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TOWARDS A NEW PUBLIC SERVICE FOR MALTA

An Assessment of Contemporary Administrative Initiatives

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ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL STUDIES

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FOREWORD

The Reports of the Public Service Reform Commission (PSRC) carry a bold title – **A New Public Service for Malta** – and an even bolder agenda of change. They call for a reorientation of public administrative services towards effective resource management and customer satisfaction. They envisage far-reaching changes in human resource management, involving greater delegation of authority over appointments, rewards and discipline, more searching performance appraisal and infusions of external expertise where the career civil service falls short.

The reports raised some spirited debate in the newspapers. But, perhaps inevitably, the contributions focused on a limited set of issues. The debate was noticeable for the absence of the key players in the process of change, including the public service itself and the trade unions. A public forum was conceived by the Department of Public Policy and the Malta Institute of Management to address the need for a broader debate involving as many as possible of those interested in the public service's future.

Over two evenings in March 1990, distinguished speakers from different walks of life discussed developments in the public service in the light of the PSRC proposals. The numerous audience at the Malta Hilton, St. Julians, expressed a broad spectrum of reactions: fears, concerns, misgivings, hopes and expectations.

This publication records their contributions. Given the advantage of hindsight, the opportunity is also being taken to look back at the wider context of this reform initiative. This is being carried out by presenting an exposition and a critique of the PSRC reform proposals, as well as an appraisal of the track record of their implementation since.

Government and the trade unions have, over these last three years, come to a preliminary agreement on several key issues. The central agencies which will drive and support the process of change have been established. Public service reform is crossing the watershed between prescription and action, while some debate continues on the direction and significance of this change.

The pace and effectiveness of such change depends critically on the informed consent of those who are affected by it: political authorities, managers, public employees, citizens, organized interests. The dialogue about the public service should continue; indeed, it must extend its scope and depth. With our interest in education and research on the one hand, and our network of professional managers on the other, we believe that the Department of Public Policy and the Malta Institute of Management have a significant role to play in this dialogue.

Prof Edward L. Zammit

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EDITORIAL PREFACE

In mid-March 1990, merely three weeks after the Public Service Reform Commission presented its second, final report to Government, the Department of Public Policy of the University of Malta and the Malta Institute of Management organised a forum on the Commission's first-stage report, which Government had published the previous December. The report itself contained several novel ideas for improving the quality and effectiveness of Maltese public administration. Among other things, it proposed modifications to the concept of a career-based public service, and advocated greater managerial latitudes for line departments. Predictably, the novelty aroused sharp reactions, as evidenced by letters to the press at the time. In organising the forum, the Institute and the Department intended to stimulate the debate on administrative reform, to give it coherence, and to arrive at some assessment of the value and relevance of the Reform Commission's work.

This book was originally intended to record the proceedings of the forum: the keynote addresses and the papers presented, as well as the discussions which followed. For a number of reasons, not least the editor's departure for research abroad, the project lay dormant.

Meanwhile, Government proceeded to appoint directors for three new organisations which were intended by the Reform Commission as prime movers of change in the public service. Negotiations with public service unions over pay, grading and

related matters also began. Many of the Commission's proposals have been or are being implemented. The three years since its work ended might be regarded as the most significant period of planned change in local public administration for the past 30 years.

Despite all this, Maltese public administration remains a neglected field of inquiry, perhaps because politicians of all hues exercise a virtual monopoly over public debate in matters of government. The press continues to carry articles and letters about administrative shortcomings. From time to time, the Management Systems Unit, one of the 'prime movers' of reform, is subjected to scathing criticism. By and large, commentators betray either crudely partisan viewpoints, or ignorance of the facts. They tend to tilt their lances at selected targets – not all of them, perhaps, the most apposite. The views of government employees remain virtually unknown, except through the pronouncements of their union representatives. There has been nothing comparable to the forum to give vigour and substance, a semblance of impartial debate over the performance of Malta's administrative services. As a consequence, the 'quiet revolution' which is changing the role, shape and character of contemporary administration proceeds without the benefit either of public scrutiny or of public understanding. In the long run, will this mean that the public service continues to be maligned because it is misunderstood; to be seen as remote because citizens are ill-informed; to be deprived of legitimacy because change is viewed from partisan standpoints?

This book retains the intentions of the forum which preceded it three years ago: to stimulate an informed debate about issues of national governance. It is, in fact, a vehicle for presenting the proceedings of the forum, which remain as relevant today as they were at the time. However, with hindsight, it is now possible to make a more rigorous assessment of the Reform Commission's work. The book therefore raises new questions. To what extent were the fears expressed about particular recommendations valid? Which of the more trenchant criticisms continue to merit concern? Is it time to direct attention from concepts advocated by the Commission, and by others, to the record of implementation? In this connection, have the recommendations been implemented as conceived by the Commission?

The book makes no attempt to furnish answers, but merely to raise these and other questions against a background of fact and informed opinion. It is organised in three parts. The first outlines the agenda for change contemplated by the Reform Commission: it consists of a paper which summaries the Commission's (two) reports and places the exercise in the context of selected local and international developments. A modified version of a critical piece which appeared in "The Sunday Times" on 28 April 1991 is also included. The second part presents critical reviews of the Commission's work and ideas. These include the papers given and discussion raised at the DPP/MIM forum in March 1990. While this is, necessarily, a select compendium of views, it nevertheless represents a broad spectrum of political, professional and academic positions. The third part of the book is a tentative record of

initiatives taken following the conclusion of the Reform Commission's work. It makes no claim to being comprehensive or analytical, but identifies landmarks for further enquiry by scholars and others. This book is by no means a retrospective, nor a hagiography for the Reform Commission. If anything, it constitutes a pioneering effort in Maltese scholarship: a short venture by scholars and others upon a stormy, shoal-infested sea in search of the grail of good governance.

The publication would not have seen the light of day without the willing cooperation of many persons. The Department of Public Policy at the University of Malta and the Malta Institute of Management (MIM) collaborated effectively to organise a most stimulating public debate. The newly formed Institute of Public Policy Administration (IPPA) also provided valuable assistance. The seminar owes its success as much to the gentlemen who presented their thought-provoking analyses as to the well-directed efforts of the MIM and the Department: a debt of gratitude is owed to Mr J R Aquilina, of the Federation of Industries; to Mr J R Grima, currently Secretary to Cabinet; to Dr G A Pirota, from the Department of Public Policy; to the Hon L Spiteri, MP; to Mr A J Tabone, formerly a high-ranking civil servant; and to Mr J V Tabone, Operations Review Consultant at the time. The Hon J Dalli, Minister of Economic Affairs at the time, delivered the opening address, while the Hon Dr E Fenech Adami, Prime Minister, brought the proceedings to a close the following day: their support for the initiative is warmly acknowledged.

As Editor, I am grateful, first of all, to Prof. E L Zammit, Head of the Department of Public Policy, and to Mr J Abela Fitzpatrick, President of the Malta Institute of Management, for endorsing the idea of a publication. Mrs Edith Rizzo, Secretary at the Workers' Participation Development Centre, assisted by Ms Antonia Zahra, Secretary at the Department of Public Policy, painstakingly transcribed the forum's taped proceedings and prepared printer's proofs of the entire publication. I am indebted to my colleagues in the Department for their encouragement and, in particular, to Godfrey Baldacchino, who dusted down the papers and despatched them to the printers. Without his assistance, the project might have lain dormant for a legendary span of one hundred years!

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September 1993

A REVIEW OF THE REPORTS OF THE PUBLIC SERVICE REFORM COMMISSION

Edward Warrington

Introduction

This paper briefly reviews the published reports and papers of the Public Service Reform Commission (PSRC), focusing on the premises and principles of the key recommendations. It places the Commission's work in the perspective of local administrative development, commenting on the extent to which the exercise differs from established patterns of reform.

The paper is not meant as a critique of the Commission's reports. That is the task undertaken elsewhere in this publication. This paper effectively provides the backdrop to such criticism as well as to the proceedings of a public forum organised expressly to deliberate the PSRC report implications.

A Historical Sketch

The shortcomings of the public service are never far from public consciousness. They weigh heavily on the mind of political parties in opposition, which invariably promise to reform the administrative services as soon as they are returned to power. An incumbent Administration, no less anxious about the performance of its civil service, makes the same promises. Rather more

cynically, though few elections are fought over the public service, canny governments bear in mind that public employees and their dependents form by far the largest constituency.

Electoral manifestos become the mandate of the victorious party, especially if it has spent an extended term on the Opposition benches. It is no coincidence that changes of administration are generally accompanied by major reviews of a nation's public service, most evidently in countries belonging to the Westminster tradition, where few of the high-ranking civil service positions change hands with a new Administration.

The pattern is clearly discernible in Malta throughout the post-war period. Another factor – constitutional development – also seems to precipitate reviews of the public service. Thus, in 1944 and 1946, on the threshold of the restoration of Self-Government, an Anomalies Committee and a Salaries Revision Committee reviewed civil service salaries, wages and related matters(1). In 1956, shortly after the Labour Party took office, a Civil Service Commission was established to review pay, recruitment, grading and conditions of service, as well as facilities available to non-industrial employees for joint consultation(2). Between 1959 and 1961, critical pre-independence years, the Elwood Reforms were carried out(3). In 1967, a Nationalist Government enjoying its first post-independence electoral victory established the Salaries (Anomalies) Commission(4). In 1971, only two months after being returned to office, the Labour Government established the Commission for the Reorganization of the Public Service with very extensive terms of

reference and a numerous membership(5). The Commission was disbanded shortly after, without completing its work, and the reorganization resumed in 1974 as, essentially, a collective bargaining exercise only concluded in 1981 (6).

In all of these reviews, the terms of reference clearly emphasised pay, grading and conditions of service. Changes to departmental structures and procedures were generally undertaken following organization and methods studies carried out by officers of the Efficiency Development Branch at the Office of the Prime Minister.

The PSRC: A Departure from the Pattern

In May 1988, a year after taking office, the Nationalist Administration established the Public Service Reform Commission. In several significant respects, the Reform Commission departed from the pattern established by earlier reviews of the public service.

In the first place, the reasons prompting the review were more urgent and more critical than had previously been the case. The Commission carried out the first major review of the public service in fifteen years. During that time, the Service had seen its prestige as a governing institution and as an employer decline. In spite of its remarkable record in assuming ever greater administrative responsibilities, the public at large, and especially the industrial and commercial communities, were dissatisfied with

its performance. The incoming Administration had made official corruption and administrative abuse one of the principal electoral issues(7): it courted the widespread perception that the public service had become politicised. The civil service itself was demoralised, and had steadily been losing staff with managerial expertise as its salaries slipped behind those of the private sector(8).

Secondly, the Commission's terms of reference did not focus on pay, grading and conditions of service for the public workforce: the key direction was "to examine the organization of the public service". This also differed from the brief given to the Commission for the Reorganization of the Civil Service in 1971, which was directed, among other things, "to examine the requirements of the country, and to see how these can be met administratively by the public service...." The PSRC's brief is more future-oriented and, for the first time, introduces the idea of change – rather than continuity – as a goal of administrative reform: "....and to recommend means by which the Service can efficiently respond to the changing needs for effective government".

In the prevailing climate of mistrust, it was perhaps inevitable that Government should not only establish the Public Service Reform Commission, but also broaden its terms of reference beyond pay and grading. The breadth of the terms of reference reflect, to some extent, the range of expectations about its task. Not all of them were easy to reconcile.

The composition of the Commission also reflects the orientation of its task. Three of its five members were trained as economists: two of these had occupied senior management positions in the private sector; the third was an academic. Two members spent the greater part of their careers as high-ranking civil servants.

A third, novel feature of the exercise was the presence, side by side with the Commission, of an expatriate consultant seconded to the Maltese Government to carry out an Operations Review which examined, among other things, the governmental structures within which the public service operates, as well as management systems. The Review gave further 'depth' to the Commission's brief, and the two exercises together acquired a 'critical mass' that made it more difficult for policy makers and for the civil service to ignore them.

The Commission was aware both of the prevailing views about the public service and of the diverse expectations regarding its task. It attempted to harness both to its task, by inviting written and oral submissions. In its own words, "...Over one hundred submissions were received...many of these were supplemented by informal meetings and interviews [covering major trade unions, interest groups and high-ranking civil servants]. These contacts....have given individuals and groups an opportunity to participate in the exercise"(9). The Commission's deference to the expectations of an increasingly participative society also marks a change from traditional patterns, though it must be acknowledged that a

commission is not suited to carrying out a broad-ranging and on-going communications exercise.

Finally, the Commission's exercise is noteworthy for the rapidity with which it was concluded: it spanned nineteen months, from June 1988 to February 1990. The most visible outcomes of its work are two reports bearing the same title: A New Public Service for Malta. The first deals with the organization of the public service; the second makes further proposals on administrative structures, grading, staff development, selection and compensation. Three supplementary papers presenting the results of studies undertaken by the Commission have also been published. Once again, both in content and in style, the Commission's reports depart from the patterns of the past.

Premises of the Commission's Proposals

In order to place the Commission's recommendations in the right perspective, it is necessary to understand the premises on which they are based. A reading of the first stage report points to five such premises.

Firstly, the public service is conceived as an institution, not merely as an organization or a passive component of the 'machinery of government'. Therefore, the effort to bring about change must be directed at structures, operating systems and the institutional culture, i.e. values, norms, attitudes and aspirations.

Secondly, the present difficulties are seen to be the result of complex causes and developments. Therefore, the needs of the Service cannot be met by 'orthodox' solutions that find their inspiration in the past.

Thirdly, many players, in Government and outside, are associated with the Service and its activities. The players are generally in agreement about problems and their causes: it is therefore necessary to secure their support for the changes that are proposed, for which purpose they must understand the plans and participate in implementation.

Fourthly, lasting change depends on the establishment of a climate of trust; that rests on a commonly accepted framework of rules and the assurance of efficacious action if that trust is betrayed.

Finally, the capacity of the public service depends critically on the quality of its human resources and, in particular, on the leadership within its ranks; it depends on the investment in skills, ability, and expertise; and on the reward of merit.

This last premise is clearly evident throughout the report: in fact, it might be said to constitute the principal theme. The Commission was particularly concerned with the leadership of the public service, addressing the report "to the men and women who have chosen public service as their calling and upon whose ability, dedication and leadership the outcome of this exercise so largely depends"(10).

The First Stage Report

Given these premises, the Commission identified two over-arching objectives, these being the restoration of the institutional fabric of the public service and building its organizational capacity. The Commission also underscored the need to safeguard the rights of employees, yet another theme underlying the report.

The first stage report opens with a brief statement of 'findings' in which four decades of developments in government and administration are sketched out in broad brushstrokes. They lead to a terse diagnosis of the state of the public service and a shortlist of priority issues. The report "seeks here to focus only on what is essential, and to set the stage for identification of goals and strategies that address these issues"(11).

The remainder of the report is almost entirely prescriptive, being constructed around a framework of eleven inter-related goals.

In order to 'restore the institutional fabric', the Commission set the following goals:

Goal One: Win public confidence in the service

Goal Two: Create a culture of excellence and integrity

Goal Three: Define the role of the public service.

In proposing strategies for attaining these goals, the Commission enunciated three important principles concerning the role and organization of the public service.

The first is that the activity, resources and development of the career public service should be focused temporarily on the areas of its greatest strengths – the delivery of services – with external expertise grafted on the organization to perform other roles such as planning and policy analysis until such time as the Service developed planning and analytical capabilities(12).

The second principle is that departments should be organised for tasks and be described in terms of 'positions', a position being the locus of responsibility for the performance of a task or tasks(13). This observation is so obvious as to seem almost trite, but it illustrates the extent to which the public service has lost structure and order.

The third principle is that the roles of central agencies and line departments should be redefined: line managers should be delegated authority to plan work schedules, to spend within approved estimates and, most significantly, to select, assign, reward and discipline staff; the central agencies would establish operating standards and rules, and build the operating capacity of the line departments(14). This constitutes, in effect, a reversal of the present management philosophy, which assigns extensive controlling powers to the Ministry of Finance and to Establishments (now Management & Personnel Office).

In order to build organizational capacity, the following five goals are identified:

- Goal Five: Define and develop employee competence
- Goal Six: Select and retain the brightest and ablest
- Goal Seven: Improve the quality of management
- Goal Eight: Invest in technology and plant
- Goal Nine: Increase planning and audit capabilities

The remaining two goals are more generic:

- Goal Ten: Define and contain executive discretion
- Goal Eleven: Institutionalise change.

Proposals relating to human resource management account for the greatest share of this part of the report.

The framework for human resource management would be provided by a new classification system comprising 'categories' which define broad levels of skill and competence, and 'classes', which identify occupational groups(15).

Perhaps the greatest changes proposed concern the selection and appointment of public officers: these recommendations are the ones which have aroused most public comment and, almost certainly, some concern within the public service itself. The

essential principles in the recommendations concerning appointments can be stated as follows.

Firstly, appointments should be made by the managers who assume responsibility for the performance of staff(16). The Commission acknowledged two limitations of this principle, namely, the need to avoid excessive departmentalism and the need to take advantage of economies of scale, both of which justified a measure of central intervention in the appointments process(17).

Secondly, selection decisions should meet the needs of the organization by matching candidates with jobs. The Commission proposed that the criteria for selection should be relevant to the nature and the requirements of the job, and that selection exercises should find their context in annual manpower plans(18).

Thirdly, managers should be accountable for selection decisions before an impartial tribunal which would have effective powers to scrutinise such decisions and to initiate appropriate follow-up action(19).

Finally, the rights of candidates for all positions should be safeguarded by means of an effective appeals procedure(20). The Commission acknowledged that this principle should be limited by the need to avoid spurious complaints or paralysis of appointments procedures(21).

The Commission extended the principle of competition to the highest management positions, recommending the appointment of 'persons with a proven track record of management in the private sector... to fill key management positions for which there are no comparable candidates in the public service'(22). The Commission further recommended that 'Category A' officers from the career track should retain tenure in a grade, rather than in the positions to which they are appointed. Initially, career officers promoted to Category A positions classified in Scales 1 to 4 would retain tenure in the grade of Assistant Director. Career officers who perform consistently well at levels above the grade of Assistant Director would be granted tenure in the higher grades(23).

The removal of rigid central control would be counterbalanced by increased planning and audit capabilities in the central personnel and financial management agencies, in the departments, in the Public Service Commission and the Department of Audit. The central agencies should put up a framework of operating standards and reporting systems, and the scrutinising agencies should be given enhanced capacity for action, including initiation of investigations and imposing sanctions against defaulters (24).

With each set of proposals, the Commission identified the key player/s who would assume responsibility for taking the public service towards the relevant goal, but, in general, the first report does not dwell on implementation.

The Second Stage Report

In February 1990, the Commission presented its second-stage and final report to Government, the main purpose of the report being that of taking Government to the threshold of decision and action on the agenda proposed in the first. The report was premised on acceptance of the principles and proposals enunciated in the first stage report(25).

The report elaborates proposals relating to five key aspects of human resource management, namely, administrative structures, grading, staff development, selection and compensation. The report also contains an implementation plan which synthesises the fundamental issues on which decisions are required, and links implementation of the Commission's proposals with complementary changes recommended by the Operations Review.

