

ADMINISTRATIVE REFORMS COMMISSION

# Report

The Machinery  
of the  
Government of India  
and its  
Procedures of Work



SEPTEMBER 1968

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GOVERNMENT OF INDIA



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REPORT  
ON  
THE MACHINERY  
OF THE  
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA  
AND ITS  
PROCEDURES OF WORK

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Chairman

Administrative Reforms Commission  
Government of India,  
Sardar Patel Bhavan, New Delhi  
September 16, 1968.

My dear Prime Minister,

I am presenting herewith the report of the Administrative Reforms Commission on the Machinery of the Government of India and its Procedures of Work. The Commission appointed a Study Team on this subject with Shri S. G. Barve as Chairman. He completed the work on an interim report, but unfortunately passed away before presenting it to the Commission. We place on record our gratitude and appreciation of the good work he did for the Commission. After him, Dr. C. D. Deshmukh was appointed as Chairman. He gave the final report. Dr. C. D. Deshmukh and the members of the Study Team have worked hard and long and we thank them all. The reports of the Study Team and further discussions with some eminent persons who knew the working of the Government of India, have helped the Commission in formulating the recommendations made in this report.

2. The pivot of the administrative machinery of the Government of India is the Union Cabinet and it sets the pace for efficiency in the entire organisation. We have proposed a compact Cabinet of 16 Ministers to ensure homogeneity, speed and purposeful functioning. The selection of Cabinet Ministers should invariably be guided by their background in public life, stature in the country, and their special ability and aptitude for the portfolios concerned. To the extent extraneous considerations creep in, the worth of the Cabinet gets deteriorated. The Prime Minister being the leader of the team has undoubtedly the right of selecting the Cabinet Ministers. The recommendations we have made should be of assistance in the proper selection of Ministers and allocation of work to them.

3. While we envisage the continuance of the Ministers of State and Deputy Ministers, we welcome the discontinuance of the Parliamentary Secretaries. In order to fix responsibility as well as to bring a sense of satisfaction to the junior Ministers we have recommended that their powers and functions should be clearly specified in appropriate rules or orders of the Government. We have taken the view that the size of the Council of Ministers should be determined primarily by administrative needs. We have, therefore, recommended that the size of the Council should normally be forty and should in no case exceed forty-five.

4. We have recommended that as a matter of principle every Department in the Government of India should be with one Cabinet Minister or the other. The present practice of some departments being independently under a junior Minister is not conducive to overall policy formulation and decision making by the Cabinet. Even a small department and its working must fit into the overall picture of policies and decisions. To place it at a sub-Cabinet level would be invidious.

5. The Prime Minister is now the Chairman of the Planning Commission. We have recommended in our report on Economic Administration that the Prime Minister should keep herself informed about overall progress in the implementation of the plan with a view to ensuring that all the sections of the economy move forward in unison and to issue necessary directives. This in effect gives her the overall directions of economic affairs of the Government of India. The Prime Minister has the right to take any work or portfolio under her direct charge. But the overall view we take of the great responsibilities of the Prime Minister, compels us to recommend that she should not spend her precious time in ordinary administrative work. Most of her time should be available for guidance, direction, advice and coordination. In the international sphere the place of Prime Minister of India is high. She has to visit other countries. Foreign dignitaries visit India. She has often to undertake tours within the country. All this takes considerable time. It is, therefore, that we have recommended that normally she should not be in charge of a Ministry. Her role is essentially one of leadership and not of ordinary administration.

6. The work at present handled by the Central Government falls into three categories, namely, (a) work relating to the subjects which, under the Constitution, fall within the Central List of subjects; (b) work relating to those items in the concurrent List for which the Centre has assumed responsibility through Central legislation or otherwise; and (c) work concerning subjects within the State List. Government has hived off some of its work to statutory corporations and other autonomous bodies. As regards items (a) and (b), the present functions and responsibilities of the Central Ministries concerned, will have to continue. In the case of (c), over the last twenty years, the Ministries at the Centre have been encroaching upon the State sphere to quite an extent. These Ministries have to retrace their steps and confine themselves generally to coordination, research and such other matters as are agreed to between the States and the Centre. The autonomous corporations should be allowed by the Secretariat, and the Ministers to act in the true spirit of the Parliamentary enactments under which they have been brought into existence. If they do so, much of their administrative functions and personnel would get reduced. Adopting this approach, we have suggested reduction in the number of Ministries and proposed a rational combination of subjects into portfolios distributed among sixteen Cabinet Ministers.

7. We have examined the organisation of the work at the Ministry and supra-Ministry levels. Our recommendations with regard to the former seek (a) to confine within proper limits the work now done by the Central Government and its agencies with regard to matters falling within the States' sphere; (b) to coordinate the functions of the Secretariat and executive agencies and (c) to improve the Secretariat methods of work. One of our recommendations relating to the last item is the reduction of levels of decision in the Secretariat to two. This and the "desk—officer" system under which each officer will have to dispose of finally a substantial portion of the work coming to his 'desk' will, we hope, cut out annoying delays in Secretariat offices.

8. We have recommended that the Cabinet Secretary should have enhanced responsibilities. His rôle should be that of a general coordinator and principal staff adviser to the Prime Minister, the Cabinet and the Cabinet Committees. He should be associated in the determination of overall policies and actions concerning the selection and career development of all senior management personnel.

9. The work of administrative reforms is a serious and purposeful work, which the Government has undertaken, through the Administrative Reforms Commission. The recommendations of the Commission made in their various reports have to be processed with speed and implemented effectively. The Commission and its Study Teams will have examined and taken counsel with Secretaries and Ministers and experts. The processing of the recommendations of the Commission again by the Secretaries is unnecessary. We have, therefore, recommended a Cabinet Committee on Administration to deal with the implementation of our recommendations. The Cabinet Committee has to consist of the Prime Minister, the Deputy Prime Minister and the Home Minister. We have recommended that the Deputy Prime Minister should be in charge of implementation of the reforms. Unless these high-level decision making and implementation methods are adopted the attempt at reforms will be attenuated by the processing at the secretariat level and by the interested resistance that naturally arises in sections of the administration adversely affected.

10. Any restructuring of the organisational set-up of Ministries and departments or the re-orientation of the methods of work cannot by itself generate efficiency in administration. It is the calibre and morale of personnel which finally set the tone of administration and determines its effectiveness. We have, therefore, devoted attention to the arrangements needed for providing a sound organisational base for the performance of the key personnel functions at a central point in the machinery of Government. We have recommended the setting up of a Department of Personnel, whose main functions would be formulation of personnel policies and review of their implementation, talent-hunting, development of personnel for "senior management" and processing of appointments to senior posts,

manpower planning, training and career development and research in personnel administration. The Department will not itself administer service cadres the control over which would be with individual Ministries and Departments concerned. In view of its vital importance for our country has to exercise leadership over the administration as a whole, we recommended that the Department should be in the charge of Prime Minister.

11. In this report, we have, to some extent, dealt with the procedures of work in Government of India, leaving the rest of the work to our report on Personnel Administration which we will be making in a few months' time.

12. One of the Members, Shri H. V. Kamath, has given a note of dissent which is enclosed. All the points raised by him were fully discussed at the meetings of the Commission.

Yours sincerely,

Sd/- K. HANUMANTHAIYA.

Shrimati Indira Gandhi,  
Prime Minister,  
New Delhi.

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