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Institut d'Administration publique du Canada

Laissez-moi d'abord vous dire combien je suis heureux de vous recevoir ici ce soir au nom de la population du Québec et au nom du corps administratif de la province. Je vois dans la salle de nombreux représentants de notre haut fonctionnarisme et il me fait plaisir de constater l'intérêt qu'ils manifestent envers l'Institut d'Administration Publique du Canada et l'appui qu'ils accordent à ses travaux.

I want especially to welcome those members of the Institute who have come here from the other provinces of our country, or who have been sent as delegates by public bodies outside Quebec. I would like them to know that Quebec's specialist in public administration are happy to co-operate with them in a common work which is becoming more and more necessary just as much in Canada as in the other advanced countries of the world.

The general and greatly increasing industrialization of modern nations has, in effect, created a gradual relative decrease of those occupations which were traditionally known as primary ones; it has, at the same time, increased the importance of the secondary group. As for the services — of which you all form a part they have developed a great deal as the result of the creation of new professions designed to cope with new needs. It is, of course, a recognized fact that the greater the development of the economy, the greater the number of people employed in industry. Through constant progress in the economic sphere, production becomes diversified and the markets increase; techniques change and the various types of activity multiply. Education, transport and communications, social services, pure or applied research, advertising, business, government services and all kinds of other occupations require a greater and greater number of people. As industry and finance develop more and more, co-ordination, which used to be merely useful, becomes essential. Administrative functions take on a heretofore unsuspected importance and can

become, through the efficiency of those who carry them out, one of the basic conditions for the social and economic progress of a nation. At the present time, we have a better understanding of the bearing and the great importance of administrative tasks in a world where they are commanding an increased respect. It must be pointed out, however, that those who wish to become administrators must be endowed with something more than mere willingness. For this reason, the technique of administration now forms part of the curriculum of several institutions of higher learning, and those who apply these techniques are receiving better and better remunerations for their services. In short, as the result of circumstances and the fact that all types of organism interested in administration have taken on a new awareness, it has aroused the interest of the progressive elements of our society in the sphere of public and private administration. It was the general opinion for a long time — at least people acted as if it was the general opinion — that administrative work was unproductive, and this type of work was restricted as much as possible. Today, this way of thinking has become obsolete, and the close relationship which exists between an adequate and well-ordered administration and the quality of production is much better understood. Even the word « production » has been enlarged to include the administrative services as well as production in terms of physical or quantitative effort.

Je ne sais pas au juste à quoi tient le nouveau courant de pensée en cette matière, mais je suis convaincu que des groupes et des associations comme l'Institut d'Administration Publique du Canada ont beaucoup contribué à son avènement. Vous avez compris que les changements rapides dont notre monde est témoin rendraient nécessaire l'adaptation constante des techniques administratives à la réalité ambiante. Pour que cette adaptation puisse se faire, il importe que ceux qui la recherchent soient ouverts aux solutions possibles des problèmes qu'ils rencontrent dans leurs tâches quotidiennes respectives. Si j'en juge par le programme et les communications à la réunion que vous tenez cette année à Québec, vous remplissez parfaitement cette exigence. Le dynamisme de votre Institut et la largeur de vue de ses membres me semblent être non seulement une garantie du succès de ses entreprises actuelles, mais préparent aussi notre avenir commun; en effet, l'évolution naturelle de la conjoncture économique et sociale nous conduit inévitablement vers un mode de vie – vers un monde, pourrait-on dire – où s'amplifiera graduellement l'emprise du secteur administratif sur l'ensemble de la vie communautaire.

It seems quite obvious that the increase in the spheres of government activity has had an enormous influence on the slow but steady transformation of our economy into an economy of administrative services. A few decades ago, in accordance with the ideological position of the then predominating economic liberalism, the part played by the State was not as widespread as it is today. As a matter of fact, it was almost non-existent when we compare it with the tasks that modern governments must assume if they are fully aware of their responsibilities and the far-reaching effect of government activity on the human element in the sphere of social security as well as that of economic policy, the problem of the relationship between the administrative personnel and those whom it administers now requires to be solved. There are times when this relationship is very close, for example when it is a question of presenting proof of eligibility for such and such a government grant. At other times, the relationship between the administrative personnel and the general public is far less obvious but still exists, because decisions made by members of Parliament and Government or certain highly placed civil servants can still affect thousands of individuals.

