increasingly diverse, it would need universities much larger and much more generously provided with financial resources than ours if we were to attempt to meet specialized professional requirements. It is quite true that the problems of higher administration in what-

ever department of government have very considerable common content. It is probably also true that every young civil servant should carry in his brief case the commission of a Deputy Minister. But he has normally many years to go before he reaches a higher level of administration and he has much to learn on the way up.

There is a second reason of a practical sort. During the last few years there has been a large number of university graduates entering the public service. There has been a particularly large number trained in the social sciences. This has been gratifying and desirable. It has stimulated academic interest in the problems of government and in the improvement of training for the public service. There is, however, no assurance of a steady intake. The universities may grant degrees certifying that a graduate is qualified as a public administrator, but there may be no place for him in the public service. Nothing could be worse than to have people having a degree in public administration having to seek remunerative work elsewhere.

I might add a third reason which, had I given it first, would have obviated the need for the others. I just do not think it is desirable because there are very much more important things for the universities to do. For example, I am quite sure that it is much more valuable to, say, the Department of Finance, to receive a graduate who is ten points higher than otherwise in his capacity to write the English language than it is to send them one who is able to cite the specific clauses of that greatest of all public documents, The Consolidated Revenue and Audit Act.

Now of what are our courses in public administration made up? I do not profess to have examined all or even a great number of them, and I do not mean to criticize lightly my academic colleagues. The courses seem, however, to be generally of three types. The first is made up of rather general courses, with a good deal of concentration in the various social sciences. They seem about equally good or bad, according to their quality, for other callings as well as for the public service. In other words, they are not specialized vocational courses.

The second type of course starts from the same foundation but has been given a top story of administrative organization and techniques. These I seriously question as undergraduate courses, except as they fit a philosophical rather than vocation approach, and

even as graduate courses they should have a limited scope. Unless a student has some background of administrative reality, courses in organization and technique are likely for him to be full of empty words. There is always great danger of producing in students a verbal facility which outruns their grasp of reality.

There is a third type of course in public administration, more evident in the United States, which can perhaps be correctly designated training for brain trusters. To read the syllabus, one would infer that the graduate is to leap, fully armed, to the very centre of public administration. He would seem to be equipped to advise on policy in a great variety of fields and even to promote policy. Brain trusters are not a Canadian institution. Historically, in the United States, they were a coterie of presidential advisers who, whatever their nominal position, were in fact outside the normal departmental organization of government. The late President Roosevelt had a peculiar bias for creating new organizations without eliminating any of the old ones and for evolving policies outside the circle of his cabinet. Under our ministerial system of government the brain truster has no place except to the degree that individual civil servants may become trusted advisers of their ministers or the government as a whole.

Now what does the public service require of university graduates? Here I speak of some of the things of which Mr. Bland has already spoken; and as he said, I am not referring to those qualities of tact, will, and character which so far determine a man's effectiveness in any calling and which rarely, if ever, can be taught to any individual. First, the public service requires from the universities first-class trained minds. The university graduate in the civil service should be able not only to master the practical problems of administration but to see them against a wide background of knowledge of history, institutions and philosophy. Here the universities can contribute, and contribute greatly. As the scope and direction of government changes, the case for a greater content of the social sciences and particularly of political science becomes stronger. But even the social sciences ought not to be an exclusive requirement. I would regret very much a rigid system which prevented a Deputy Minister of Welfare from being equally qualified to assume a position as professor of classics, or requirements which made it impossible for a former professor of history to administer the

Department of Mines and Resources. Of course we have other examples of the head of a Treasury Department who is an accountant, on the one hand, or an economist, on the other, and it would probably be asking much too much of our educational institutions that we should have one who was both. So the first thing which I think we might offer to the public service is people who have trained minds.

Secondly, it is obvious that the public service needs a great variety of competent scientists. These positions are open to people who have the required academic qualifications and these qualifications are very similar to those required in other fields of industry. When the government wants a biologist, they want just as good a biologist, though probably no better biologist than one employed by a university or a private firm which has need of such scientific services. The qualifications of an economist for the government service do not differ from the qualifications of one for another kind of professional employment except perhaps in those personal characteristics which a university can not create.

Then, thirdly, the public service requires numbers of people who have a practising knowledge at an elementary or intermediate level of a large number of techniques: statistical techniques, languages, stenography, accounting, laboratory and testing techniques. Here, the universities can do something and are doing a great deal to provide these people with training in these elementary techniques which have a vocational value. Here again, however, few of the techniques are peculiar to the public service.

What concerns me with these three definite requirements that I have set out is that nearly every employer in the country wants recruits with these sorts of training. The evidence is in the stress which Mr. Bland laid in his paper on the continuous competition between the public service and private employment.

Now I cannot leave the matter with a wholly negative answer, so I ask myself, what can the universities do that is of importance to the prospective public servant and to the public service? In teaching the basic subjects which students select there is a great deal that the universities can do. Without trying to teach administrative practice as such, it is possible to stimulate the student's imagination and to enlarge his conception of the possibilities of

public service and of the scope and essential nature of the problems of administration and policy. Indeed, much the most fundamental part of education consists in stimulating the imaginations of young people so that they see the real substance of experience which has been achieved in particular fields. In a sense, no person can educate any other person. Every person must educate himself. But it is possible to illuminate certain fields of knowledge and to display patterns of thought which will stimulate able minds to make their own search for reality.