The second report reflects the Commission's concern about the structural impediments to change and the safeguards required to ensure that implementation is consistent with the Commission's intent and with the real needs of the public service. The main proposal in each chapter is framed so as to facilitate implementation of corresponding proposals in the first report. Thus, for example, Chapter One – Human Resource Management: The Organizational Framework – outlines political and administrative roles in the change process, including those of the Prime Minister, the Public Service Commission, the Management

and Personnel Office, the Management Systems Unit and the Staff Development Organization.

Though essential, the second stage report is clearly subordinate to the first. The 'grand strategy' for change is mapped out in the first: the second takes the strategy closer to its realization.

Supplementary Papers

Both reports are deliberately stripped of lengthy analysis and argumentation: a terse statement of the issues is followed by an equally terse set of recommendations. This serves to focus the reader's attention on the merits of the ideas that are proposed, rather than to dwell on the litany of shortcomings and deficiencies that are the stuff of any diagnosis.

In order to compensate for the terseness, particularly of the first stage report, the Commission produced a select collection of three papers "that are a sample of the studies undertaken by the [Commission's] working parties....They are being released in order to provide an understanding of facts, data and ideas which helped shape its thoughts on the future of the Service"(26).

The first paper is a brief synthesis of the written and oral submissions which were made to the Commission. The second is a study of the growth of the public service during the years since Independence. The third paper is a report on a survey of General

Service officers in the grades of Assistant Head of Department and Administrative Officer.

Notes

The published reports and papers of the Public Service Reform Commission are cited as follows:

Organization denotes the first stage report entitled A New Public Service for Malta – A Report on the Organization of the Public Service, July 1989.

Further Proposals denotes the second stage report entitled A New Public Service for Malta – Further Proposals on Administrative Structures, Grading, Staff Development, Selection and Compensation, February 1990.

Papers denotes A New Public Service for Malta – Supplementary Papers, January 1990.

1. Establishments Division, Office of the Prime Minister: Introductory Factual Memorandum on the Malta Civil Service submitted to the Civil Service Commission, 1956, pp.1,2.

2. Ibid., p.1: The Commission is also known by the name of its Chairman as the Arton Wilson Commission.

3. Government Proposals on Pay and Grading Structure of Non-Industrial Employees in the Malta Government Service (DOI, 1959) provides the backdrop to the Elwood exercise.

4. Report of the Salaries (Anomalies) Commission, (DOI, 1969) para.1, p.5.

5. OPM Circular 63/71.

6. Warrington E., Administrative Reforms linked to Economic Changes – The Case of Malta (Brussels, International Institute of Administrative Sciences, Working Paper No.7, 1987).

7. Partit Nazzjonalista: Xoghol, Gustizzja, Liberta – Is-Sisien għall-Gejji See, in particular, sections I.2, I.3, III.2 and III.9 (Pieta, Ufficcju Informazzjoni Partit Nazzjonalista, 1987).

8. Public Service Reform Commission: Organization p.2; and 'Tracing the Growth of the Public Service' in Papers p.17.

9. PSRC: Papers 'Taking Stock: A Synthesis of Submissions to the Commission' p.5.

10. PSRC: Organization, p.iii.

11. Ibid., p.4.

12. Ibid., p.22.

13. Ibid., pp. 25, 26.

14. Ibid., p.26.

15. Ibid., p.36.

16. Ibid., p.48.

17. Ibid., p.50; and elaborated in Further Proposals, pp.58, 59.

18. PSRC: Organization, pp. 48–50, with elaboration in Further Proposals, pp.57–62.

19. PSRC: Organization, pp.49–50.

20. Ibid., p.49.

21. The enormous volume of complaints concerning public service appointments before the Commission for the Investigation of Injustices points to the prevailing mistrust of selection procedures and alerts policy-makers to the risks attending appeals to the Public Service Commission.

22. PSRC: Organization, p.57.

23. Ibid., p.58.

24. Ibid., pp.61–63.
25. PSRC: Further Proposals, p.1.
26. PSRC: Papers, p.1.

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A CRITIQUE OF THE PSRC REPORT

Godfrey Baldacchino

Introduction

The report on the organisation of the Public Service was submitted to the Prime Minister by the Public Service Reform Commission (PSRC) in July 1989. Having presented its homework, the Commission wound itself up. Not that the members of the Reform Commission felt the report to be beyond recrimination; perhaps they felt that, if criticised, it should be the responsibility of Government who commissioned the report, to have exclusive right to respond, if at all. In any case and as expected, criticism has not been lacking. And not even the PSRC itself put up a united front in defending the total application of its recommendations: A minority report by one of the five commissioners is indicative of internal dissension.

This article seeks to critically explore some of the key themes of the PSRC Report. It does so with the full understanding that such a critical and dialectical exercise serves to widen horizons and options. It is therefore ultimately constructive in intent. It hopes to identify premises, problems and issues which need to be addressed head on if the reform process is to be what it claims to be, a change agent.

The approach adopted to execute such a task is to critique a self-chosen but context faithful selection of PSRC statements. Such representative excerpts are reproduced and then followed by a cross-examination. The exercise is organised around ten themes.

Ten Propositions

Item 1: A danger of fallacious technocratic idealism?

"A New Public Service for Malta" (Title)

Already in the title, the PSRC promises us a new public service, a magical phoenix rising from the ashes of the embarrassing past. However, a radical programme itself requires an effective defence mechanism which preserves its commitment for change. And then, traditional value systems and habits may be so pervasive that they persist and refuse to be reformed. The inputs relied upon to spearhead the process of change – particularly people and institutions – are integral parts of the social fabric which the PSRC is purportedly seeking to transform.

It is more difficult than one usually imagines to develop new structures, habits and a work ethic, groomed out of the same old economic, political, socio-cultural and historical milieu. With the same public servants, living on the same traditions and continuously defending themselves (against political intervention, against their own and others' inefficiency, against customer insolence) with established routines, based on years of formative

experience. With the same politicians/ministers and their entourage, immersed in the same traditions of paternalism and patronage and continuously defending themselves (against their own and others' inefficiency, against constituents' demands) with their own established routines based on years of formative experience.

It is therefore no wonder that degeneration is a common occurrence among those bodies and processes which seek to challenge the established social order, with its own ingrained micro-culture. The PSRC, perhaps secure in the technical excellence of its recommendations, remains impervious to this threat. One needs to be wary of ending up with a case of new wine in old bottles.

Item 2: Is there adequate sensitivity to the context?

"We...recommend that...entry to Category A and Category B [top and middle management grades] should be by means of competition; that competition should not be restricted to candidates within the public service" (p.57).

An insufficient sensitivity to environmental variables may have led to the above recommendation. This is possibly the one statement which has met the strongest reactions, for or against, from one and all. Not only, as expected, from civil servants who feel threatened and potentially thwarted of an otherwise seniority-assured grade. The main outcry has been that the Commission has unwittingly

played into the hands of a political party bureaucrat who had insisted that the service should be run under executive political direction. Indeed, as the PSRC Secretary outlined in a letter to the press, "the Commission has not, at any point in its report, proposed political appointments to the senior positions in the Service". We may choose to accept this assertion in good faith. But does the idea behind a proposal inhibit the latter's manipulation? Does not the likelihood remain that outside entry to these enviously and jealously prized grades in the public service will fall victim to such ingenious operations?

Item 3: Are the ideas operational?

"We do not think that staff have an inherent right to be promoted without regard to their ability" (p.42).

Fair enough. That age is tempered by proven capability in the granting of promotions would logically lead to a significant boost in the quality and image of management in the public service. Yet, how does one determine staff capability? (Performance appraisal is inherently extremely difficult to carry out in service-oriented occupations). And who will determine staff capability? For all their potential advantages, the criteria are much more subjective than seniority and therefore require proper scrutiny. But how does one scrutinise promotions on the basis of ability effectively in such a small country as ours where personal contacts are inevitably profuse especially in the ongoing struggle for control over scarce resources (such as promotions)? An exclusive weight to seniority

for the purpose of determining promotions may not be conducive to maximum efficiency and to the reward of effort and talent; but its saving grace is that it is objective and therefore more resistant to manipulation. And, even in spite of this, there have been various occasions when even this objective criterion has allegedly been flagrantly violated.

What then would be in store for the public service if an even less objective variable becomes the magic criterion? What could be a subtle invitation to legitimize personalised sanctions may trigger a denouncing public outcry. Yet perhaps even the most junior of public servants may give the scheme tacit approval: they too may hope to reap benefits from an institutionalisation of favouritism.

Item 4: Has the setting and the heritage been well explored?

"The ideas presented [in the PSRC Report] constitute definitive statements...on matters which...it sees as fundamentally important. Because of their importance, the Commission thought it necessary to express them succinctly, unburdened by detailed argumentation or proposals which might serve to diminish their significance" (Introduction, p.i).

Begging to differ, I would rather argue that, because of the alleged fundamental importance of the ideas presented, the Commission should have thought it quite indispensable to elaborate (a) on the premises of these ideas and (b) on the reactions that they may

trigger off and the resistances they might generate. Elaboration should not be only in the "forward direction of pragmatic implementation" (as the Commission proposes) but in the "backward" direction of hypothesis verification and sound theoretical formulation. The deficiency leads to a series of self-righteous recommendations (such as of a new public service, as argued above) which may prove to be either unworkable or, worse still, prone to imaginative manipulation. A Maltese cultural trait?

Item 5: Are stereotyped impressions put forward as facts?

"The popular image of the Public Service as the natural image of the mediocre, lazy and incompetent..." (p.46).

This is a case in point: sweeping generalisations which the PSRC, armed as it was with research and support staff, could have at least verified. The present condition of the public service is uncritically based on what is acknowledged as a popular image or as "first impressions" (p.2). No attempt is made to check systematically whether these impressions are true or false and, if true, whether they are general or particular, in a relative or absolute sense.

No reference is made to comparative studies having been carried out (such as diachronic, across-time studies; across different departments, comparing similar public and private activities). Is all the public service mediocre, lazy and incompetent? And if not (or if not to different degrees), why? Is there more than just a

pervasive civil service syndrome? Answers to these and similar questions are all too glaringly absent.

The PSRC ought to have known better: popular images tend to be far removed from empirical manifestations because they are fuelled and nurtured by mass media and organisations which may have vested interests in cultivating certain impressions; otherwise they may be simply cultural constructs which have lost their bearing on the contemporary state of affairs or otherwise distort it in accordance with unsubstantiated myths.

Item 6: Over-dramatisation?

" One factor alone can make the risks of change acceptable and that is trust: unless that becomes the foundation of Malta's system of government and administration, none of the ideas proposed here will bring the results that are sought" – (Introduction, p.iii).

One issue here is that the PSRC hopes that its recommendations will, when implemented, bring about the establishment of trust. But trust is hardly the bottom line. Appeals to trust in the powers that be usually conceal attempts at legitimacy building which exclude the exercise of proper and effective accountability. This would be more characteristic of autocratic, dictatorial rule. In pluralist, liberal democracies, structures of effective accountability and open government – such as review and audit structures, a division of powers between the legislative, the executive and the judiciary, opposition party politics and pressure group action with

access to a free press –these are intended as a form of countervailing power and scrutiny which would not be necessary where blind trust exists. Indeed, it is these structures which may be said to form the basis of trust.

The PSRC has recommended that trust in the public service must be rebuilt. This trust is directed specifically at a particular labour segment within the public service, and that is public service management. This category is meant to exercise very wide discretionary powers in public service affairs. The deficiency here is that the scrutinizing agencies intended to check managerial decision making are likely to prove ineffective. Management, portrayed as an enlightened elite pleading to be allowed to roam free and to exercise its discretion, is being thus proposed to 'play God'. With only bogus scrutinizers, that is exactly what would happen.

Item 7: Phantom scrutinizers?

Accountability is being vested in (i) the ability of structures within the public domain (Parliament / Audit / Public Service Commission) to scrutinize (pp.27-8); (2) in the enactment of apposite legislation (e.g. for inquiring into patronage; to regulate access to information) – (pp.1,12,63, etc.); and (3) the submission of annual reports to the P.S.C. (p.49).

The lessons of history and local experience on this matter are legion. The authority to scrutinize is far removed from the action of scrutiny; nor does the rectification of irregularities detected in the action of scrutiny necessarily follow the act of scrutiny; and if they do, they may not occur speedily.

What will act as a spur to scrutinize? What provision for enforcement of new and already existent legislation? Is the submission of an annual report, or an annual discussion on the budget allocation of a ministry, or the annual submission of the report by the Director of Audit in themselves acts of effective scrutiny? This would only be a symbolic and formalistic exercise of the law. There is yet a long way to go. And as long as the organs of scrutiny have no inherent interest in exposing sins of omission or commission, the process will grind to a halt. The real or imagined, direct or indirect encroachment of the government of the day on the workings of the scrutinizing bodies is one braking component. Another is the temptation towards collusion which results from the fact that both scrutinizers and scrutinised are common members of the public service 'club' where a 'live and let live' code of ethics could rule the roost. This issue has become even more pertinent given the deployment of the Management Systems Unit (one of the bodies recommended by the PSRC) as a limited liability company operating with public funds.

Item 8: A green public service in the realm of Oz?

"The root of the problem of poor customer relations seems to lie in the public's ignorance of their rights and obligations... and ...the absence of some very basic skills in the public service" (p.9).

What is repeatedly diagnosed as a public service sickness which therefore warrants "something substantive [to restore] the institution to health" (p.3) is perhaps more properly understood as a very healthy, indeed ingenious, adaptation to a particular (read sick) environment.

Customer relations is the first example of such 'sickness' raised by the PSRC Report. The public service departments with customer related activities have developed the customer relations appropriate to their environment (with its pressures) as well as to their own interest in cultivating networks. This requires some very basic skills – such as being very efficient with customers who are actual or potential patrons of theirs or their colleagues – which help to promote the public servants' own patronage links and coalitions. Customers not belonging or not resorting to such networks are deftly penalised with a full dose of inefficient bureaucracy. The public's ignorance has been couched by the PSRC in terms of its rights and obligations; would it not have made more sense to couch it in terms of its lack of personal contacts?

Item 9: Is pluralism odd?

"With regards to the scope of industrial relations, it is odd that collective agreements include provisions which are clearly inimical to the needs of the organisation and may prevent the responsible exercise of managerial judgement: this is especially true of entry and promotion policies, of the artificial and unrealistic fixing of complements" (p. 66).

This statement betrays ignorance of the raison d'etre of industrial relations whose exercise is intended precisely towards the containment of managerial absolutism. The PSRC should not find it odd that bodies other than public sector management have their own interpretations of the needs of the organisation, and that the laws of the land in liberal pluralist democracies guarantee the exercise of this right.

That these interpretations may be different or contrary to those of the managerial powers is just too bad and management should be prepared for this. (Indeed, why else recommend skilled negotiators in the Management and Personnel Office - p. 69?). Such diverse interpretations on the role and function of the public service may be forthcoming from organised workers (via trade unions, professional bodies, staff associations) from Government (an exceptionally important client of the public service) and from other 'consumer' interests.

The PSRC here betrays an anti-pluralist orientation, putting its trust in the "responsible exercise of managerial judgement" and expecting all others to follow likewise. An anti-union stance also

comes through in a recommendation for the establishment of staff associations to represent Category A staff, and excluding these from the ambit of collective agreements relating to other grades in the service (p. 67). This is tantamount to a fragmentation of worker solidarity which is the basic principle behind the general unionism on whose lines workers are organised in the public service today.

Item 10: Mythical private sector managers in the public service?

"...the Commission has used the terms 'manager' and 'management' rather than 'administrator' and 'administration'. The... image ... of the manager is congruent with a decentralised system, held together by mechanisms for planning and accountability and emphasizing efficient use of resources and flexible response" (p.27).

"Public service managers, if they are to be worthy of their name, are the key players in this process; they must begin to see themselves as the agents of change" (p.71) .

One wonders how public service administrators can ever become the managers which the PSRC would like them to be. Public sector performance operates within constraints fundamentally different from those in the private domain: success is not readily translated into growth and expansion; there is no market discipline because of monopoly conditions; Government, organised interests and public opinion will exert pressures on public utilities which may

inhibit efficiency; there is less freedom to redeploy assets; and there is less freedom to plan for the long-term, undisturbed by changing budgetary allocations, political actors and imperatives.

Nor is the image of far flung private discretion and self-direction an empirically based one. It could well be that the impression of private sector competence is unduly rosy, and as much an impression as that of public sector impotence. Private sector junior and senior executives may also have very narrowly curtailed decision making authority and few opportunities to exercise significant discretionary judgement. Both the public and private domain can support monolithic structures.

Conclusion: Bringing People back in?

"It would be a mistake to think that well-designed structures and management systems guarantee efficiency. In the final analysis, it is people who make organisations work..." (p.34).

The PSRC prescription for Maltese public service reform consists of structures, human resource development and management. These are all admittedly crucial to reform and various problems associated with the public service today stem from fossilized structures and the lack of a proper policy for staff recruitment and training.

But such is only a partial solution. A more courageous and faithful translation into practice of 'open government' is warranted. The PSRC may have done better to suggest the establishment of multiple forms of scrutiny which would be accountable to multiple constituencies, each with diverse aims and with diverse concepts of efficiency. Disagreement is not odd but healthy; and pluralism is only odd if one considers oneself infallible. Effective counterveiling forces ought to form the lynchpin of any public service reform. Especially if it is not simply a case of nursing a sick public service to health. A genuinely new public service may only be possible in a genuinely new Malta.

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PROCEEDINGS

OF THE

FORUM

OPENING ADDRESS

The Hon. JOHN DALLI, M.P.
Minister for Economic Services

Honourable Colleagues, Ladies, Gentlemen,

I would like to thank the organizers of the forum for inviting me to express my personal views on such an important subject.

A strong and efficient public service is undoubtedly vital in a political system such as ours. The public service is the institution that should provide the managers to run Malta Incorporated. It is the institution that should provide the operational apparatus to convert concepts into plans, and to transform plans into action. It is the institution that should provide a discreet monitoring mechanism to ensure that action is moving according to plan and that the result is close to the objectives of the original concepts. It is the institution that guarantees stability through its permanence and shelters the public from political caprice.

The public service is another national institution which is in urgent need of repair. It is high time for an attempt to orientate it away from being a colonial tool towards becoming a management structure required by a new, small, independent state. In this context, we talk about a new public service for Malta.

I see the new public service as an organization that is clearly laid out, with well-defined lines of responsibility and channels of communication; one wherein all participants have a clear idea of their responsibility levels rather than its being a schematic or labyrinth for a game of 'pass the buck'; an organization with a fluidity that allows individuals to float up to their level of maximum contributory capacity; where added responsibility is given to public servants on the basis of track record as opposed to seniority, and credentials as opposed to patronage, thus ensuring competence.

It will be a career that is sought as a prize rather than begged as a favour; a worthwhile prize because of excellent conditions of work measured in status, compensation and working environment; a prize because it promises satisfaction and fulfilment, rather than a guaranteed, slow-speed, carefree existence.

It will be an occupation in which each individual is motivated towards the achievement of a set goal, because the system will be run by objectives and because the system will allow each individual to use the required initiative in the solution of problems and the creation of new initiatives; an occupation that ensures that modern tools and streamlined procedures help public servants to achieve results, on which results they will then be measured and for which results they will be fully accountable.