In the administrative sphere, therefore, it is always a good idea to keep the human touch, and to remember that even if it is easier to draw up legislation and the regulations which go with it in definite and categorical terms, the citizen who considers himself a particular case, does not always fit precisely into any one particular class of the socially insured, either as a beneficiary or as a contributor. There are always exceptions to any rule to remind the administrator of the deep complexity of the human being, and each case must be judged in the most enlightened manner. Furthermore, the real efficiency of the administration very often rests not so much on the speed with which the administration of a department is carried out, but really rests on the common sense of the decisions that it makes. In other words, the administrative process consists of reconciling two things that are not always compatible: the simplicity of the regulations that are to be kept or enforced, and the respect for justice towards those who come under the administration. The simpler the regulations, the faster their application, but the less easy it is to fulfil the requirements of true distributive justice. On the other hand, the harder we try to give each one what he should get in accordance with his needs or his rights, the more we need to provide a multiplicity of regulations, and the exceptions become more

and more numerous. It becomes inevitable, therefore, that there comes a time when we must draw the line, and the point at which we must draw this line can never be determined in advance or once and for all. In the drawing up of laws for example, all particular cases must be reduced to a common denominator as far as possible, without, however, simplifying things to the extent that they would result in creating more problems than they would provide solutions. The prior judgment of the legislator must be implemented by the judgment of the administrator who must see to the application of the laws thus conceived. Those who are responsible for the administration of laws and regulations and to seeing that the regulations are carried out are faced by two dangers: arbitrariness and red-tape. These two dangers are not in themselves incompatible, even though they can stem from causes that are, as for example vagueness in the meaning of the law, or too much attention to detail on the part of the administrator.

Naturally, in this case as in many others, the attainment of perfection in practice is too much to expect. While perfection is always to be hoped for, we know that it is not always possible to attain, and trying to attain it without understanding could result in the drawing up of laws that would be inapplicable to human beings endowed with liberty, initiative and judgment, and also — we must admit — with a spirit of contrariness.

Administration, like government, is a human undertaking.

A great deal can be expected of it, but we certainly cannot expect it to perform miracles. Also, we must not lose sight of the fact that even if it is built up along ideal lines, its value as an instrument for the common good is in direct proportion to the level of competence of the people who run it.

There is not a single government or administrative service in this world that can escape from this problem. It is inherent with them in one way or another. There are two ways of solving this problem — by simply ignoring it — or by accepting the challenge that it presents.

The first way is obviously the easiest because it is simply a matter of making negligence a principle. This attitude is very easily justified by saying that no one expects public administration to be efficient anyway. Furthermore, one can always cite some instances where it did not come up to expectations. One therefore concludes that civil servants are merely a necessary evil that modern nations have allowed to take root and to which they will have to become resigned. Once such an idea is adopted, and once its logical conclusions are accepted, it is almost impossible to make the necessary changes to get the administrative personnel to become more competent. In fact, we do not encourage them at all to reach this end. Furthermore, we frighten away those people who could enrich and renovate civil service from the inside.

The other solution naturally calls for far more courage. Not only is it contrary to an all too frequent conception of civil service, but it also attacks a state of affairs that has been built up by the collective behaviour of whole generations of people. Nevertheless, this is the solution that we have chosen to adopt in Quebec. I should say, rather, that this is the solution that was called for in view of the new tasks that the Quebec Government will have to take on and which, furthermore, the population of the province has called upon us to carry out.

Ces tâches sont à la fois nombreuses et étendues. Le peuple du Québec attend dorénavant de son gouvernement qu'il fasse sa grande part dans le domaine de l'éducation et de la culture, qu'il intensifie, par l'effort de coordination et de planification qu'il peut y apporter, le développement rationnel de notre territoire et la mise en valeur de ses richesses naturelles et aussi qu'il y participe – et qu'il augmente le niveau de santé et de bien-être de toute la population. Bien entendu, un tel programme ne peut se réaliser rapidement, ce que tout le monde admet. Mais tout le monde reconnaît aussi qu'il doit éventuellement se réaliser et cela, non pas dans un futur incertain, mais dans l'avenir immédiat.

Afin de s'acquitter des responsabilités nouvelles, le gouvernement que j'ai l'honneur de diriger a cru devoir orienter son action vers un double objectif: la réforme des structures administratives, et, parce que ce premier objectif est en lui-même insuffisant, la valorisation de la fonction publique. C'est à ces deux conditions que nous croyons pouvoir entreprendre la réalisation du programme à long terme dont le peuple du Québec nous a confié le soin. En ce qui concerne le développement économique, nous avons d'abord remis sur pied le Conseil d'Orientation économique, resté inactif pendant plusieurs années. Nous lui avons donné une perspective nouvelle et nous lui avons confié un mandat plus précis.

Ce Conseil est un organisme voué à la recherche et à la réflexion; il agit comme consultant auprès du gouvernement et, par ses suggestions et ses recommandations, accentue le progrès matériel du Québec.