In the second place, I think it important that the universities should enlarge, as some of them have enlarged, their studies and instruction in the social sciences, to include the problems of public policy. This is not for the purpose of solving in the classroom the insoluble problems of public policy but rather that students may graduate with some feel of the sorts of investigations that have to be made, some knowledge of the sources of information that are needed if the political heads of government are to make decisions on real issues and not on imaginary or distorted ones.

In the field of political science, it is important, I think, to extend the work away somewhat from the older institutional fields, and to give much more attention to the functions of the executive and the public service in government. We have many changing forms of administration, forms whose significance, perhaps, we do not fully appreciate. Then, too, there is need also for much more attention to provincial and municipal government. My own university has been giving special attention to municipal government, but I confess that we have not done as much as we ought in studying the important problems of provincial government. Of course, not all of this is appropriate to undergraduate studies but we are here equally interested in graduate work.

There is a third thing, and I speak here much more tentatively, but I think something useful could be done, and I think this Institute might be the appropriate agency. If we could establish, not necessarily on a rigidly regular basis, but from time to time, a number of graduate seminars in which experienced public servants, not venerable public servants necessarily, but people who have passed their apprenticeship in government, together with people from the universities, could meet in the seminar and discuss aspects of public administration and policy which are of vital importance.

Universities alone are in no position to solve such problems, though they can contribute to their understanding. Public servants can rarely find time in their offices to grapple with them until action is imminent. What I have in mind is a seminar which would last over a period of, perhaps, two or three weeks, in which a group of public servants and an academic group would devote themselves to the exploration of specified questions and topics. Such a seminar might result in the publication, with some secretarial help, not only of a series of papers but also of some summary of the results of discussion and the formation of views. Perhaps we might learn something from what is being tried at the National Defence College, where over a longer period of time, students drawn from the three armed services and from the civil departments of government, are studying what you might call international and national policies, not with the idea of making experts of themselves, but with the object of creating a wide background of knowledge among people who are likely to occupy position of some importance in the future.

Now, I should not like to finish without going beyond the narrow question which was posed for discussion. I should like to mention one or two things which the public service might do to help with this general problem. The first thing which I would like to see is the most regular annual intake into the public service as is possible under the conditions of government. The public service has suffered in the past very greatly from the very intermittent character of its recruitment. If a man wants to be a lawyer,—it is of course quite possible that he may fail to qualify, but if he qualifies he may become a lawyer, prosperous or unprosperous. But there have been long periods of time when a student who was ambitious to enter the public service found that he could not enter. Inevitably he has had to take some other kind of employment and by the time the public service is ready for him, he has become fully indoctrinated with the advantages of private employment. If it were possible for the public service always to take even a few every year, then the man who made the public service his ambition would not have assurance that he could enter, but he would always have a sporting chance. That is very important in recruitment. We have private employers who come to the universities and make it a policy, whether they are in need of staff or not, to take one or

two qualified people because they want to keep their channel of recruitment open. I should add to that, that I should like to see both the Dominion and the Provincial Governments follow a pattern of regular examinations which a student would expect to try, on graduation or just before graduation, so that those who wished to go into the public service would know what they must do to get in or to equip themselves for the competition and could make it part of their regular career plan. Further, I venture to add that I would favour grading those who aspire to the public service, insofar as they may be graded on examinations, on the more academic rather than the vocational subjects. The public service wants people with quality, not merely specialized knowledge.

I can pass over quickly another matter which I think is very important, since Mr. Bland has mentioned it, that is, training within the public service, training on the job. The recruit in the public service is too often at present left to find out about his job and his office for himself.

I would lay great emphasis also on the importance of movement within the service not only within a department but between departments. There ought to be some higher authority, who can say to a deputy minister, "You cannot sacrifice the career of this promising man to your own convenience. You must let him go where he can obtain wider experience." We need far more civil servants who have experience in two or three departments. Such a practice would give great stimulus to the younger men and it would, I think, have a great effect on the range and experience of senior public servants. Anything which divorces promotion in the civil service from the age of one's superior will have a tonic effect.

I was asked to say whether we should have specialized university degrees in public administration. While allowing perhaps *minor exceptions, my answer has been, no. I hope* I have made clear, however, that I think the study of public administration has a place in the university curriculum. I have tried to show that the universities can do a great work in training recruits for the public service. I have ventured to point to one or two things which the public service can do to ensure more fruitful careers to graduates of the universities. (Applause).

MR. L. E. PE'VERILL: The next subject is consideration of Education for Public Service in French Canada. Our speaker is

Jean Marie Martin, Director of the Department of Economics, University of Laval. Mr. Martin received his formal education at the University of Laval, Montreal, and did postgraduate work at Cornell. He is also an outstanding economist in the agricultural field. During the war, Mr. Martin served as the regional representative for the Wartime Prices and Trade Board for Eastern Quebec. He has also had experience in the public field as a representative of the Department of Agriculture of the Province of Quebec. He had the distinction of being appointed the first General-Secretary of the Superior Council for Co-operation of the Province of Quebec. He has contributed many articles on economics and co-operation to various scientific magazines. We have great pleasure now in calling upon Mr. Martin to address you. (Applause).