The new public service will be a team of positive thinkers and doers who make it their business to develop adequate and required

services, and to maximise efficiency and quality in rendering these services; a new public service that sees the public as a client rather than a nuisance. This new public service, as I see it, will attain its scope in society, regaining its self-respect and, through its efficiency and integrity, gain the respect of the public that it serves.

This is a dream or is it?

Thank you.

SUB-THEME ONE:

THE INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

GODFREY A. PIROTTA

In presenting these observations one point needs to be stressed at once. Space allows only for general observations. This paper, consequently, cannot be regarded as a detailed critical study of the Report of the Public Service Reform Commission, (hereafter referred to as the PSRC report). Moreover, discussion of the report is made difficult because the latter is merely a 'statement of findings' (PSRC p.9) rather than a report proper. This paper, therefore, seeks merely to discuss some of these findings and the proposals made in the report as they arise or are said to arise from these findings.

It may be said, at the outset, that many of the conclusions or prescriptions advanced in this report are by no means new. Rather, they reflect three decades of debate on public service reform elsewhere but especially in Europe and North America. This is not in itself a criticism but merely a statement of fact. It is a fact which finds confirmation, albeit in passing, in the PSRC report itself. "This report" the Commission states, "... presents ideas that may appear bold ... They have been tried by other countries facing the same problems and have been shown to work." [PSRC p. iii] The latter may or may not be universally true and it was wrong of the Commission to fail to provide either indication of the countries it refers to or evidence to support its assertions. There are several reasons why this is wrong. In the first instance it restricts discussion. Second, it breeds mistrust and, ultimately, does not strengthen or aid the process of accountability which, as its own

report admits, is so sadly lacking in these islands. Third, the Commission's reluctance to come clean, as it were, with respect to the sources which have influenced its conclusions, makes public monitoring of its reforms almost impossible. How are we in future, as outsiders in the decision-making process, to distinguish whether the reforms being implemented are those actually favoured by the Commission? How are we to ensure that the so-called reforms being implemented by the party in government do not mask partisan objectives? Even as we speak today public allegations persist that several appointments and promotions carried out at every level of the public service, reflect neither the interests of the public service nor the spirit of the Maltese Constitution. It is, perhaps, the danger that some of the recommendations may be abused in this manner which led Mr Caruana, by far the most experienced member of the Commission in public service affairs, to publicly express his reservations.

A final general criticism of the Report is that the PSRC report tends to give inadequate attention to the political environment. It is this environment which, in a large measure, shapes and dictates public service behaviour, goals and performance and which, in turn, gives rise to the political culture of its members and to that of the rest of society. One may argue, quite justly in my view, that political reform was not in the PSRC's agenda when it was constituted, hence its reluctance to express explicit views on the subject. Nonetheless, it remains true that, in Malta, radical public service reform depends, almost entirely, for its success on radical political reform. Indeed, in my view, the former cannot be

divorced from the latter. This is a point which the Commission seems to have failed to grasp fully. One reason for this, perhaps, appears to emanate from the exaggerated sense of faith which the Commission, with the exception of Mr Caruana, seem to place on the readiness of present, and indeed, future political leaders to pursue reform and to forgo partisan advantage. I, for one, do not share this faith and see the work of the Commission as yet another lost opportunity for a new beginning in Malta.

Of Goals and Men

The Public Service Reform Commission, as already noted, has described its report as a statement of findings. It might also be correct to view it as merely a statement of goals for reform. Indeed the report consists of a brief sketch of the thirteen goals which the Commission sees as necessary if public service reform is to be successfully implemented. Below I shall address some of these goals.

In approaching Goal One: Winning Public Confidence the Commission seems to imply that the fault for the public's loss of confidence in the service lies, largely, with the public service itself. The report states, for example, that because of the extent of the public's loss of confidence in the service, politicians and organised interests have become predisposed to carry on their 'business through the "networks"' thereby 'justifying this unsavoury feature of the national way of life'. [PSRC p.9] Furthermore, they emphasise, rightly in my view, that public

servants tend 'to demonstrate a lack of sensitivity to the needs of customers.' [PSRC p.10] Their response to these problems is to urge the development of improved customer relations, the rooting out of patronage, corruption and incompetence, and the gradual introduction of open government. But in order that these problems may be successfully tackled, especially where negligence, patronage and corruption are concerned, three steps need to be taken, according to the report. First that quick and effective action should be instituted, by means of inquiries, against officials suspected of impropriety or incompetence. Second, that adequate provision for the speedy audit of administrative measures be instituted. And finally, that the scope of judicial review of administrative discretion be extended beyond acts that are 'ultra vires', or clearly in violation of an explicit provision of a written law.

One cannot help but agree that a large number of civil servants are insensitive to the needs of the citizens they are employed to serve. But one cannot accept the view that the system of doing business through networks has arisen in Malta as a result of the existing mistrust of public servants. This system has, in fact, been an ingrained feature of our social and political culture for centuries. It is a system encouraged by smallness, where face-to-face relationships are the norm and where ties of kinship and friendship are generally enduring. It is also a system which has gained in strength and importance in post-war Malta with the introduction of mass electoral politics and the growth of an extensive system of state welfare. Furthermore, candidates for political office have

secured for this system an even greater degree of entrenchment. The PSRC report, therefore, is much nearer the point when it states in the introduction that, "politicians ... have succumbed to the temptation to factor the Service into the strategies of power politics. Willingly or unwillingly, the public service came to be associated with the use of public resources for partisan or private gain." [PSRC p.1] In other words ministers have systematically employed the local public service, and public monies, to advance their political careers, those of their party and the private interests of their supporters. Hence, it might be nearer the truth if we were to admit that the public service we have today – incompetent, inefficient or corrupt as the case may be – is what politicians have made of it over the years. In fact, it is well-known to individuals, as well as to user groups of the public service that, in nearly all matters, the "buck" stops either with the minister or his secretariat of loyal political collaborators. Thus, since responsibility for administrative matters rests almost exclusively with political heads, rather than civil service heads, one must, even at this stage, predict great reluctance on the part of the Cabinet to implement the Commission's proposals for the institution of speedy, effective and presumably, independent inquiries. Indeed the time it will take the Minister of Justice to comply with the wishes of the PSRC Commission and amend Section 743 of the Code of Organisation and Civil Procedure will represent one measure of the Government's commitment, or lack of it, to genuine reform. [PSRC p.11].

However, if inquiries are to enhance the process of accountability and ultimately to improve the efficiency of the public service the results of these enquiries must, unless extremely exceptional circumstances dictate otherwise, be made public. It is intolerable that in a so-called democratic society Prime Ministers should continue to enjoy the power to deny citizens their right to information by denying them access to reports which may embarrass the government. If voters' sovereignty is to be truly meaningful then voters must be allowed to scrutinise every aspect of government performance. The practice of giving the people only what the party in government feels to be in its political interests to give the people smacks of electoral dictatorship and is incompatible with liberal-democratic notions of effective citizen participation, accountability and the protection of individual human rights.

It is for this reason that I fully support the Commission's call for the introduction of open government. I also agree with the Commission that in doing so several needs require to be reconciled especially that the privacy of individuals, where this is not a public matter, be safeguarded, that the administration is not paralysed by demands for information and that the security of this vulnerable micro-state is not jeopardised. [PSRC p.12] As the Commission correctly points out 'this exercise calls for more than a review of the Official Secrets Ordinance' [ibid] but appropriate legislation. Nor is it an exercise which can be successfully carried out within the closed walls of the Cabinet or Attorney-General's Office. Rather it requires the creation of a separate Commission to hear

views and, after proper inquiry, to submit proposals for implementation. How long it will take the government to proceed on this issue of open government, which also featured as one of its electoral promises, will also serve as an indication of the readiness of the party in government to implement radical reform.

Moving on to its second goal or set of recommendations the Commission reiterates its view of the existing 'disquieting reputation of the Service' and stresses the often overlooked, or purposely ignored, fact that, today, "the risks of corruption, waste, inefficiency and the abuse of administrative discretion are large and growing.' [PSRC, p.14] Public expenditure in Malta has, over the past few years, grown in a manner hitherto unknown but the powers and competence of the supervising and scrutinising agencies have neither been expanded nor developed in a similar manner. Unfortunately, the reason for this state of affairs is known only to those wielding political authority who, it seems, remain undisturbed by the existing popular feeling that corruption, waste, and the abuse of administrative discretion are widespread in Malta.

The solution proposed by the Commission to redress this situation is twofold: it proposes the creation of a culture of integrity and excellence. By integrity the Commission means ethical behaviour which can be explained by reference to agreed standards of conduct and the creation of some mechanism to deal with offences against such standards. It is important to note that the Commission feels that these ethical standards should apply to public servants

and politicians alike. 'Excellence' the Commissioners 'take to mean the quality of performance of tasks.' [PSRC, p.16]. This involves, according to the Report, the introduction of departmental corporate plans which identify priorities, set goals and targets, allocate resources and assign responsibilities; performance standards and a performance evaluation system to serve as a basis for the evaluation of outputs; and the introduction of a system of rewards for good performance based on a system of performance evaluation.

These two planes would, in the view of the Commission, serve to make the Maltese public service a distinct profession with its own outlook and identity. Despite the existence of several professions, in Malta professionalism is still, rather sadly, profoundly lacking. The reasons for this are several and cannot all be discussed here. In the first instance, Maltese professions are grossly overstocked with the consequence that the resultant competition for rewards tends to ignore ethical and, at times, legal standards. This is particularly true among the oldest professions and in every case it is the consumer and the community that suffer. Professional status tends to be equated with a somewhat higher standard of living than other occupations but it is a fact that existing formal opportunities are scarce and, hence, not enough to fulfil, on their own, such expectations. It is not surprising, therefore, that members of these professions can be found working in spheres outside their profession and not infrequently playing an important role in Malta's vast underground economy. Second, several of their members are also employed as full-time public servants and

though technically not free to practice their profession tend to give greater attention to the latter than to the former. Finally, there is enough evidence available to suggest that many so-called professionals - who none the less charge for their services professional fees - tend to care very little about quality, performance or excellence. Hence, it may be said that professional status does not always or necessarily coincide with professional conduct.

Having said that, however, I would be the first to admit of the need of making the public service a professional occupation. I would also be prepared to say that, if the recommendations of the PSRC report are closely adhered to, this aim may be eventually achieved. This becomes clear if one examines Goal Two in the light of what the same report proposes with respect to Goal Seven which discusses role delineation and staff development. For without proper training neither integrity nor excellence is possible. Nonetheless, if the goal of integrity is to be attained and maintained on-going ethics training is not enough. In fact two things are required. First, a system of scrutiny which protects public officers against pressures from relatives and, given the smallness of our society, from their vast army of friends and acquaintances. Second, that ethics training becomes a national pursuit. This involves making ethics a subject of study at all levels of the education system and that those admitted to the teaching 'profession' should themselves have undergone extensive ethics training. It also calls for the creation of open and independent bodies, themselves subject to public scrutiny, charged with the

setting of ethical standards and empowered to investigate, expose and deal with breaches of such standards. Political leaders, because they wield enormous political power and dispose of vast sums of public monies, should themselves become the subject of on-going investigations by these independent bodies. Those selected to sit on these bodies must not be the nominees of the party in government alone but also of other political forces and constituted bodies.

One has to admit that the two bodies which exist today, i.e. the Commission against Injustices and the Permanent Commission against Corruption have been, in my view, purposely handicapped by the legislation which created them. The Commission against Injustices is required by law to conduct its business in complete secrecy. The upshot of this is that the taxpayer, who ultimately has to bear the cost of its recommendations, can never feel sure that the Commission's decisions are founded on principles of justice, even though this may be the case, and not partisan considerations. Furthermore, the law, as it stands today, gives the Prime Minister the power to make the final binding decision thus making him the final arbiter of what constitutes justice. Such a concentration of power is unacceptable in a democratic society and a dangerous precedent which should be got rid of forthwith. The Permanent Commission against Corruption, on the other hand, has proved itself rather timid. Despite its powers this Commission has consistently failed to take the initiative and investigate serious allegations of corruption which from time to time have been made against political heads of departments. Had it done so public confidence in its political independence would have been assured.

Public confidence in this Commission is further undermined by the fact that it does not enjoy executive powers with the consequence that its reports may, if it suits the government of the day, be left to gather dust.

Training programmes for public servants have been on the decline since independence. Thus, the detailed attention which the PSRC gives to training is most welcome. Also noteworthy is the way the report approaches this issue. The report stresses that 'staff development policy should no longer be limited to developing the abilities of staff to the extent demanded by their duties and responsibilities' but that the public service, as an employer, has 'an obligation to prepare staff for promotion to a higher grade' [PSRC, p.42]. This is an important recommendation and it is hoped that, as the training capacity of the service develops, it would be implemented in the same spirit in which it has apparently been made. Of equal importance is the recommendation that 'the training and development needs of the successors be identified, and a training programme designed to meet those needs be initiated' [ibid.]. This, as the report states, is a priority. The Report also expects service-wide responsibility for the training function, with departments having their own training units. It also proposes a Public Service Training Board, a Management and Personnel Office and a Central Staff Development Organisation. Both the MPO and the SDO, as the latter two organisations are commonly known, are already functioning effectively under capable leadership.

That the service needs its own training function is neither in doubt nor in dispute as the foregoing makes clear. However, not all the training needs of the public service can be met from within the service. Where the higher grades are concerned some of these needs can be met by the university. It is unfortunate that the Commission did not see fit to inquire how the university can help the public service to attain its ends. Nor did it see it fit to assess the value of courses, especially those in the sphere of Public Administration, held over the years at the university. That these courses were of some value can be gauged from the fact that the support and research staff of the Commission itself, of its brainchild the Staff Development Organisation, and of the Management Systems Unit, are graduates of public administration. The PSRC must have been aware of the low view that many academics hold of the public service. In 1988 a proposal to establish an Institute for Public Sector Studies at the University, an idea first floated by this author and some close associates, failed to excite interest among university departments. It is to the credit of the authorities at the University that a complete break between the university and the public service was avoided with the creation of the Department of Public Policy within the Faculty of Economics, Management and Accountancy. In a sense, therefore, the Commission lost an important opportunity to strengthen the claims of the public service as a profession in its own right.

My final comments concern issues which arise from the PSRC's discussion of Goal Six which deals with ways of selecting and retaining the brightest and the ablest. It may be said that most of

the proposals advanced in the report which aim to secure these ends are firmly rooted in modern concepts of management. Indeed, this is true of the entire report. Much of what the report proposes is coherent, useful and can be applied with advantage. Those who argue that management concepts are of little value in the public sphere are mistaken. No organisation can function properly or achieve its goals if it lacks sound managerial structures and practices. The crisis in which the public service finds itself can, in fact, be attributed to the absence of such structures and practices. An absence which greatly facilitated the usurpation of its limited authority by political masters who constantly seek to extend their power instead of loyally carrying out the responsibilities for which they are elected. In fact it appears that departmental employees are often conceived by ministers to be their servants first and public servants second.

Nonetheless, I am of the view that not all the proposals contained in Chapter Eight of the report are applicable to the public service. The report states, quite rightly, that "selection decisions must be made in the right context and for the right motives: there must be a job for the candidate that fits into the framework of tasks of the organisation and the positions that correspond to those tasks" [PSRC, p.48]. But the report then goes on to state that "in order to restore credibility and relevance to selection decisions, authority to select and appoint all staff other than those in Category A (Ass. Director upwards), be delegated to heads of departments" [ibid.]. This is a mistaken view. The Commission seems to assume that the needs of each department are inherently

different from those of every other department. This is not so, especially at the lower levels, where what is expected of public officials is very similar, if not quite identical, to every department. It would also result in a rigid system as it would make movement between departments difficult. It might even prove unfair to public servants for promotion prospects in one department might be more restricted than in others. Even the existence of career streams may not remedy such disadvantages. I am also inclined to favour the view, expressed by Caruana, that "doing away with common recruitment procedures in respect of staff used for the same kind of work would be cumbersome and inefficient and it would hardly add anything to the quality of the staff required" [PSRC, Reservation to the Report]. It seems to me that the Commission's error or mistaken conclusion arose from its approach, i.e. its assumption that public service departments are practically independent organisations in their own right. A better way of explaining it, perhaps, would be to say that they treated the public service as they would a conglomerate or group of companies having one central office. This is too simple an approach, although it has its strong merits when it is applied to the specific tasks of individual departments.

The PSRC report also recommends that Directors, Heads and Permanent Secretaries should no longer enjoy security of tenure but should be on contractual terms for definite periods. I believe that this proposal would in practice prove less mischievous in those countries where a free press exists and where strong and independent scrutinising agencies have a long history. This not the

case in Malta. Consequently, the outcome of this recommendation would be the appointment of party cadres to these important and strategic offices. Their sole qualification would be political loyalty to the party in government and to individual ministers. Indeed, in time, the political interests of their patrons – the ministers – would come to coincide with those of their own. Their sole motivation would be to secure electoral victory at the polls for their party and thereby to retain their office. The outcome would be an even greater expansion in clientelism, patronage and ultimately abuse of power and corruption. Furthermore, it is quite likely that those appointed in this manner to these offices would prove to be capable overseers rather than the managers envisaged by the Commission. This is not to say that I favour seniority. Seniority should be made to count only when it is combined with merit and when the criteria of what constitutes merit have been clearly established. But to swiftly adopt what the PSRC report proposes would be dangerous.

Concluding Note

This presentation may have at times, appeared rather scathing of the PSRC report. This is not the case. A brief exposition of this nature can never do justice to the wealth of sound recommendations advanced in the report. Nonetheless, the author remains convinced that the crisis in the Maltese public service is merely one of the symptoms of the wider crisis which pervades Maltese society. The cause is entirely different and can be found

in the political system of which the public service is merely a part, albeit an important one.

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ALBERT J. TABONE

Ir-rapport kif inhu ma jistax wiehed jikkommenta fuqu sufficientement ghaliex l-Operations Review m'huwiex accessibbli. Fil-verita, l-pubbliku ghandu nofs rapport. L-elementi krucjali, l-elementi li jirrigwardaw struttura, l-elementi li forsi jirrigwardaw organizzazzjoni, l-elementi li jirrigwardaw allokazzzjoni ta' xoghol: dawn mhux koperti fir-rapport li hawn mahrug ghall-pubbliku u li qeghdin nikkummentaw fuqu l-lejla. Dan huwa punt bazilari li wiehed irid jaghmel car.

Il-kuntest li fih hadmet il-kummissjoni kien kuntest pjuttost limitat. Tghidu, ghaliex limitat? Ghaliex koprew is-servizz pubbliku, pero is-servizz pubbliku m'huwiex biss "ic-civil" kif nafuh. Jinkludi wkoll, per eżempju, il-korporazzjonijiet pubblici. Rrid insemmi punt ftit importanti: numru ta' korporazzjonijiet nholqu b'certu skopijiet ta' operat effettiv, ta' operat "on business lines". Fil-verita kulhadd jaf li mhux qed joperaw hekk ghaliex, nonostante l-fatt li nholqu dal-korporazzjonijiet, u legalment huma ndipendenti, in effetto qed jiehdur direttivi minghand ministri. Mela kien mehtieg ukoll li l-kummissjoni tidhol f'dan l-aspett, pero ma dahlitx. Ma dahlitx forsi ghax eskluza mit-'terms of reference' taghha.