Comme d'autre part, le peuple de la province est plus que jamais conscient de l'importance de ses richesses naturelles et de la nécessité de les exploiter d'abord à son avantage, puisqu'il en est le propriétaire, nous avons résolu de coordonner toutes les activités du gouvernement qui ont trait à ces richesses. À cette fin, nous avons réuni sous la juridiction d'un seul ministère, celui des Richesses naturelles, tous les services gouvernementaux axés sur les mines et les ressources hydrauliques.

Dans le même ordre d'idée, nous avons réorganisé le ministère de l'Industrie et du Commerce en y créant de nouveaux services et précisant leurs fonctions. De la sorte, nous croyons disposer désormais d'un véritable ministère de l'Économie, grâce auquel le souci de planification du gouvernement actuel pourra se traduire dans les faits.

Dans le domaine social, en plus de toutes les nouvelles lois à caractère proprement humanitaire que nous avons adoptées, nous avons transformé l'ancien ministère du Bien-être social en ministère de la Famille et du Bien-être social. Il ne s'agit pas là que d'un simple changement de nom. Le nouveau ministère a en effet pour mandat de repenser toute notre législation actuelle en fonction de la famille qui, comme vous le savez, est un des facteurs principaux dans la survivance du groupe ethnique canadien-français.

Notre culture particulière est un autre de ces facteurs. Pour la favoriser et pour lui donner plus d'occasions de s'épanouir, nous avons créé le ministère des Affaires culturelles. Celui-ci a sous sa juridiction des organismes comme l'Office de la Langue française, le Département du Canada français d'outre-frontière, le Conseil provincial des Arts et la Commission des Monuments historiques. Pour la population canadienne-française, ces divers organismes ont une signification profonde; ils sont en quelque sorte la cristallisation

de sa volonté de vivre et de faire connaître sa culture. Ils sont aussi le symbole de l'acceptation par l'État du Québec du rôle nouveau qu'il doit dorénavant assumer dans le maintien et l'expansion du « fait français » en Amérique.

French Canada, in Canadian Confederation, cannot live turned inward upon itself, nor can it live « against » the other ethnic groups., Our country is made up mainly of two ethnic groups and its future depends entirely upon the co-operation which should exist between these two groups. The French Canadians want to be accepted as full citizens, for they no longer believe that their « country » stops at the boundaries of Quebec. In order to reach this objective, we decided to create a Department of Federal-Provincial Affairs whose principal task will be to integrate Quebec into Confederation, without allowing Quebec to lose any part of its identity in the process.

So far, I have only mentioned structural reform. As I have already mentioned, we must go even further. For this reason, we have taken a serious look at the problem of administration as well as the problem of personnel. We have, for example, given new strength to the Treasury Office and we have created the post of Controller of the Treasury. In this way, we have decentralized the tasks of the Cabinet and ensured a better supervision of the spending of public moneys. We have also reintroduced the system of calling for public tenders and we have applied the same system in the purchasing service. In connection with the granting of permits, in the case of liquor, for instance, we have set up a better process for the issuing of permits by creating a quasi-judicial body known as the Quebec Liquor Board. We have also begun to reorganize the Quebec Provincial Police Force from top to bottom in which we have also introduced the merit system. We want our Provincial Police Force to be an exemplary body of men and a model for others to copy.

In order to ensure the selection of competent administrative personnel, we have increased the number of Commissioners in our Civil Service Commission, and we have adopted the system of public competitions as regular procedure.

All these decisions and many others that we have made stem from the new spirit that we wish to instil into every aspect of our provincial administration. A great many of the services that I have mentioned already existed, but they had almost never been allowed to render the services that were expected from them. We have revived them so that they will be able to carry out the functions which the necessary progress of our society calls for.

We are only beginning the reforms that must be made. Our province, which is the common lever of the French Canadians and at the same time an active member of Confederation, has entered into a new phase of its history. The population will, from now on, scrutinize much more than in the past the steps which the Provincial Government takes to carry out the tasks that the citizens have given it. For this reason we need a Civil Service whose members will be competent, efficient and who will take pride in the part that they play in the proper administration of the province. The Government of Quebec is happy, in this case, to know that the most dynamic elements of the private sector are most interested in raising the prestige of the Civil Service. It is also pleased to know that many members of the administrative personnel are interested in improving their professional knowledge. The Government is also

giving every encouragement to universities to develop study programmes for future Civil Servants and to improve those programmes which are already in force.

A far-reaching effort in this sphere will substantially change the face of our Civil Service. As a result of the reforms that we have introduced we can already see encouraging signs of change. These changes are very promising because they allow our present personnel to give its full contribution, and allow the Government to carry out its newly assumed responsibilities. The Government is most pleased to accept these new responsibilities, because they constitute the first step towards the achievement of the kind of society in which the citizens of Quebec have chosen to live.