Punt importanti li semmiet il-kummissjoni u ser nikkwota testwalment: "Neither the public service nor politicians have appreciated the implications of this development" - hawnhekk qed jirreferixxu ghall-kontroll permezz ta' "democratically elected

executive" - "and have not fully adjusted their expectations and perceptions of one another". Pajjizna ghandu esperjenza ta' gvern responsabbli jew rapprezentattiv almenu f'kontinwita bi 'break' qasira mill-1947 'l-hawn. Ir-relazzjoni bejn ministri, bejn il-politici u s-servizz pubbliku qatt ma gew definiti. Dan huwa punt kardinali u jigi, forsi, mid-difetti kulturali li ghandna Malta li ghamel accenn ghalihom is-Sur Pirotta. Jigi ukoll, jista' jkun, ghax hawn interess ta' politikanti li dawn qatt ma jigu definiti. Dawn il-veritajiet irridu nkunu cari fuqhom.

Ic-cittadin, meta jigi ghand impjegat, jistenna trattament ekwu, jistenna trattament identiku. Jistenna applikazzjoni ta' ligi favur jew kontra tieghu, pero b'mizura ugwali, mhux mizura differenti, skond min int jew skond minn min tigi u min qed jibghatek. Dan huwa l-kuncett sfortunat li ghandna Malta.

U dan hu kuncett sfortunat li, jiddispjacini nghid, il-kummissjoni ghamlet accenn ghalih, pero ma tat ebda suggeriment ghal soluzzjoni dwaru. Anzi l-kummissjoni semmiet in-necessita' li l-poliktant u l-'entourage' tieghu, li jistghu jkunu nies tal-politika u jistghu ikunu 'advisers', li ma jindahlux jew izommu l-bogħod mis-servizz pubbliku. Dan hu l-kuncett. Pero kif ma qalitx. U l-kif huwa mportanti. Qeghdin f'pajjiz zghir hafna. Certi pressjonijiet ma nistghux nevitawhom. Ghalkemm ma'ahniex pajjiz Afrikan, il-kuncett ta' l-'extended family', japplika wkoll f'pajjizna b'mod izjed insidjuz kultant. Irridu noqogħdu attenti hafna, ghaliex minhabba f'dan jigi l-fatt li individwu sejjer ghand dak biex jinqeda u jmur ghand l-iehor u bir-rizultat u

konsegwenza ta' korruzzjoni. U dan huwa l-punt li l-kummissjoni ghamlet accenn ghalih u fil-verita fir-rakomandazzjonijiet taghha infatti marret kontra dak li qed tghid hi stess.

Ghaliex? Ghaliex is-servizz pubbliku, b'definizzjoni, huwa l-haga li ghandha tipprovdi kontinwita' ghall-pajjiz. Kieku tghid li hemm bzonn nirrigenerawh, hemm bzonn li naraw kif nirrangawh hemm bzonn naraw kif ser nittrattaw il-problemi li ghandu, dan kollu minnu, imma li xi hadd jigi jitkellem f'termini ta' servizz pubbliku gdid ghalija bhala cittadin u bhala ex-'civil servant' toffendini. Toffendini ghas-semplici raguni li ghalija s-servizz pubbliku ghandu jkun ix-xempju ta' kontinwita'. Is-servizz pubbliku qieghead hemm biex jezercita certu fren fuq il-politikant. Jekk is-servizz pubbliku mhux lest jezercita fren fuq il-politikant, allura ehles minnu u dahhal nies ta' politika ghal kollox. Nistghu nimmaginaw pajjiz jimxi b'dan il-mod? Dan li qieghdin nithaddu fuqu il-lejla. Dan li ghandna nezaminaw flimkien.

Il-"concern" ta' hafna mill-hbieb li hawn prezenti huwa possibbilment l-element tas-salarji. Is-salarji huma mportanti pero m'humix il-haga crucjali - il-haga crucjali hija li c-civil jerga' jipprestina ruhu biex jieqaf lill-politikant u l-ndhil politiku zejzed.

M'inhix qed nghid li ordnijiet politici wiehed m'ghandux jimxi magghom. Jien qed nghid li l-politikant ghandu jistenna mis-servizz pubbliku l-onesta' kollha u ghandu jirrispetta lill-impjegat pubbliku u jittrattah bl-onesta' u hekk ghandu jistenna c-cittadin.

Dan huwa l-kuncett, dan huwa li sar, dan huwa li ghamlu accenn ghalih, il-Kummissjoni, pero ma taw ebda soluzzjoni.

Jiena wiehed minn nies li nemmen li tajjeb ikollok kummissjoni li taghmillek rakkomandazzjonijiet, tajjeb li jkollok 'guidelines' ta' kummissjonijiet u ta' nies indipendenti. Pero' r-riforma, r-riforma bazilari mhux biss trid tkun accettata mis-servizz pubbliku imma hu stess irid isib mezzi kif jiggeneraha. L-inizjattiva trid tigi mill-impjegat tal-Gvern. Jekk irridu nirnexxu f'riforma tas-servizz pubbliku, irridu nippruvaw nitkellmu f'termini ta' servizz li jirrispetta lilu nnifsu, li jirrispetta c-cittadin, li jirrispetta l-politiku li jkun hemm minn zmien ghall-iehor; dik ir-riforma trid tigi ghaliex l-impjegat jemmen fil-htiega ta' din, jemmen fiha bhala punt kardinali fit-twemmin tieghu.

Issa hawnhekk ghandna zewg mardiet, it-tnejn storici: ta' nuqqas ta' definizzjoni ta' responsabbiltajiet bejn il-politiku u l-impjegat li ilhom sejr in is-snin; ghandna kuncett li hallew warajhom l-Ingliزي, ta' centralizzazzjoni, il-kuncett tas-Segretarjat l-antik. Dak il-kuncett li ghadu prezenti sa' llum, il-kuncett li l-ufficju tal-Prim Ministru u l-Finanzi huma l-awtoritajiet. Mela qabel ma tfarrak dik l-ideja, qabel ma tfarrak l-ideja li xi settur fil-gvern huwa izjed gharef mill-ohrajn, ninsew l-ideja ta' riformi. Il-kuncett li rridu nkissru hu l-kuncett li hemm xi hadd 'at the centre' li jaf aktar mill-ohrajn. Dan huwa kuncett li huwa wirt hazin u sfortunat, minn zmien is-Segretarjat, minn zmien il-kolonjalizmu.

Semmejt illi l-kummissjoni ghafset hafna mhux biss fuq ir-rwol tas-servizz pubbliku. Semmiet kuncetti ta' 'managers' li mhux kuncett gdid, kuncett li konna qed nipprovaw indaħhlu fis-Servizz tnejn u ghoxrin sena ilu, pero' mlibbes b'libsa isbah illum, ipprezentat b'diskors isbah, pero' il-kuncett hemm baqa'.

Pero' l-ikbar nuqqas tal-kummissjoni hija li servizz, istituzzjoni, parti mill-arma eżekuttiva ta' gvern tikkonceptxi li fl-ogħla livelli ma jingħata kaz ta' xejn tal-kontinwita' u jiddaħhlu nies minn barra, f'pozizzjonijiet eżekuttivi, jagħtu pariri, jew infatti huma nfushom ikunu l-'managers', tad-dipartimenti. Dan huwa kuncett li jkompli jkabbar il-pjaga tal-politicizzazzjoni fis-servizz civili.

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LINO SPITERI M.P.

Is-servizz pubbliku - definit bhala s-servizz civili u l-korporazzjonijiet pubblici - ghandu funzjoni x'jaqdi li, ghalkemm fundamentali, fiha nnifisha hi semplici. Il-qafas istituzzjonali li fih titwettaq dil-funzjoni lanqas m'hemm diffikultajiet kbar biex jingharaf.

Tliet mistoqsijiet jistghu jghinu biex is-suggett jigi nkwadrat tajjeb:

X'ghandu jaghmel is-servizz pubbliku?

Kif ghandu jaghmlu?

X'ghandu jiehu talli jaghmlu?

Li ghandu jaghmel is-servizz pubbliku hu sempliciment li jaqdi, u jaqdi sewwa, lill-pubbliku b'mod li jaghraf li bazikament dan mhux qasam ekonomiku, izda socjali.

Ma naqbilx mal-hafna enfasi fir-Rapport tal-Kumissjoni ghar-Riforma tas-Servizz Pubbliku, dwar customer relations. Is-servizz pubbliku mhux xi hanut tal-moda jew agenzija ta' l-ivvjaggar. Innies li jrid jaqdi dan is-servizz m'humiex konsumaturi normali, fis-sens li jistghu jgharblu u jqabblu, u mbaghad jaghzlu skond il-mezzi taghhom. Ghal certi htigijiet, il-poplu bilfors ghand dan is-settur irid imur. Das-settur jamministra s-servizzi tas-sahha, tal-harsien fit-triq u tad-dar, ta' l-edukazzjoni, tad-dawl, l-ilma u t-

telefon. Għall-pensjonijiet, għajnuna waqt il-mard u servizzi soċjali oħra, sors wiehed u wiehed biss għandu l-poplu.

Mela qabel xejn, is-servizz pubbliku jrid iservi lic-cittadin, mhux sempliciment għax hu dan li jhallas għalih bit-taxxi, izda għax dawn servizzi pubblici, c-cittadin għandu dritt istituzzjonali għalihom u l-Istat hu obbligat jagħtihomlu, permezz tas-servizz pubbliku.

Hawnhekk tidhol il-htiega ta' distinzjoni li ma ssirx bizzejjed. Is-servizz pubbliku huwa mekkanizmu ta' l-Istat, mhux tal-gvern fis-sens politiku. Kull gvern imexxi l-Istat temporanjament. B'kuntrast, l-amministrazzjoni ta' l-Istat trid issir dejjem.

Wiehed irid jagħraf li s-servizz pubbliku, waqt li għandu l-funzjoni mportanti li jagħti l-pariri oggettivi tiegħu, irid jiehu l-ordnijiet minghand il-politici li jkun jmexxu l-Istat. Jekk ma jsirx hekk, das-settur ikun f'anarkija. Stramba għalhekk li, għalkemm il-Kummissjoni qalet li hasset il-htiega li tikkonsulta ma' kemm jista' jkun minn dawk li għandhom x'jaqsmu mas-servizz pubbliku, lill-politici ma semmithomx u lanqas, sa fejn naf jien, ma ikkonsultathom.

Ir-relazzjoni istituzzjonali bejn is-servizz pubbliku u l-gvern tal-gurnata trid tingharaf ta' li hi, biex hadd ma jkun ittantat jahseb li das-servizz għandu xi dritt jinjora x-xewqa demokratika tal-poplu, murija fl-ghazla ta' min imexxi. Izda hu mehtieg ukoll li l-ufficjal pubbliku qabel xejn iqis lill-nnifsu bħala parti minn

amministrazzjoni permanenti, u mhux minn gvern li dejjem hu temporanju - m'n alla hu hekk!

Dan jidhol ukoll fit-tieni mistoqsija: kif ghandu jwettaq il-funzjoni tieghu s-servizz pubbliku?

Ghandu jwettaqha billi jaghraf il-permanenza tieghu fis-servizz ta-cittadini, b'kuntrast mat-temporanjeta' ta' kull gvern tal-gurnata. Ghandu jwettaqha billi jaghmel hiltu biex ighin lill-gvern tal-gurnata jimplimenta l-programm tieghu, izda mhux b'mod li jinsa li mhux hu l-politiku, mhux hu l-ministru, mhux hu l-oppozizzjoni.

Qisu jinstema' zejjed li wiehed jemfasizza dan, ghax imissu jkun evidenti li hadd fis-servizz pubbliku m'ghandu jhares lejha innifsu bhala parti mill-politika partiggjana fil-kariga tieghu, hlief fis-sens li hu jaghmel sehem mill-Ezekuttiv, li barra li jamministra s-servizzi pubblici irid iwettaq il-programm tal-gvern tal-gurnata. Sew bhala ex-ministru, sew bhala deputat, u wisq u wisq izjed bhala cittadin, altru ma nhossx li hu zejjed jew barra minnn loku li jinghad u jigi emfasizzat dan.

Nidhku bina nfusna jekk ma naghrfux li mhux rari li ufficcjali pubblici hallew it-twemmin politiku taghhom - ghax ma jaqblux mal-gvern tal-gurnata - izommhom milli jwettqu dmirhom u jaqdu lill-poplu kif imiss.

Baq'a' hafna xi jsir biex tigi zviluppata kultura fonda u mferrxa ta'servizz pubbliku fejn il-mira tkun bizzejjed ta' servizz veru, u mhux, b'mod jew iehor, ghalkemm altru mhux minn kulhadd, ta' politika partigijana.

Barra l-element politiku f'dit-tieni mistoqsija jrid ukoll, b'mod realistiku, jissemma' li ghad irid ikun hemm zviluppi kulturali ohra. Hemm suppost qaddejja pubblici li - f'kuntest ghal kollox mhux politiku - ma jaghrfux bizzejjed is-semplicita' serja tal-funzjoni taghhom: dik li jissodisfaw tajjeb dawk il-htigijiet li c-cittadin bilfors irid imur ghand l-Istat ghalihom. Nifhem li ghalhekk hemm min, bhall-Kummissjoni, jaghmele mfasi qawwija fuq kuncetti bhal 'customer relations'. Nibqa' nghid, izda, li din l-emfasi ma toghgobnix. Il-membri tas-servizz pubbliku m'ghandhomx imqar rimotament jithallew jahsbu li bizzejjed taghti service with a smile.

Is-servizz pubbliku mhux tbissim artificjali jehtieg. Jehtieg gharfien car u kontinwu li min qieghed jew ghad jidhol fih, barra ghax irid impjieg tajjeb, ghandu jkun hemm b'sens qawwi ta' vokazzjoni, ta' opportunita' li jaqdi lic-cittadini shabu anki kif irid ikun moqdi hu stess bhala cittadin ukoll.

Wisq drabi, dal-fattur jintesa. Wisq drabi l-kejl ikun x'se niehu jien, u mhux, x'se naghti ta' dak li niehu. Wisq drabi wkoll ma jkunx hemm l-gharfien li l-ufficcjal pubbliku ma juzax rizorsi tieghu personali, izda tas-socjeta'. Sahansitra qisu lanqas hemm gharfien bizzejjed li s-servizz pubbliku stess, permezz ta' l-eluf

kbar ta' individwi li jahdmu fih, hu parti qawwiya minn dik is-socjeta' li mhux dejjem jigu meqjusa l-interessi taghha, f'dal-kaz f'sens ekonomiku ta' efficjenza u hala.

Li jwassalni ghat-tielet mistoqsija: **x'ghandu jichu s-servizz pubbliku talli jwettaq il-funzjoni tieghu?** Waqt li wiehed jemfasizza li ghandu jkun hemm element baziku qawwi ta' vokazzjoni f'kull qasam tas-servizz pubbliku, u mhux biss f'dawk tradizzjonali tas-sahha u ta' l-educazzjoni, wiehed irid jaghraf sewwa li ghandu jkun hemm kumpens tajjeb. Min ighix f'komunita' miftuha ma jistax jghaddi biss bis-sodisfazzjon spiritwali f'xogholu, ghalkemm zgur jehtiegu. Irid ikollu wkoll kumpens materjali xieraq. Il-kwistjoni hi, x'inh u xieraq?

M'ghandux ikun hemm dubju li l-qaghda fl-oqsma kollha ta' l-impjiegi trid dejjem tittiehed in kunsiderazzjoni. Minn dal-lat kien hemm zviluppi fil-qasam ekonomiku u socjali li jemfasizzaw il-htiega li l-kumpens lis-servizz pubbliku jinzamm taht analizi kritika. M'ghadux izjed il-kaz li mpjieg tajjeb awtomatikament ifisser wiehed mal-gvern. Kien hemm ukoll l-izvilupp importanti ta' l-estensjoni ghal kulhadd ta' pensjoni ta' zewg terzi meta tirtira bl-eta', permezz ta' l-Iskema tas-Sigurta' Nazzjonali. Dan ifisser li issa hemm hafna izjed mobilita', hafna inqas rabta ghal min jidhol fis-servizz pubbliku. Xorta, izda, baqa' l-fattur importanti wkoll li min ikun fis-servizz pubbliku jista' - tnehhi xi zball gravi minnu, jew xi burdata stramba ta' xi politiku - jibqa' fis-servizz sa ma jirtira, kontra l-incertezza li ssib f'setturi ohra.

Kollox ma' kollox, il-kumpens irid ikun relatat mill-qrib ma' x'qed jigri fil-bqija ta' l-ekonomija. Barra minn hekk, izda, jridu jinzammu relattivitajiet xierqa internament fl-istess servizz pubbliku. Ma mpressjonajtx ruhi wisq b'ghadd ta' aspetti tar-rapport tal-Kummissjoni. Izda partikolarment inhoss li t-twessiegh goff li jissuggerixxi fil-koncertina, barra 'perks' addizzjonali ghall-irjus il-kbar, jekk jigi attwat inissel mhux muzika ta' armonija helwa, izda kakafonija ta' tkissir u glied.

Fuq kollox, ma naqbel xejn mal-proposti tal-Kummissjoni dwar il-kapijiet tas-servizz pubbliku, u'tassew nittama li dal-hmar il-lejl strutturali ma jigix tabilhaqq istituzzjonalizzat f'mostru reali. Il-Kummissjoni, bil-hsieb jew le ma nafx, tidher li accettat proposta politika kontroversjali li kumbinazzjoni saret hu u jigi mhejji r-rapport. Il-proposta kienet li t-tmexxija tas-servizz pubbliku tigi politicizzata, fis-sens li l-hatriet ta' fuq nett ikunu hatriet fuq bazi temporanja.

Dil-proposta, kieku tigi attwata, mhux biss ixxellef sewwa l-kontinwita' li suppost joffri s-servizz pubbliku fl-amministrazzjoni tal-makkinarju ta' l-Istat. Izda fil-kuntest specifiku ta' Malta, iddahhal perikli godda, b'zieda mal-kultura ta' partiggjanizmu li kibret f'das-settur, mhux l-inqas tort ta' politici li nkoraggewha.

Ghax, x'se tkun il-qagħda ta' dawk l-irjus li, skond dil-proposta, jigu mtellghin fl-arja mhux dejjem sfiqa tal-parti ta' fuq nett tal-garigor tal-poter? Jekk huma diga' qegħdin fis-servizz pubbliku,

izda jigu temporanjament mghollija fil-kmamar tas-sular il-gdid, se jkollhom tentazzjoni qawwija li jippruvaw izieghlu kemm jifilhu bil-kap politiku taghhom. Il-funzjoni li suppost iwettqu - dik li jaghtu parir oggettiv lill-kap politiku temporanju, u mbaghad jiddecciedi hu - tista' taqa' ghal rasha minn fuq il-bejt.

Kif kienet is-sistema sal-lum, jista' jkun li kap li ma jdoqqx muzika li toghgob lill-imghallem politiku, jiddobba 'transfer', jew jitqiegħed x'imkien disprezzat ma jagħmel xejn. Bis-sistema proposta, it-'transfer' jarmieh mhux la genba, izda 'l isfel sewwa, b'telf sostanzjali ta' status u flus. Wisq nahseb li jaf ikun hemm min jidhol fis-sogru li jimrad bil-vertigo, jew li jmarrrduh bih!

Barra minn hekk, dawn il-kapijiet 'casual', kif nistghu nsejnhom, barra li jogħgbu lill-kap politiku, jekk mhux ukoll lill-assistent politiku tiegħu, ikollhom kull interess li jharsu 'l barra mis-servizz pubbliku għal li jista' jinqala'. Ghax, jekk dawn in-nies ikun hemm il-periklu li jigu mitfugħa għal isfel minn fuq it-trapeze għoli li tellghuhom itiru fuqu, faċli jhossu li ahjar ihejju xibka.

L-applikazzjonijiet ta' dal-periklu m'hemmx għalfajn hawnhekk insemmihom wahda wahda. Tajjeb niftakru, izda, li hawn Malta m'hemm xejn xi jzomm ufficcjal pubbliku, għoli kemm kien għoli, milli jissieheb ma' kumpanija jew interessi ohra privati appena jitlaq, jew ittellquh, mis-servizz.

L-anqas ma nahseb li l-qafas istituzzjonali tas-servizz pubbliku se jkun imtejjeb jekk bhala l-oghla kapijiet ikunu jistghu jigu mahtura b'kuntratt nies minn barra s-servizz. Twettiq ta' dil-proposta wiesa' bilfors jolqot hazin u jgerrex lil min ghazel jew jithajjar jaghzel is-servizz pubbliku bhala karriera. Barra minn hekk, dawk li jinqalghu minn fejn ikunu biex jaccettaw hatriet gholja temporanji, iridu jkunu rashom mistrieħa, b'mod jew iehor. Ghax dawn il-kapijiet kazwali lanqas ikollhom ix-xibka ta' mpjieg inqas gholi fis-servizz, bhal fil-kaz ta' dawk li jigu mgħollija temporanjament minn gewwa.

Mohhom iridu jserrhuh mod iehor, jekk ikunu jentiegu impjieg. Jew billi l-impjieg qadim tagħhom jinzamm miftuh għalihom, bil-possibiltà ta' suppost cara ta' konflitt ta' nteress. Jew għax ihossuhom konfidenti li jistghu jsibu mpjieg iehor malajr meta jispickaw minn kapijiet kazwali, b'izjed konflitti - jekk mhux aghar - implikati.

F'dan ir-rigward, hemm ukoll implikazzjonijiet politici serji. Malta zghira fid-daqs u fil-firxa ta' l-opportunitajiet, apparti l-kultura, mentalita', gosti u pregudizzji li jezistu. Gvern Socjalista jkollu hafna inqas opportunita' li jattira kapijiet kazwali milli jkollu gvern iehor. Dan fattur li min irid stabbilita' istituzzjonali, m'ghandux jinjorah. Jien, bhala socjalista, zgur ma ninjorahx. Izda waqt li ngharfu, meta ngharblu nkun lest li naccettah kieku nhoss li sistema bhal din tkun izjed ta' gid għal Malta, anki jekk ma taqbilx għall-partit tiegħi. Izda kif urejt, inhoss li minnflok ta' gid, tkun ta' periklu.

Nafu nispiccaw, b'dis-sistema, bil-principju tac-'cihuahua': flok ikollna qaddejja fl-interess pubbliku, ikollna habrieka għall-interess tagħhom stess. Flok għassiesa herqana u fuq ruhhom taddar, ikollna 'cihuahua' li biex jidhru helwin ihallu min ilibbishom ic-coff, u jitfissdu, u joqogħdu attenti biex kemm jista' jkun ma jinbhux.

Biex nigbor fil-qosor dak li ridt infisser:

Tajjeb u mehtieg li l-qagħda tas-servizz pubbliku tkun taht studju kontinwu, analitiku u kritiku. Tajjeb li l-iskop u l-kundizzjonijiet ta' dan is-settur tant importanti jigu mgħarbla u zviluppati b'mod oggettiv, realistiku, u gust.

Hazin hafna, izda, jekk ezercizzju bħal dan iservi biex flok igib 'il quddiem il-gid tas-socjeta', li għandha dritt tkun moqdiya tajjeb, flok igib 'il quddiem izjed armonija interna fis-servizz pubbliku, izjed armonija esterna bejnu u bejn dawk li b'mod jew iehor imissu miegħu, nispiccaw b'taqlib izjed ikrah milli diga' hemm.

Flok xi servizz pubbliku għid, inhoss li hu dan il-periklu li wasal magħna llum.

The Hon. Lino Spiteri, M.A.(Oxon), M.P., is Opposition Spokesperson on Economic Affairs. Apart from being a prominent journalist, he has had a long career in politics. He served as Minister of Finance and Minister for Economic Development under the Labour Administrations of 1976-81 and 1981-87.

SUB-THEME TWO:

MANAGING HUMAN RESOURCES

JOSEPH V. TABONE

Mr Chairman, Prime Minister, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wish to thank the University of Malta and the Malta Institute of Management for taking the initiative to organize this forum. It is one that is very long overdue. I have now lived out of Malta for more than half of my life, and you will therefore have to excuse my use of English. While I excuse myself for that, I will not excuse myself for not sharing your sense of fatalism about the plight of the Service and its future. However, I do feel that, in order to successfully come to grips with the problems that ail it, one first of all has to understand the underlying causes: in other words, when we say it is not working well, before we administer a cure, we really have to have a good understanding of what the ailment is.

While several of the issues and causes are very clearly and articulately identified in the Public Service Reform Commission's report, what I would like to do is run through an overview of the Operations Review, and its findings.

There is nothing unique about the Government of Malta deciding to carry out an Operations Review: this is something that any large, responsible, visionary organization indulges in from time to time. Its purpose was, firstly, to look at itself, to look at its structures, in order to determine the extent to which its organization, structures, its policies are conducive to effective delivery of

its services. The second part of the Review tied in very closely with the work of the Public Service Reform Commission. The third element to the Review was the development of an information technology strategic plan for Government, and that is being finalised at this point in time.

The review identified three types of issues that were contributing to some of the dysfunctions of Government. Some of these concerned the organization structure itself; some were concerned with human resources, and a third, broader group had to do with environmental issues, as we call them for want of a better word.

Very briefly, with regard to the organizational issues that were identified, these had to do, firstly with the lack of structure in our institutions, – this goes back to the origins of the public service.

Secondly, there is lack of clarity of the mandates of some of these structures and as a result of that, lack of delineation between incumbencies within those structures, whether ministers, the senior and the junior ones, public servants and their interactions. Possibly as a result, we have a situation where, rather than being made at the lowest possible levels within organizations, decisions have a tendency to gravitate to the very top, either within the organization or, higher still, to Cabinet.

The system is lacking in capabilities in planning, policy analysis, and mechanisms for dealing with interdependencies within the

complex government of today, which is entirely different from the government which we had to administer twenty or thirty years ago.

The absence of effective communications is the result of a lack of structures: we may have some very good things that are going on at the top but, unfortunately, these are not filtering down sufficiently.

There is a lack of delegated powers to incumbents within organizations, starting at the highest level with ministers, working its way to the lowest levels of the organization, particularly in matters relating to financial management or people management. Suffice it to say that a manager working in the government environment as it is today, really has very little latitude in terms of the management of the area of his or her responsibility. This, coupled with an absence of guidelines in matters relating to fiscal, requisitions, staffing, etc., does not make his or her lot a very easy one.

The other thing that quite surprised me is the gap in so far as middle management is concerned, and it is really for this reason that I don't see what we're doing as much of a threat: I see it as an opportunity for many, because those gaps have to be filled before we move forward.

Lastly, in terms of organization-related issues, there is, I suppose, a lack of experience in managing our own affairs, and that is simply a factor of history.

In terms of **human resource** issues, I think those are spelt out very well within the Public Service Reform Commission's report, and I do not wish to waste time now in dealing with them.

Moving on to environmental support, the issues that were identified include the working conditions and the tools that people are given to work with; the telecommunications; the lack of information technology. Government, because of the nature of its business, is information-intensive, but it has so little by way of tools to help it in that regard. Given the way in which we have evolved, an average person in government departments has very little basic support to help him or her do the job.

As you can see, the list is a long one, and I merely tried to go through some of it quickly. The mistake that is often made when we talk about the state of the public service, is that too much is attributed to one factor: this happens consistently, and I am at a loss at how to deal with it. In talking to one individual, invariably, the focus is on one particular issue, one particular deficiency: if you talk to a civil servant, it invariably has to do with the interference of ministers or it may have to do with the poor conditions in which people have to work; ministers talk about the lack of support from the public service. In reality, all these are contributing factors, and we have to successfully deal with all of them, before we can move forward, due to the extent to which they are so closely inter-twined. I don't want us to delude ourselves that we can deal with them tomorrow, but in recognising the totality of

these, we can develop a strategy, collectively and, over a period of time, overcome them.

The range and the complexity of the issues posed is, no doubt, quite daunting. But, far from being impossible to deal with, if we keep an open mind, we can come up with the solutions. One thing to be resisted is the temptation for tinkering. This report has tried looking at issues quite exhaustively, and I think that there is a danger that we may get too selective in terms of how much of it is adopted and how much is cast aside. It is vital to remember the breadth of issues that it started off addressing.

It is because of the recognition of these wide-ranging issues and their complexity that Government has announced the setting up of an organizational entity to address the issues, and that is the Management Systems Unit. Again, this is not a novel initiative, unique to Malta. The government of Britain did this about ten years ago; the government of America was doing this quite recently; the government of Canada has established structures to help the organization get over hurdles that it may be trying to overcome.

The Management Systems Unit is a multi-disciplinary group, with competences in the areas of general management, financial management, human resource management and information technology, and its role is that of facilitator. That is very important: its role is in no way intended to undermine or to supplant the

line; the unit is there specifically to help line management implement these complex changes.

The priority of Government in staffing the organization is, first of all, to try to find as many practising civil servants as possible to join the team. If sufficient people are not found within the Service, Government has advertised and would like to identify other capable or qualified candidates in Malta. As a third order of preference, Government is looking to Maltese people who have done well in some field of endeavour in another country; it could attract them to help out. All else failing, it would look for foreigners who could help the organization for short periods of time. One of the things that is very important is that quality is not sacrificed in the interests of doing it "the Maltese way".

The key to success in dealing with these issues lies in the wisdom, the maturity, the professionalism, the teamwork that we show in the coming months. It is also knowing when to call for help: what distinguishes a good manager, is knowing where to get the job done, as opposed to being able to do it himself. I understand that there is some sensitivity about the concept of breaking with tradition and going outside the public service to fill some of the key posts.

I have no doubt that, if we can inspire confidence in our actions, people will rise to the challenge. Having been in every ministry and in every department, I have come across a great deal of frustration. But, at the same time, I feel very encouraged by the

quality of some of the people that I met, their interest in making the system function better.

Thank you all very much.

Joseph V. Tabone is a senior executive in the Ontario public service. He has been seconded to the Maltese Government to carry out an Operations Review and to prepare an information systems strategic plan. He is currently Director of the Management Systems Unit.

JOSEPH R. AQUILINA

Mr Chairman, Hon Prime Minister, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Although I speak in my personal capacity, I would like to be allowed to base my talk on the work done by the Human Resources Division of the Federation of Industry, which went into an exercise to look into the public service and to be involved with the Public Service Reform Commission in terms of submissions for the betterment of the Service.

First of all, I should like to begin by expressing my appreciation of the work of the Public Service Reform Commission in producing this first stage report – partial though it may be. Irrespective of whether we agree or disagree with the Report, wholly or in part, I think it is only fair to say that the Commission has addressed itself very professionally to the task placed before it. I think that it has produced a serious and comprehensive study. At the very least we are fortunate today to have a calibre document on which mature comment and formal suggestions may be based. I am sure that it was not easy for them to come to this and I have to acknowledge their wisdom and the hard work that must have gone into the presentation of this report.

If I look at the faces of the individuals that make it up, the public service is very rich in human resources, in terms of many parameters that one can think, education-wise, experience-wise, integrity-wise, and any other-wise. No matter what the detractors of

the public service say, I think it is still a fact that the Service holds within it and attracts from outside persons of good-quality timbre. If I look at the Service as an entity, I see a totally different picture. It is a paradox that the Service as an entity, is in what I would describe as a negative synergy situation, ie, the sum total of the service is much less than the arithmetical sum of its constituent parts. Why?

The report of the Public Service Reform Commission has gone into great detail into analyzing why this is so and it has suggested some ways of how we can unleash and tap the potential that is inside many officers and to bring these to a cohesive whole to improve the functions, to improve the performance, to meet the new, challenging demands that our economy is making today.

When one talks of "Service", what is it exactly that we mean? Allow me to give a definition that is lifted out of the report of the Commission: the public service should be a service-delivery system. Does it deliver? To what extent? If we are not satisfied, what can be done to remedy the situation?

I think, by and large, there is general consensus that the system does not deliver as it should. The most vociferous opinions that I hear in this regard come from some of my friends in the public service. Some of them voice frustration; some of them voice even anger. I find this positive evidence that the spark of the will to work is still there and I look on the report of the Commission as one which will give us a reform which will allow these persons to

get on with the job that they would like to do. Of course, the malaise of the public service in its various manifestations and in the various public complaints cannot be lightly overlooked and cannot be too easily summarised. They are many and various and even the report does not go down in sufficient detail to address the complaints and perhaps the hardships that our citizens have to face at the hands of the public service machine.

Talking to public officers, they will say that responsibility for the public service ultimately rests with them. However, I believe that the Service needs to look a long, hard look at itself in the mirror, and it needs to see also what it can do for itself. Having said that, when we were working within the Human Resources Division of the Federation of Industries, we came to the conclusion that the civil service of itself and within itself, could not solve its problems, because we were of the opinion that one of the fundamental obstacles hindering the improvement in the quality of the service and performance of the public sector is the intrusion of politics and partisanship in the managerial and administrative functions. We felt at the time that there was an understanding that for the public service to carry out its functions efficiently, politics and partisanship had to be eradicated from its ranks, to be replaced by professionalism or commercial business practice and professional business techniques and management techniques, where applicable.

The FOI had felt then that the public service's first priority was for the Service to be depoliticised and we had made some strong, perhaps even radical, recommendations in this regard. We were of

the opinion that it was absolutely essential to have a very clear, sharp distinction between the functions of ministers and the functions of members, administrative and executive, of the public service. We felt that a minister's main functions should be to establish government policy, within the parameters of Cabinet decisions, within the mandate given by the electorate, together and in consultation with all the interested parties involved in the process. At some remove from the date of the writing of this requirement, I have to note that there has been much that is positive done in this direction.

We also feel that another ministerial function should be to monitor all the factors affected by government policy pertaining to the particular ministry, and to formulate legislative changes as and when these become necessary, and to act as a watchdog over the public service to ensure that government policy is being properly and effectively implemented within the parameters of established and agreed targets...the concept of management by objectives from minister to head of department.

We felt that the function of the public service should be to execute and to faithfully administer government policy, and that the public service had a considerable effort to make in this regard to return to the impartiality of former times. We felt that it would be in the interests of the government of the country if ministers did not have direct executive power over the civil service, in the sense that ministerial functions should be exercised only via policy directives given to heads of department with whom targets and time-frames

could be agreed, on the understanding, of course, that heads of department or heads of public corporations should be held accountable to the minister for the implementation of these directives and targets.

The FOI had felt that Act VII of 1975, which empowered ministers to assume all or many of the functions and responsibilities of heads of department, should be suitably amended so as to revert the situation to the status quo ante and to restore to the heads of department the responsibilities, accountability and functions that were assigned to them prior to the promulgation of the Act. What we were saying, in fact, is that we had a deep-seated desire to see a separation and a distinction of the political functions and to leave these where they belong with the politicians at Cabinet level and at ministerial level, to make sure that the public service, either on an individual basis or collectively, did not interfere in this, but, on the other hand, to ensure that the political masters of the day, having established policy and having then established guidelines, did not interfere, and adopted a 'hands off' approach from the actual execution of the policy that they wished to implement.

Perhaps multi-party discussions are required to arrive at a consensus on the lines which I have described. Or am I dreaming?

The next point that I would like to come to is the point of managing change, which I feel that the Reform Commission report has gone into quite satisfactorily. First of all, lest we castigate our public service too harshly, from some exposure that I have from

the side of industry, to British, Italian and German bureaucracies, I have to say that it results that our situation is not unique: there are differences in a matter of degree. But, even though, in these Services, the concept of institutionalised reform has been going on for a long time, they still have some of the problems that we ourselves suffer from. This perhaps indicates that reform of public service is a time-consuming process, one that perhaps cannot be carried out within the short political time-frame of one legislature, but which requires unrelenting, long-term commitment, if it is to bear results.

One point that struck me about these Services, even at the lowest level of their operation, was their consciousness of customer-service, was their consciousness that tomorrow is another day, and that the systems need to change. They were not afraid to be self-critical and they were themselves pushing for the self-criticism to be converted into reformative action on a constant, updating basis. Therefore, it is for this reason that I strongly agree with the Commission's recommendation to institutionalise change, and I also agree with the principle or the principles for the chosen mechanics of this institutionalization.

Human resource management is a term which has come to replace personnel administration. It is not just a buzz-word. The idea behind it is that one looks at the persons making up an organization as the richest source for that organization's possible success. Human resource management, however, being by its nature a maturing process paralleling what happens in mother nature, is

sometimes painful. I think that we have to be mature enough to accept and deal with this truth. There are no easy recipes, there are no easy solutions, and it is going to take a lot of effort on the part of everybody, and some personal sacrifices in terms of lowered expectations as well.

No matter how strong our beliefs in social justice are, life cannot be seen solely through the perspective of social justice, and the pursuit of national goals might lead us to have to be prepared to walk through other ways and to revise our expectations. On the other hand, judicious human resource management will afford as many facilities as possible, to accommodate as many people as possible with the least degree of inconvenience. It is for this reason that the FOI had strongly recommended further and more enhanced early retirement schemes and the serious consideration of financial and other measures to make it easier for people to accept changes.

Another problem that looms in front of reform is the very size of the public service. In most countries, the realization has come about that the benefits of having one single, unified service are, at this point in time, far outweighed by the disbenefits of keeping homogeneous control and harmonized systems, within the framework of such a size. Therefore, I believe that while there will always be a very strong case for a highly qualified generalist class of public officer, especially at the policy formulation level, today's demands in administration call for increasing specialization.

I believe that the functions of government should, in general, be decentralised to make them as effective as possible. Many of the line functions of departments – in fact, perhaps entire departments – could be more efficiently handled on an agency basis. Small is not only more beautiful, small is also more manageable, and the results are more tangible. This recommendation is strongly in line with current developments in the British civil service, on which ours is still patterned. For example, the most recent development is that a social security benefits department is going to be turned into a social security benefits distribution agency. There were many other points that I would have liked to cover. I would like to close by commenting on two small points.

We have far too many control systems: it seems to be a national malady that, whenever an abuse comes to light, a new control system is planned to prevent a repetition. I believe that abuses started on the first page of Genesis and, whatever we do, they will continue to the last page of the Apocalypse. The public at large has the impression, if not correctly so, that the Public Service Commission bends over backwards in order not to find people charged, guilty. In the meantime, control systems have multiplied, and an honest civil servant cannot give an honest day's work. It is an uphill struggle all the time for anybody who wants to get anything done.

I will end by quoting one young lady from the House of Representatives who last night mentioned trust. In the context of the stagnation and the blocking of much goodwill amongst many

officers in the public service, by an overabundance of systems and control systems and checks and counterbalances, is it possible to ask: 'How far are we prepared to reform on the basis of trust? How far are we ready to let go of some of the cumbersome, duplicated and superfluous control systems? Are we ready to dispense with this? Are we ready to introduce trust over and above any other consideration?' Of course, this on the understanding that if anybody is caught doing what he should not have been doing, he would have to face the full consequences of his actions, if necessary, right up to dismissal and criminal prosecution.

As a senior civil servant said yesterday, the Service is now ready to take over itself the running of the reforms arising out of the report of the Reform Commission. I believe that the Service can do this and that today's forum is but a step towards arriving at a common consensus of what we all need from the Service, and what everybody is prepared to contribute to the Service. Let us have more of these meetings, let us arrive at an agreed framework of what we want to do and, having done that, let's get on, and let's do it.

Mr Joseph R. Aquilina worked in the public service before joining private industry. He is active in the Federation of Industries, where he served as Chairman of the Human Resources Division. Mr Aquilina served as Chief Executive of the Employment & Training Corporation.

JOSEPH R. GRIMA

I consider it a privilege and a pleasure to be invited to talk about a subject in which I have taken a keen interest for quite some time – the reform of the Civil Service.

I believe in the Civil Service and in what it is meant to be doing. I believe Malta, like any other country, can only get a Civil Service that it deserves. I believe the Civil Service can do far better than it is doing at the moment. I also believe that the Civil Service deserves better in several respects – and these are the four underlying themes that I shall be implicitly talking about when I consider the management of human resources in the light of the PSRC Report.

Yet it is with some caution that I shall approach the subject. Not that I am hesitant to talk about the field in which I have laboured these last thirty-three years, but it has to be recognised that the civil service overcoat that I am wearing tonight is, at the best of times, heavy and sometimes also awkward to carry.

As the only serving public officer on the panel, I thought I should desperately try to ferret out of my talk, if my talk is to have any value, any self-interest-induced-bias I may have about the subject. I shall try to be as objective as I possibly can.

In this regard I also wish to state at the outset that the organizers invited me from the civil service not to speak on behalf of the

Civil Service but to give my personal views on the subject. And that is exactly what I am doing tonight. The views I shall express are exclusively mine. I have no brief to speak on anybody's behalf. In fact even the papers I quote are mine.

After last night's meeting, however, I felt that I should pause here for a moment to make a point or two.

Two or three weeks ago, at a Seminar in this same hall, I was shocked to learn that of the 100 Government accountants who graduated between 1983 and 1989, sixty have already resigned. Again, of the 50 students at present in the second year of the Bachelor of Commerce Course there was not a single student who showed enough interest in public administration to choose public policy as a subject. So, in the face of this typical situation, what exactly were we saying last night? Were we saying that everything was OK with the Civil Service? Or were we saying that we need reforms but not those proposed by the Reform Commission? Does this mean we have to set up another study group and wait for another 3 years for a Report? Is it possible that there is nothing in the Report with which we agree? If there is then, what is wrong in saying so? If we don't agree with two or three measures proposed, are there not enough recommendations on which we agree to make the reform work? Are we looking a gift horse in the mouth? To my mind civil servants simply cannot afford to miss this opportunity. If they do, they would be the losers, and the country with them.

The public service has been the subject of reform the world over for quite some time and for different reasons. Locally too, there has been a relatively subdued but consistent call for reform of the Civil Service.

With my press cuttings I have headlines which tell stories of reform in Britain's civil service designed in turn by Lord Fulton, Lord Rayner and Sir Robin Ibbs. I have write-ups on the Devlin Report prepared by the Public Services Organization Review Group about the Irish Civil Service, published in 1969. Some years ago I was given a copy of the Giannini Report submitted to the Italian Parliament in November 1979 about the main problems of the Italian public service. The United States, too, had its own civil service reforms and major changes were packaged in the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978.

The International Institute of Administrative Sciences, in one of its journals, listed some of the beliefs which gave rise over the years to demands for reform of Government personnel processes in the United States. If I repeat them here it would be observed that the statements are not unfamiliar and probably the basis of reforms in many other countries. These are:

1. "Government employment should be more responsive to political needs, which reflect the will of the people.

2. Partisan politics and personal friendships should have no influence on the selection and advancement of Government employees.
3. Government personnel processes should not impede but should support the ability of agency heads to manage their programmes with flexibility and speed.
4. Government should be a model employer, hiring persons of excellence, providing attractive pay and benefits, consulting systematically with employee representatives concerning conditions of employment and reassigning or dismissing ineffective employees."

But it is not only developed countries that concern themselves with the public service and its reform. Developing countries too have attached much importance to civil service reform and with good reason.

"Governments in developing countries have long realised that effective public administration systems are essential to the achievement of national development objectives." This is the opening statement of a United Nations study on administrative reform in developing countries published in 1984. Mention is made of the various initiatives taken in Latin America, Africa and Asia to bring about reforms.

In the case of developing countries the study makes reference to three important factors which contribute to administrative reform. The first "relates to the discontinuities between a colonial administrative system and the needs and demands of sovereign Governments." The second refers "to the need for an administrative apparatus adequate for performing the expanding role of Governments in managing the economy." The third was identified as "the desire to change the orientation and attitudes of civil servants and to introduce modern management techniques and processes in order to make the administration more efficient and effective in the delivery of services to the public." The UN Study adds, however, that some catalytic event or situation has to occur in addition to the foregoing factors to give rise to reform activities. A new party government after a long period of rule by another party was quoted, amongst others, as an example of such an event.

With this international background information as a reassuring backdrop that we are not alone at all in getting to grips with the fundamental problems of the public service, I would like to ask whether there is a real need or expectation for administrative reform in Malta too.

The editorials and articles that have appeared regularly over the years in a wide range of local opposing newspapers and magazines, and of which I shall quote the headlines of only a small sampling, are indicative of the consensus that exists about the need for reform in the Civil Service. Some constituted bodies too had prepared formal studies of what needed to be improved in the

public sector. As usual, however, most comments focused on the shortcomings rather than on the remedies.

"Ic-Civil" was the innocuous title of a full-page article in March 1981. "The Civil Service: What is wrong?" asked a headline in a weekly in October 1983. "Qed iberraq fic-Civil?" asked another headline in February 1986. "Ic-Civil - x'sar minnu?" asked rhetorically the leading article in a monthly magazine in December 1986. "There is widespread agreement in the country to-day that the public service needs urgent attention" stated the opening sentence of an editorial in November 1986. "Yes, Minister!" asserted another headline in January 1989.

To me it is evident that the need for reform of the public service is strongly felt in Malta too but, as pointed out in the 1984 UN document, and I quote, "the pressure groups for reform within the administrative system are usually less vocal than those for other goals. The latter are often well organised, articulate and persistent." Other demands are usually "highly visible, command wide interest and public support and have political influence". In this context the organisers of the present forum ought to be congratulated twice over for taking this initiative and Government too for setting up the Public Service Reform Commission.

What is this Civil Service? It is often stated that Malta as a nation has no natural resources other than its workforce and that if it is to survive or improve its lot, in this competitive world, it can only do so through the effort of its people.

Given that so many people are engaged in the public sector, it must matter more than a little to the prosperity of this land what this large army of people are doing for their country and how they are doing it.

But here, tonight, this forum is concerned with only one part of the public sector, namely, the traditional Civil Service proper: the 26,000 – odd permanent employees in Government departments, whom the Constitution defines as "public officers", from the dustman to the Head of the Civil Service, and including amongst others, nurses, teachers, policemen, architects, heads of departments, administrators, executives and clerks.

What are my views of the PSRC Report? I think that, for the first time ever, we now have a compact yet comprehensive report drawn up by a Maltese commission about how the Maltese Civil Service should operate in Sovereign Malta.

The Report addresses issues which have never been directly addressed locally before and it does so in a responsible manner. The Report is not only about the conditions of employment or about a long overdue revision of salaries of Government employees. The Report goes deeper than that. It is about the Civil Service as an institution and about its proper management, especially the proper management of human resources.

The Report is largely positive, balanced and innovative in its approach. No attempt is made to put the clock back nor to suggest

cosmetic solutions. There are no pious hopes of how things could improve. There is a huge yet specific agenda of hard work. There are no inferiority hang-ups that the Civil Service cannot excel. A spirit of optimism pervades the Report.

I suppose there are many in the civil service who can argue, rightly in my view, that the relatively low profile given to the compensation issue, after an extraordinary long period of austerity, betrays a lack of sensitivity on the part of the Reform Commission to a predicament which is very real. Vocal paralysis should not be mistaken for contentedness, nor unwittingly should it be allowed to lead to apathy, despondency or bitterness.

Yet to my mind, the Report is not looking at the interests of the Civil Service as a group in isolation. It is at the same time also looking at the governance of Malta and at its prosperity. It is also looking at the interests of John Citizen who deserves to be served better in every field of public administration. In other words, I believe the package of reforms, in its totality, is addressed to meet the needs of the country as a whole rather than those of a particular sector. In the proposed process, however, it is hoped that everybody would be a winner.

Not many would quarrel with the proposed objectives and goals set out in the Report, although it is very probable that not everybody would agree with all the measures that are being proposed. I would like to think, however, that on most measures underpinning the fundamental issues, there could be broad agreement.

Which are to me the fundamental issues concerning the management of human resources as identified by the Reform Commission? The Reform Commission seems to be saying that only an accountable, competent, and productive civil service "can efficiently respond", to use the words of the Commission's terms of reference, "to the changing needs for effective Government" and in its Report it is showing the way how these qualities can be achieved. In a nutshell, I think the Reform Commission is submitting that Government cannot possibly hope to have the Civil Service accountable for things over which it has no control, or competent in fields in which it is not trained, or productive unless it is motivated, respected and well paid.

These are the tough fundamental reforms with which forward-looking civil servants cannot but agree.

The inter-relationship of most recommendations in the Report is such that their cohesiveness would be lost if only one or two recommendations were to be singled out for particular importance. But at the centre of the whole reform exercise, I would place the question of performance together with that of training and development.

The Report is proposing that pay and advancement, reward and discipline, in the Civil Service, as in the private sector, should be linked to performance. It is also being suggested that performance should be judged as closest to the place of work as possible, even if subject to the most rigorous audit scrutinies that are considered

necessary. The topmost commitment in the Report is to revamp motivation and prime every initiative.

Surely one cannot really quarrel with such arrangements if a sustained effort is going to be made to increase productivity. There is no good way a manager could possibly run a profitable business or provide a service and be held accountable for the end results, if he is expected to turn a blind eye to the performance of his personnel or if he has no control over his personnel.

The Reform Commission is proposing that the manager in the Civil Service should have the competence, the authority and the resources to match the responsibilities that he is asked to carry. It is being recommended that, similar to managers elsewhere, the Civil Service manager should exercise the basic management functions of planning, organising, co-ordinating, directing and controlling.

The Reform Commission is also proposing that every manager in the Civil Service, at whatever level, should at the same time be held accountable for results, that his performance should be measured, but that he should be given managerial freedom, support and inducement to reach the goals set for him by the Government of the day. In other words, it is being proposed, that the Civil Service as an organization should become results-oriented.

The stigma of mediocrity has a high price attached to it. Small nations like us are embarking on national campaigns promoting devotion to excellence as a way of life, with the sub-slogan "Together we can achieve even more." The PSRC speaks highly of excellence and only cynics would take a jaundiced view of the recommendations made regarding excellence and integrity.

Dr J.G. Vance, in his book "Leadership and Life", observed: "we may say confidently that integrity is the grandest of all human qualities; it has a harmony and beauty all its own. It is the source of greatness, of sincerity, of responsibility, of honour. It is the root of those high attributes which make leadership faithful, fruitful, and effective. Its value is beyond the power of words to express".

In its own words, the PSRC Report focuses for the greater part on human resource management. New structures and better systems are being proposed but the 26,000 jewels in this complex clockwork of reforms are the people. People of all sorts and at all levels. They are all very important and every single one of them matters. By deeds, they have to be reassured that the proposed reforms are meant to be of benefit not only to every sector of the community at large but also to them personally.

There are bound to be pockets of resistance that would play on the fears and doubts bound up with the unknown. And here I do not mean the resistance to an odd measure or two but to a reformed Civil Service. Besides the slum-dweller syndrome of resistance to change at all costs, there would be some who are either tired or old

to consider change. There would be some who are, for one reason or other, comfortable with the way things are.

Others, simply anti-establishment, or else with false or anachronistic sentiments of nationalism of colonial days, still tend to identify the Civil Service with "the faithful servants of the Crown" and they would like to see the machinery of Government grind to a halt. There would be others who would consider the Civil Service as their kingdom or as the spoils for which they are prepared to engage in a bitter campaign.

Finally, there would be those who with a misguided sense of social responsibility feel that the cake of the Civil Service should be shared with those less fortunate in the community when in fact it is the national cake that should be made available for this purpose. These too may find it difficult to understand the proposed reforms.

I submit with all due respect that Government, Unions and the Civil Service should weigh carefully the PSRC Report and obviously listen sympathetically to each other and to any other representations that may be made about the Report but then, agreement should be reached with deliberate speed, even if implementation is going to be phased over time. Some of the reforms brook no further delay.

The Reform Commission states that "the scale and nature of changes can only be realised gradually." Unfortunately, time is not

on our side. This is a huge challenge and the soonest we start measuring up to it the better. In the concluding part of the U.N. document that I mentioned earlier, it is observed that "strong political support is necessary for administrative reform efforts to be successful."

I confess I would have gracefully declined the honour to speak at tonight's forum had there not been some tangible evidence of Government's commitment to the Reform. Indeed more than Lm800,000 are voted in the 1990 Budget to set up the Management Systems Unit, the Human Resources Development Programme, the Information Technology Strategy and a Communications Strategy under the heading "Public Service Reform Initiatives". It is now up to the Civil Service to play its part.

It may be appropriate to quote here a short extract from the Irish Devlin Report:

"Change, such as we describe and feel is necessary, requires fire in the belly; there must be an enthusiasm and urgent desire for change and the desire cannot be imposed from without - it must burn from within..."

The PSRC Report makes no claim to infallibility nor to absolute finality in its findings. In its concluding part it states that the Report points to the direction that the management of the public service should take in the coming years: it is not an immutable blueprint or a once-and-for-all solution to problems present and

future. On my part, I submit however that it would be folly not to accept the Report almost in its totality as the long term plan for the Civil Service. I think the Report should be looked upon as the framework which is flexible enough to accommodate change yet firm enough to provide stability and direction at least on the fundamentals.

We all know the local constraints and difficulties inherent in bringing about the needed change. The obstacles perceived in implementing some measures or the strong objections we have in accepting the odd recommendation or two, out of the sixty six recommendations made, need not jeopardise the whole exercise. In my view there is ample room for a huge programme of reforms within the present provisions of the Constitution.

I think the proposed programme of reforms is another challenge that the country has to face. Indeed, it is a golden opportunity to give to our country the efficient and effective Civil Service that it deserves. Obviously, this would have to be done at a price, but to do without the Reform, the price would be even higher.

Thank you, Mr Chairman.

Joseph R. Grima is a career civil servant, who has worked in various sectors of the public service. He is currently Deputy Secretary to Cabinet.

A SUMMARY OF INTERVENTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

Editor's Note:

The presentations from each panel were followed by an open discussion between members of the audience and the panellists. On the first day there were three rounds of discussion, only one round on the second. We are presenting here a shortened, edited transcript of the proceedings. Remarks or questions which were not strictly germane to the theme have been omitted, as were examples and digressions in the comments which are recorded here. Although, as far as possible, the speakers' words have been left unaltered, some editing was necessary to make the interventions coherent and readable.

FIRST DAY

First Round

G AGIUS, Ministry of Education

Fit-Taqsima 11.3 tar-Rapport – Providing Protection and Redress – hemm parti li tgħid hekk: "Two avenues of redress already exist in the Commission for the Investigation of Injustices and in the review by the Public Service Commission of its own decisions. The limitations of these initiatives lie in the fact that both depend, in the end, on the Prime Minister's acceptance of their recommendations". Nixtieq insaqsi jekk dan hux totalment korrett. Jekk hu korrett, allura l-Prim Ministru ma jkollu l-ebda problema jzomm il-prerogattiva li jagħzel wiehed mir-rakkomandazzjonijiet skond kif jidhirlu. Jekk dan m'hux għal kollox korrett, fil-parti li tirrigwarda l-Kummissjoni ta' l-Investigazzjoni, xi tkun il-pozizzjoni tal-Prim Ministru meta jkun hemm konflitt?

N.N.

Jien nixtieq nghid kelma fuq l-imparzjalita' li huwa valur fis-servizz civili. Minn naha l-ohra jekk wiehed iqis li hemm eluf ta' nies li jirraprezentaw interessi - bhal fil-kaz tat-teachers, li jirraprezentaw l-interessi tat-tfal u tal-edukazzjoni tajba - dawn m'ghandhom l-ebda 'charter' ta' drittijiet dwar kif jesprimu l-opinjoni jiet taghhom, u kull espressjoni ta' opinjoni hija 'bona grazzja' ta' xi hadd li jista' jghalqilhom halqhom. Fid-dipartiment m'hemmx lok fejn tista' tinholq opinjoni pubblika. Kif jista' jinholq mezz biex dawn l-impjegati jinfluwenzaw decizjonijiet?

E ZAMMIT, Enemalta

Nahseb li wasal iz-zmien li fil-Parlament jinholqu kumitati biex jisimghu opinjonijiet mid-dipartimenti, minn esperti u ohrajn, biex b'hekk il-ligi tkun maghmula b'mod aktar professjonali.

L-indhil politiku fis-servizz pubbliku huwa kwazi mpossibli biex taqtghu; tista' forsi tillimitah billi l-kapijiet jinghataw aktar awtorita' permezz tal-ligi.

Issemmiet li jinhatru 'managers' minn barra is-Servizz: dan jista' jkollu hafna effetti. Fis-servizz pubbliku hemm hafna l-mentalita' li "l-aqwa li mmexxi l-'file': dan m'hux sew. Inhoss li s-servizz pubbliku ghandu jkollu element ta' 'decision-taking'.

Hemm skop li s-servizz pubbliku jkun daqshekk kbir, jew jista' jickien?

G. BORG CARDONA, Ministry for Social Policy

Qed nghidu: inbid gdid fi glud mherrijin. Jien nghid li - jekk m'hux se nkeccu lil kulhadd - se jkun l-istess inbid, f'gilda ahjar. 'A New Civil Service' ma jistax ikun: l-unika haga li nistghu naccettaw hu li jkun gdid fil-kuncett.

Veru li s-servizz pubbliku ghandu jaghti servizz ahjar milli qed jaghti llum; irid ikun servizz ekwu, identiku, u certament ma jridx ikun naghtu parir kif wiehed jista' jiehu dak li ma haqqux.

Lis-'civil servant' se nsejhulu 'manager' flok amministratur. Jien nghid li dan ilu 'manager' pero' 'manager' b'idejh marbuta, u jekk se nbiddlulu ismu imma nhalluh b'idejh marbuta, se nibqghu fejn konna.

Semmejna l-koncertina; sfortunatament, konxjament, cekkiniha. Nifhem li difficli illi din terga' titwessa', pero' l-istess nies li taghtihom fastidju koncertina wiesgha fis-servizz pubbliku, ma jsibuhix bi kbira li fl-industrija ghandek manager b'Lm10,000 - Lm12,000, u haddiem bil-paga minima.

Jekk hemm bzonn nirrangaw l-affarijiet taghna, nafu daqs haddiehor, nafu x'hemm bzonn isir ... jekk nahsbu li billi ngibu n-

nies minn barra se nsolvu xi haga, lkoll nafu li nistghu maghmluh ahna stess.

Reactions from the panel

A.J. TABONE

Is-servizz civili għadu b'regolamenti li huma wirt kolonjali. Hawn koncetti li ilhom joperaw minn zmien ir-Regina Vittorja, u allahares 'civil servant' jitniffes jew jiftah halqu, għaliex jistghu jipprocedu kontra tiegħu. Dawn il-kuncetti l-Kummissjoni għamlet referenza għalihom fis-sens li semmiet 'open government'. Jekk verament nizvolgu dan il-kuncett, allura jkun hemm aktar partecipazzjoni minn nies 'at working level' b'idejat u pariri. B'danakollu, ukoll bir-regolamenti li hemm, m'hemm xejn li jzomm impjegati milli jahdmu flimkien biex jagħmlu suggerimenti. Niftakar zminijiet mhux il-bogħod, meta dan sar.

L. SPITERI

Il-fatt li rapporti dwar ingustizzji u affarijiet bħal dawn jigu riferuti lill-Prim Ministru bħala stituzzjoni, dawk huma sistemi hżiena. Il-Prim Ministru huwa l-kap tal-gvern. Rapporti dwar ingustizzji riferiti lilu jipogguh f'sitwazzjoni mbarazzanti. Kien hemm diskussjonijiet dwar tibdil fil-Kostituzzjoni li certi affarijiet ikunu riferiti 'l fuq mill-kap tal-gvern, lill-President, u hekk għandu jkun. Il-kariga tal-President veru għandha tinbidel, u jsir il-'guardian angel'.

L-imparzjalita': id-diversi gruppi ta' mpjegati mhux dejjem jistghu jkunu mparzjali minhabba fl-interessi li jirraprezentaw. M'hemm xejn izda xi jzommu lis-'civil servant' milli jissieheb ma ohrajn u jitkellem, jew inkella li jghid direttament lill-ministru tieghu. Jien irrid nahseb li ma kontx uniku, kien hemm u hemm ohrajn issa, li lis-'civil servants' taghhom kienu jistednuhom biex jirrikmandaw. Barra minn hekk tinsewx li t-trejd unjonizmu 'is alive and well': ghandu kull liberta' t-trejd unjonista li jitkellem dwar affarijiet li ma jolqtux lilu personalment.

Dak li ssuggerixxa t-tielet kelliem kienet issir: kienu jingiebu civil servants quddiem il-Parlament u jigu mistoqsija dwar il-kompetenzi taghhom. Dak li semma l-kelliem issir fis-sistema Amerikana.

G.A. PIROTTA

Wiehed mill-punti principali tieghi hu li s-soluzzjoni ghal hafna mill-problemi taghna hi li jkollna gvern miftuh berah. Ma nemminx li ghandu jkun hemm kummissjonijiet jew kumitati li jahdmu fil-magħluq. Jien nemmen li huwa fl-interess tal-membri tac-civil, fl-interess tal-membru tal-pubbliku li dak li jsir f'dawn il-kummissjonijiet ikun miftuh. Barra minn Malta dawn jippubblikaw il-kazijiet u ghaliex iddecidew mod, biex il-pubbliku jkun infurmat, jitghallem id-drittijiet tieghu.

Ma jistax ikollok civil efficjenti jekk ic-cittadin ma jafx kif jakkwista d-drittijiet tieghu u ma jafx x'qed jigri.

Second Round

J. AZZOPARDI VELLA, Treasury

Nixtieq li l-panel tesprimi ruhha dwar dak li qal ir-rapport dwar 'transfers' bejn ic-civil u l-industrija privata.

V. BORG, Universita

Jien naqbel li dan ir-rapport huwa nofs rapport. L-ahhar paragrafu ta' l-introduzzjoni jaghmel enfasi kbira fuq 'trust'. Il-'findings' tal-Kummissjoni isemmu l-hafna gid li hareg mis-servizz pubbliku, u wiehed jistaghgeb kif dan kollu hareg minn servizz li huwa deskritt bhala katastrofu. Dan bizzejjed biex lili jgiġheln i nistaqsi jekk jafux fuqhiex qed j itkellmu. Aktar tard jghid ir-rapport li t-trejd unj ons ma ghandhomx jigu konfrontati fuq affarijiet ta' principju.

Dan ir-rapport jghid li jrid jipprovdi salarji u kundizzjonijiet tajbin halli nies ta' kapacita' ma jmorrux fl-industrija: issa jien smajt diskussjoni tal-FOI u dawn qalu li hemm bzonn li n-nies tajbin imorru fl-industrija. Meta nara dawn l-affarijiet izjed u izjed nibda naghmel domandi fuq dan l-istess nofs rapport.

A. VELLA, General Workers' Union

Ir-rapport, narah jien, huwa maqsum f'zewg bicciet importanti: ghandek dak li hu ta' interess immedjat, bhalma huma pagi, strutturi; jidhol ukoll f'ghanijiet ohra li ta' min jistudjhom, jiehu z-zmien jiflihom u jarahom. Dan ir-rapport ghalissa hu l-opinjoni tal-Kummissjoni li ghamlitu. Ghadna ma nafux kif inhi l-opinjoni tal-Gvern. Jien cert li t-trejd unjons ghandhom l-opinjoni taghhom ta' kif ghandha tkun ir-riforma. Dawn it-tlett opinjonijiet m'humix bil-fors kif enumerati fir-rapport tal-Kummissjoni. Qed nassumi r-rapport ghad irid jigi evalutat, bejn il-gvern u l-impjegati.

Ir-rapport isemmi is-sistema ta'dixxiplina u ta' promozzjonijiet. Jien ukoll m'inhix kuntent kif dawn jahdmu, imma jekk ma toghgobnix xi haga ma jfissirx li nfarrakaha, imma nsahhaha. Dak li qed tipproponi l-Kummissjoni ma jzidx l-efficjenza, billi jdahhal izjed nepotizmu. Irridu nsahhu l-istituzzjoni tal-Kummissjoni dwar is-Servizz Pubbliku.

G. BALDACCHINO, Università

Qed niehu gost hafna li, forsi ghall-ewwel darba f'pajjizna, qed naraw studenti, kapijiet b'responsabbiltajiet kbar fic-civil, u forsi xi haddiema tac-civil, migburin biex jistudjaw ir-rapport. Li hawn nieqes huma dawk stess li kitbu r-rapport.

Importanti wkoll li, minbarra li nsemmu partijiet tar-rapport li jidhru deficjenti, naslu wkoll biex nidentifikaw alternattivi għannuqqasijiet. Fejn tidhol, per eżempju l-kwistjoni ta' 'accountability', wiehed jikkunsidra strutturi fejn dak li jkun iqiegħed l-'għadu' tiegħu, f'sitwazzjoni li jissorveljah. Wara kollox, dan għandu l-akbar incentiv biex iwettaq din il-funzjoni. Biex nagħti eżempju, wiehed jista' jgħib f'moħħu kumitati maħtura apposta, b'membri tal-gvern u tal-oppożizzjoni biex jifflu dak li qed jigri fic-civil. Wiehed irid isemmi wkoll ic-cittadin li dejjem inharsu lejha bħala konsumatur, imma li hu wkoll agent fis-socjeta'.

Reactions from the panel

A.J. TABONE

Nahseb li hemm haga iżjed semplici mill-kumitati biex jissorvelja d-dipartimenti. Il-Parlament m'hemm xejn xi jzommu milli johloq 'Committee on Public Accounts' u forsi 'Administrative Reform' li jkollu membri tal-gvern u tal-oppożizzjoni, u mmexxi minn-membri tal-oppożizzjoni.

Dwar 'transfers' mill-industrija għac-civil u vice-versa: fit-teorija hija haga li toghgobni, pero' niftakru id-daqs tal-pajjiz. Moviment ta' spiss jista' jagħti lok għal affarijiet li ma tantx huma mixtieqa.

L-impjegati m'humix sensittivi bizzejjed għall-htiega li l-pubbliku li qed iservu jinfurmawh, ma johlqulux problemi. Din hi marda tas-Servizz, u huwa s-Servizz li jrid jikkoregiha.

G.A. PIROTTA

Meta ndahhlu idejat barranin, irridu naraw ukoll is-'safeguards' li jaghmlu barra minn Malta biex dak li qed insemmu li nibzghu minnu ma jsirx. In-nies li jinghazlu jsir 'screening' tagghom: nies li jaghzel il-President Amerikan jigu rrifjutati milli jidhlu fis-servizz pubbliku Amerikan u fl-oghla stituzzjonijiet bhall-Qrati. L-ideja ta 'safeguards' hija nieqsa mir-rapport. Il-futur tac-civil Malti huwa li turu lis-socjeta' l-integrita' taghkom, li kultant tkun imcappsa minghajr raguni.

L. SPITERI

L-'exchange' japplika fil-kaz tal-korporazzjonijiet bhall-banek, li jahdmu fuq bazi kummercjali, fuq bazi ta' profitt. Imma fic-civil innifsu m'ghandux ikun hemm il-kuncett ta' profitt: din hi organizzazzjoni li trid thaddem il-politika socjali, iva efficjement, iva, minghajr korruzzjoni. Meta nitkellmu fuq 'exchange' irridu nitkellmu fuq fejn hu rilevanti.

Third Round

J.R. PACE, Institute of Management

Hija haga sewwa li kien hawn certa kritika tar-rapport, pero' hemm hafna fir-rapport li huwa tajjeb u siewi.

L-Onor Spiteri semma li ma jaqbilx ma' l-enfasi fuq il-'customer care'. Jien anzi, jidhrili li din hi wahda mill-punti kardinali li ghandha tinghata attenzjoni. Jekk fir-riforma ma naghtux kaz ta' kif il-pubbliku se jinqeda ahjar, allura qed nahlu l-hin. Ghandna bzonn namettu li l-pubbliku mhux qed jiehu s-servizz li suppost jiehu.

Is-Sur Tabone ikkritika t-titolu ta' dan ir-rapport: qal li 'a new public service' turtah ghaliex taqta' mill-kontinwita' tas-servizz pubbliku. Jien jidhirli li huwa titolu intelligenti - 'a new public service is just what we need'. Verament, tant hemm nuqqas ta' motivazzjoni, nuqqas ta' leadership, nuqqas ta' volonta' u ta' direzzjoni fis-servizz civili, li veru ghandna kaz li nibnu s-servizz pubbliku mill-qiegh.

Haga tajba li l-kummissjonijiet jaghmlu xogholhom kemm jista' jkun fl-apert, imma f'pajjiz zghir nahseb li mhux possibbli li din tiggeneralizzaha.

C. MALLIA, Sea Malta

Ghandna quddiemna 'a daunting problem'. L-istess isem tar-rapport juri l-istess 'concern' ta' kulhadd. Smajna bin-nuqqas ghal hafna snin ta' recruitment u ta' tahrig, u t-tahrig jisemma fir-rapport.

Jien hadt l-impressjoni, Mr Chairman, meta kellimtek, li d-Dipartiment tal-Public Policy m'huwiex mahsub ghall-formazzjoni

tan-nies tac-civil. Il-fehma tieghi hi li ghandna bzonn ta' 'public service college'.

C. MAMO, House of Representatives

Whilst agreeing with quite a few of the criticisms of the civil service, I would like to point out that the civil service is demoralised to such an extent that some positive thinking is required.

Minghajr il-fiducja, ma nahsibx li s-servizz jista' jimxi 'l quddiem.

L.CIANTAR, Enemalta

F'Malta kellna nies fic-civil ta' karattru sod, nies ta' intelligenza, nies ta' integrita', nies li mexxew lil pajjizna ghal zmien twil. Ma narax ghaliex, jekk hemm deficjenza fis-servizz pubbliku, ma nistghux nizviluppaw mekkanizmu biex intejbuh.

L-iskop ewlinei ta' dan l-ezercizzju ghandu jkun li niddefinixxu preciz il-funzjoni tas-'civil servant'. Is-'civil servant' ghandu jkun 'the trusted friend of the public', bniedem li ghandu jkun kapaci jghid le meta ghandu jghid le, u iva meta ghandu jghid iva. Ghandu jzomm quddiemu l-interess nazzjonali.

H.RESTALL, Chamber of Commerce

Ahna ghamilna rapport lill-Kummissjoni, u jidhrilna li hemm elementi ta' min izommhom fis-servizz pubbliku. Semmejna 'customer relations monitoring boards', identifikajna madwar ghaxra, li jirrapportaw lill-Parlament, u jkunu komposti minn ministri, membri tal-oppozizzjoni u assocjazzjonijiet.

Jidhrilna li min ghamel il-pjan [management by objectives] ghandu jimmonitorjah hu, minnflok kif intqal fir-rapport li din il-funzjoni tidhol taht il-Ministru tal-Finanzi.

C.MIFSUD, Ministry of Justice

Fir-rapport jissemma li anke l-iktar kap ta' dipartiment li ghandu responsabbilta' m'ghandux riskju daqs 'manager' fl-industrija. Nhoss li dan m'hux minnu; kap ta' dipartiment ghandu riskji tieghu li jistghu wkoll iwasslu ghal tkeccija.

Jekk hemm nies zejda, jista' jigi mplimentat il-principju li min ghandu hamsa u hamsin sena, jew wara tletin sena servizz, wiehed, bhal fil-kaz tal-pulizija, ikun jista' johrog u jahdem bla telf ta' pensjoni.

Jistax ikun hemm xi data fejn certi proposti li jistghu jigu mplimentati 'retroactively' ikunu fil-fatt, implimentati?

Reactions from the panel

G.A. PIROTTA

Ma naqbilx ma' l-ideja li jsir 'public service college' ghaliex hemm bzonn li membri tac-civil jithalltu ma' nies b'idejat differenti. Ikun ahjar li jkollok sistema fejn l-ufficjali jattendu korsijiet differenti fl-Universita' ma' studenti ohra.

Dwar 'open government' naqbel li hemm cirkostanzi fejn wiehed irid jipprotegi lil xi nies, pero' ma jistax ikun li nibqghu f'din il-qagħda fejn hadd ma jaf ezatt kif id-decizjonijiet jaslu għalihom.

A.J. TABONE

Noqghodu attenti, ghaliex diga' għandna organi izzejjed; il-htiega li hemm hi li jkun rapprezentattivi izjed tan-nies. Id-diskrezzjoni fil-hatra ta' nies fuq dawn il-kumitati trid tkun ezercitata b'mod logiku. In-necessita' hi li jkun hemm numru limitatissimu ta' kumitati f'livell għoli biex jigi ezercitat kontroll serju fuq is-servizz pubbliku mill-ministru l-isfel.

L. SPITERI

Ma skantajtx li kien hemm riferenza għall-koncertina: il-koncertina djaqet, hemm bzonn titwessgħa, mingħajr referenza għall-industrija. Fih innifsu hemm raguni għalfejn għandha titwessgħa l-koncertina.

Ma naqbilx li l-parti l-kbira tas-servizz pubbliku qieghed hemm ghaliex ghandu 'a cushy job'. Qatt ma ltqajt ma' 'civil servant' li kellu 'a cushy job'. Irid ihabbat wiccu mal-pubbliku, irid ihabbat wiccu mal-politiku.

Tahrig ghandu jsir: ghandu jsir fl-universita'; kien dahal il-'BA Administration': ghandu jsir xi haga simili.

Ic-civil qieghed 'under scrutiny' u ghandu jkun 'under scrutiny' imma m'hux b'mod ingust, la mill-politici, u lanqas minn kummissjonijiet. Hemm proposti li lic-civil jghamlulu tajjeb jekk jigu attwati, hemm proposti li c-civil ha jghamlulu hazin jekk jigu attwati. Tajjeb li jsiru dal-laqghat; wisq ahjar li c-civil jitkellem ghalih innifsu.

SECOND DAY

C.PACE. Department of Welfare

Tista' tidhol certa anzjeta' meta wiehed ikollu jiffaccja aktar kompetittivita'. Ahna qed nitkellmu li s-sitwazzjoni tkun kemm xejn differenti: niltaqgha kull sena mas-supervisor, jaghamli l-oggettivi b'mod li jitkejlu, jien ninnegojzhom, naghmlu ftehim miktub, jien nghidlu x'ghandi bzonn bhala 'self-development', imbaghad meta tghaddi sena naraw x'rizultat hemm. Biex issir din, irid ikun hemm certi 'safeguards'. Biex ikun hemm kompetittivita' irid ikun hemm ambjent protett. Is-'civil servants' ghandhom

joholqu korp bejniethom li jaghmel 'code of ethics' u jkun dan il-korp stess li jiddixxiplinhom jekk huma stess iwaqqghu l-idejal.

A.J. TABONE, Employers' Association

Mr Tabone and Mr Grima seem to imply that one has to take the Commission's report as a whole. There are many recommendations in the report that are worthwhile. They need development, but they should and can be implemented. There are some which I find contradictory. The Reform Commission wants to create a new civil service that is proud of itself and yet, the same commission has recommended that posts in Category A and Category B should be recruited from outside the Service. I accept that Government can have advisers, but I feel that it would be very bad for the civil service, very bad for relations between ministers and civil servants if this were to happen. The trust which is necessary for good government would go down the drain.

I feel very strongly indeed, that it is only by harnessing the civil servants and not outsiders, that one can implement the report. One has got to work with and not against the civil service.

E. ZAMMIT, Enemalta

Hemm nuqqas kbir ta' dixxiplina; id-dixxiplina tigi minn fuq. Minghajr dixxiplina, il-prodott tas-Servizz jibqa' l-istess.

Haga li ma tantx issemmiet hija l-privatizzazzjoni. M'hijiex kelma daqshekk kerha: certu xoghol li jaghmel is-servizz pubbliku wasal iz-zmien li jinghata lil privat, jew lil agenziji semi-awtonomi.

C. MALLIA, Sea Malta

Ma nistax ma naqbilx ma' dak li qal is-Sur Albert Tabone, li ggib barrani biex ifejjaq is-sitwazzjoni tieghek meta dan ma jaf xejn minn-nuqqasjiet tieghek. L-ewwel fittex gewwa, u gewwa ssib hafna. Pero' li kultant ikun hemm rikors ghal barrani m'ghandux ibezzghana tant li ma jkun hemm ebda minn dawn, anzi jista' jgib xi 'cross-fertilisation' ta' idejat.

Din tfakkarni li jrid ikollna l-kuragg, u esperiment riskjuz bhal dan, jekk ikun necessarju, ma nibzghux minnu.

C. CAMILLERI, Department of Education

Nixtieq nissuggerixxi lid-Department of Public Policy u lic-civil li jippreparaw xi pjan ta' 'immersion' li hi mportanti hafna ghall-istudenti li sejrjn jahdmu matul is-sajf, biex ma jkollhomx esperjenza negattiva, jew demoralizzanti, jew li ggieghelhom jaharbu mic-civil, izda wahda li tikkumplimenta dak li qed jitghallmu fid-Department of Public Policy.

J. CURMI, Civil Service

Smajna pünt importanti li 'civil servant' huwa prodott tas-socjeta' bid-difetti kollha taghha. Naturalment, is-civil servant ma jistax ibiddel lis-socjeta', pero' jista' jkun 'change agent'.

Matul id-diskussjoni, 'we're pointing fingers at each other', fis-sens li l-kapijiet iwahhlu fil-politici, u l-ministri jghidu li mhux qed isibu fuq min iserrhu. Nahseb li hawn jopera cirku vizzjuż. It-tnejn ghandhom x'jaghmlu biex din is-sitwazzjoni tinbidel u tigi bbazata fuq 'trust'. Tajjeb li r-'roles' ikunu cari, pero' dan qatt m'hu bizzejjed: naharbu mill-illuzjonijiet -minkejja li ghandek organizzazzjoni, xorta jista' jsir manuvrar. It-'trust' jista' jinbena billi s-'civil servants' ikunu aktar kompetenti u kwalifikati, aktar mharrgin; ikunu mpenjati għall-ghanijiet politici tal-gvern li jkun.

Ir-rapport itenni dak li jghid kwalunkwe konsulent meta jhares lejn organizzazzjoni: irridu niddefinixxu sew xi rridu nghamli bis-servizz pubbliku; ladarba jsir dan, naraw kemm hemm bzonn nies u fejn; hemm bzonn nagħtu aktar kaz ta' l-istruttura tad-dipartimenti. Hemm bzonn li ssir evalwazzjoni kontinwa.

Reactions and closing remarks from the panel

J.V. TABONE

With regard to goal-setting and review, this would have to be approached with caution. This is not a process that you produce

overnight. It is something that has to be studied, people have to be trained in the running of the process. There has to be a degree of trust which comes as part of the preparation for it. Having said that, this is not something novel. It has been tried and works in a number of organisations, and there is no reason why we should be an exception.

I certainly did not imply in my comments that the report of the PSRC should be adopted in whole: I acknowledge that I would like to see that very much. I tried to convey the enormity and the complexity of the issues that we are trying to address and to ward off the temptation of doing 'a little tinkering'. Desperate situations call for desperate measures. If we have management deficiencies, rather than compromise, we may have to adopt some of the radical measures that are proposed by the report.

J.R. GRIMA

Dwar ir-'reward and discipline', inhoss li s-'civil servants' kienu kundizzjonati minn dejjem, li accettajna li jkollna regolamenti ta' dixxiplina, u mhux ukoll regolamenti ta' 'reward'. Biex ikun jista' jiffunzjona, is-'civil servant' ghandu jkollu wkoll 'the ability to reward'.

Ghandu jkun hemm mezzi ta' redress, u fir-rapport hemm ukoll kif ghandhom ikunu dawn il-mezzi.

Bhala konkluzjoni ngħid li nixtieq nara l-hafna paroli li naghmlu jissarra f'azzjoni. 'I feel that there is an exciting future beckoning, and it is up to us to play our part'.

J.R. AQUILINA

With regard to what was said about discipline, I agree that 'the troops are led from the front': one leads by example and not by diktat. I would like to see this attitude more prevalent than it is today.

I also agree very much with the suggestion for the privatisation of public utilities because they could be run on more commercial, profitable lines for the general good of the community.

The disparity between the compensation of tradesmen in the public and private sectors has to be accepted. It is the compensation for the greater risks in the private sector.

If we can generate sufficient trust, then we have the key to successful implementation of this reform.

SYNTHESIS

Edward Warrington

Editor's Note:

The synthesis was originally delivered in Maltese. This is an edited English translation, intended to provide non-Maltese speakers with a full understanding of the contributions at the forum.

My role as rapporteur

The purpose of this synthesis is not merely that of reporting what has been said at the forum, but rather that of helping the audience to 'read' the experience, by focusing on key insights and posing questions for further study.

The context of this event

The forum finds its context in nation-wide concern about the performance of the public service. The Public Service Reform Commission has produced a report entitled 'A New Public Service for Malta', which forms the subject of this forum. The task before the policy-makers and administrators is now to translate this concern and the Commission's proposals into concrete initiatives and decisions.

The forum is a step in this direction. It is not intended to propose fresh solutions, nor to take decisions about the Commission's

proposals: it is intended to develop and promote understanding of the Commission's proposals, and of their implications, with a view to catalyzing decision and action by all the players involved, especially by those leaders from many walks of life who are present here and who are somehow associated with the Service.

The forum brought together many voices and many interests to discuss a matter of common concern to the leaders present here. The outcomes of these two evenings can be described under three headings: feelings, matters of universal concern, matters on which there is agreement. What did not emerge during the forum is also significant, and will be identified at the conclusion of this synthesis.

Feelings

At times, the atmosphere in this hall has been highly charged, with a range of emotions gravitating around two poles, and betraying a tendency among all players to think in terms of absolutes.

At one end of the spectrum are strongly voiced concerns. There seems to be a fear of thinking outside the established patterns; a reluctance to confront new realities, challenges and ideas; and a preoccupation with continuity, stability, safeguards against injustice and abuse of administrative discretion. These emerged most strikingly during the first day's discussion on the institutional fabric.

At the other end of the spectrum is a sense of excitement about the opportunities presented by the report of the Public Service Reform Commission for the public service itself, for Government and for the customers of the Service. While the fears and concerns are very real and need to be addressed, the general tone of the discussions, especially the first day's discussion, may tempt decision-makers and civil servants to ignore the real challenge before the civil service, which is to manage change; it may tempt them to look for alternative solutions without really assessing the implications, costs and benefits of the Commission's proposals.

In sustaining a dialogue about the Commission's recommendations, all those concerned with the future of the public service need to be aware of these risks.

Matters of universal concern

Five matters have emerged as concerns shared by all the players, irrespective of whether they are broadly favourable or contrary to the Commission's proposals.

The first of these is **role delineation**: this is an issue which can no longer be evaded. The Maltese system of government needs a few basic groundrules to regulate the working relationship between ministers and civil servants. The trust which is necessary for effective government will be created and sustained by respect for these roles. The question before the policy-makers is who will define the roles: it seems to me that all the institutional players

must be involved in the process. How quickly can progress in the development of these conventions be expected?

The second concern is that **justice be done to the civil service**: it should not [continue to] be made a scapegoat for national failures; its customers, critics and would-be reformers cannot be allowed to think in terms of stereotypes, or to burden it with responsibilities that do not belong to it.

The third concern is that **the pace and extent of change in the public service is conditioned by the pace and extent of change in other sectors** of Maltese society. The changes that will really matter and last will be those that affect values, attitudes and expectations, rather than persons, operating systems and structures. One question that arises in this connection is whether this truism will continue to be used as an excuse for inaction by policy-makers. It is certainly a tempting way of escaping responsibility for participating in the change process.

Finding and promoting leadership of the process of change is the fourth concern: who should initiate drive, guide and evaluate this urgent, complex and lengthy process? By common consent, the political authorities and the public service itself both have significant roles to play, but these should be clarified. They should not exclude the contributions of other sectors, nor diminish the individual's responsibility. The Reform Commission proposed external appointments as one way of strengthening the leadership of the civil service.

This leads to the fifth and final concern. **External appointments** have roused much anxiety about their possible risks and implications. Clearly, these need to be evaluated further, in order that a measure of consensus may emerge about the final shape of the formula for external appointments.

Matters on which there is agreement

The forum identified some important matters about which all or most of the players are agreed: they constitute a basis for developing policy and initiatives.

There is, first of all, a clear consensus on the need for and the urgency of change in the public service, as well as an understanding that change will not come immediately. Beyond that, there is agreement on the need for a new and inspiring vision of the public service, for new structures, for more clearly defined roles within the system, for dynamic, visible leadership within the service.

There is also agreement that there is much that is of value in the report of the Public Service Reform Commission. Given this, should we, indeed, could we, look for fresh solutions?

There is general agreement on the value of the Service's human resources for administrative reform: effective human resource management is the principal issue confronting the public service; it is the principal theme of the PSRC report, and the principal

strategy for effecting lasting change, by inspiring, developing, deploying and mobilising public officers.

Matters that did not emerge

The matters that did not emerge in the forum are also significant.

The position of the major players remains unclear: they have been silent or guarded in their comments. As a result, there is no firm judgement about whether the Commission's recommendations are coherent or workable or acceptable; the discussion has emphasised one single proposal – external appointments – and neglects the remainder; at times, criticism amounts to little more than quibbling over trivial items such as the name given to the report.

In contrast to the chorus of criticism of the public service, and of the Commission's proposal concerning external appointments, the **opportunities presented by the report** – to the public service, to Government, to the general public – have hardly been mentioned.

In sum, it appears that all the players share the same concerns about the public service, but that no player is ready to take a position or an initiative: in a sense, they 'look over one another's shoulders', fearing to seize the initiative.

The present state of play

What prospects for the public service at this point in time?

The **credit side** shows something approaching a national consensus on issues and on the need for change; there is a coherent set of proposals setting out goals and strategies; financial and human resources are allocated or deployed for this purpose; and some significant initiatives are in hand.

What is needed now is the political and administrative will to move forward. The Commission has provided not so much a 'solution', as a vision and a strategy, and it presented policy makers and the public service with a challenge. Do these leaders have the will to make all of these their own?

The final word belongs to the Commission:

The public service stands at a cross-roads: it is burdened by past and present difficulties, and facing both the excitement and the risks of a multitude of challenges. Its leadership must make some choices about the future: whether to retreat along the road already tramped thus far, or to forge ahead towards the professionalism and effectiveness set forth in the eleven goals we have proposed.

Whatever course the Service takes is a matter of real interest to every citizen of this country. We wish to see this interest translated into genuine support for the initiatives conceived in this report. We earnestly hope that the changes which have been initiated will be pursued. We

believe in the ability of the parties concerned to take up the challenges identified here. We are confident that they will bring determination and goodwill to the task of creating 'a new public service for Malta'.

CLOSING ADDRESS

The Hon. EDWARD FENECH ADAMI, BA, LL.D, MP,
Prime Minister

Mr. Chairman,

L-ewwelnett, irrid nistqarr il-pjacir tieghi li nkun hawn fostkom, u s-sodisfazzjon meta nara li l-Institute of Management u d-Department of Public Policy ta' l-Universita' iddecidew li jsir dan il-forum. Ftit gimghat ilu kelli okkazjoni nitkellem u wrejt dakinhar id-dispjacir tieghi li minkejja l-fatt li l-Gvern iddecida li r-rapport tal-Kummissjoni dwar ir-Riforma tas-Servizz Pubbliku jaghmlu pubbliku, ftit li xejn kien hawn diskussjoni, ftit li xejn kien hawn reazzjoni ghal dak ir-rapport. Niehu pjacir li f'dawn il-jumejn ltqajtu u esprimejtu l-opinjoni jiet taghkom, li, naturalment, ma kienux kollha la konformi mar-rapport u lanqas konformi bejnietkom, u dak huwa ezattament l-ezercizzju li nixtiequ li naraw isir.

Jiena rrid nghid li, meta l-Gvern iddecida li jwaqqaf il-Kummissjoni, dan ma kienx att ta' sfiducja fis-servizz pubbliku. Ghall-kuntrarju, kien att ta' fiducja fis-servizz pubbliku, ghax dak li ridna dakinhar, li rridu issa, u li flimkien issa rridu nattwaw hija r-riforma tas-servizz pubbliku. Forsi l-kelma 'A New Public Service for Malta' mhix id-deskrizzjoni preciza. Min kitibha ghandu f'rasu - u jiena naqbel perfettament - li nixtiequ naraw

riforma fil-fond, riforma radikali, riforma illi l-opinjoni pubblika f'pajjizna, u nahseb ahna lkoll, konxji li hemm bzonnha.

Hemm bzonnha, l-ewwelnett, ghaliex iz-zminijiet jinbidlu, u bilfors illi z-zminijiet ta' llum jitolbu servizz pubbliku differenti minn ta' qabel. Il-lejla saret mistoqsija fl-ahhar fuq l-informatika: x'programm ghandu l-Gvern. Hemm programm li jrid jghinna biex nirkupraw għall-hafna zmien li tlietna. Irridu naghmlu l-affarijiet bil-ghaqal, b'mod efficcjenti, affarijiet, naturalment, li ffit ta' snin ilu ma kienux affarijiet attwali. Irridu verament nippreparaw irwiehna għas-sistemi godda li jirrikjeddu l-oneri godda li pajjizna ha, partikolarment bhala pajjiz sovrana, u partikolarment bl-izviluppi li kuljum pajjizna għaddej minnhom.

Hazin hafna jekk ikun hawn xi hadd li jghares lejn dan ir-rapport, u l-iskop tar-rapport, bhala semplici 'regrading exercise', jew għar, bhala sempliciment ristrutturazzjoni tal-pagi. Naturalment dawn huma zewg elementi li jinteressaw lil kulhadd. Izda, fil-fehma tiegħi, dawn għandhom jigu waranett fil-konsiderazzjonijiet tagħna, mhux għax il-Gvern mhux konxju tal-htiega li nies li jagħtu servizz lil pajjizna, u li mingħajru l-pajjiz ma jistax jimxi, ma għandniex nagħtu kaz verament mill-iktar li nistgħu ta' dawn il-htigijiet. Għaliya jigi sekondarji fis-sens li l-ewwel irridu nharsu bhala l-iskop primarju ta' dak li qed naghmlu, kif se jkollna servizz pubbliku li jagħti s-servizz li l-pajjiz jitlob minnu. Huwa piz kbir!

Jien ghidt li z-zminijiet jinbidlu. Niftakar li kien hemm zminijiet meta lkoll konna nghidu li min jahdem fis-servizz pubbliku, kellhom statura - aktar milli status - ta' nies efficjenti, ta' nies kapaci, ta' nies 'who can deliver', ta' nies ta' integrita' kbira. U llum x'inhum s-servizz pubbliku? Zgur li ghad fih nies - u hafna - ta' integrita' kbira; u zgur li ghad fih hafna nies ta' efficjenza. Dan ma niddubitahx. Anzi jiena, bhala Prim Ministr ta' dan il-pajjiz, nirringrazzja lill-hafna nies li issa wkoll ghadhom jaghtu l-ahjar servizz, servizz efficjenti, servizz b'integrita' kbira. Pero', ghaliehx dan jezisti ma jfissirx li m'ghandniex naraw il-htiega ta' riforma u, kif ghidt, riforma radikali f'pajjizna.

Il-qofol ta' din ir-riforma ghalija ghandha kelma wahda biss: fiducja f'xulxin - 'trust'! Nahseb li hafna mill-gwaj li pajjizna jinsab fih - is-servizz pubbliku inkluz - hija l-isfiducja li, ghal ragunijiet li m'hemmx ghalfejn nidhlu fihom, inholqot.

Issemma hawn fil-prezenza tieghi, jissemma fir-rapport stess, issemma fl-Operations Review, id-diffikulta' li hawn bejn zewg partijiet li kultant hawn min ihares lejhom bhala antagonistici ghal xulxin. Qed nghid ghas-sehem tal-politici u ta' dawk li huma fis-servizz pubbliku.

Niftakar li hadt parti f'forum l-Universita fl-1975, ftit wara li kienet ghaddiet l-Interpretation Act fil-Parlament Malti. Kien hemm mistednin politici miz-zewg nahat; jiena kont membru tal-Oppozizzjoni. Qajjimt il-kwistjoni tal-Interpretation Act u ghidt li, meta dik il-ligi tghid li kull diskrezzjoni ezercitabbli minn kull

kap ta' dipartiment, fil-fatt hi ezercitabbli f'isem il-ministru li jkun, fis-sens li l-ministru jezcitaha hu – jista' jiddelega pero' ghandu d-dritt f'kollox jezcitaha hu direttament dik id-diskrezzjoni – dan bilfors se jkollu effett negattiv fuq kif jiffunzjona s-servizz pubbliku.

Nahseb illum irridu nergghu naghtu sens ta' fiducja, minn naha tal-politiku lill-ufficjal pubbliku, u anki bil-maqlub: ghaliex, sfortunatament, din l-isfiducja hija xi ftit reciproka! Irridu naccettaw – u certament minn dak li intqal l-lejla dan jaccettawh – li r-rwol tal-politiku hija mportanti w importanti hafna! Li ghandna bzonn hija, mhux biss li nirrispettaw 'l xulxin u jkollna fiducja f'xulxin, imma element importanti huwa li nikkoperaw ma' xulxin. Ma nahsibx li jkun tajjeb li nemendaw il-ligi – l-Interpretation Act – u nghidu li, ghaliex id-diskrezzjoni hi ezercitabbli minn kap ta' dipartiment, b'hekk dak il-kap ta' dipartiment jagixxi bl-iktar mod assolut f'kull cirkostanzi bhallikieku responsabbli hu, u l-politiku ma jistax jindahal. Nahseb li l-linja trid tkun cara, u jekk ikun hemm diskrezzjoni ezercitabbli minn kap ta' dipartiment, dak ghandu id-dmir li jezcitaha, izda jista' jkun ukoll li min ghandu responsabbilta' politika jerfa' fil-berah r-responsabbilta' u jista' jaghti direzzjo-nijiet li ma jaqblux ma' l-ezercizzju ta' dik id-diskrezzjoni. L-importanti hu, izda, li jkun hemm it-trasparenza; l-importanti li jkun hemm is-sens ta' responsabbilta'; u nahseb li biex dal-process ta' riforma jirnexxi, rridu nergghu noholqu f'kulhadd is-sens ta' responsabbilta' – r-responsabbilizzazzjoni ta' kull wiehed minnha –

li, ghal ragunijiet diversi, mhux l-inqas minhabba dan l-iskontru politiku f'pajjizna, nahseb li naqqset hafna.

Biex wiehed jezcita r-responsabbilta' jrid ikollu l-kapacita' ghaliha. Biex wiehed ikollu l-kapacita', jakkwistaha, hafna drabi, mhux biss bid-doti li jista' jkollu, imma billi jhejji ruhu ghaliha. Ghalhekk nahseb li wiehed mill-meriti kbar tar-rapport tal-Kummissjoni huwa l-enfasi li nsibu fih fuq il-preparazzjoni, l-enfasi fuq ir-'reward' ghal min ikun ippreparat u jezcita, b'mod efficcjenti, r-responsabbilta' tieghu.

Nahseb li din ir-responsabbilta' trid tfisser sens ta' inizjattiva, sens ta' inizjattiva li, sfortunatament, - u hawn ma nixtieqx nigggeneralizzza ghaliex, kif ghidt, hawn min juriha wkoll - nahseb li naqas hafna fis-servizz pubbliku ghal ragunijiet li m'hemmx ghalfejn nidhlu fihom, pero' fosthom dak li ghadni kif semmejt. Lili ddejjaqni hafna li minkejja d-diskors li l-politici jindahlu zzejjed, il-politici jippruvaw jaghmlu kollox huma, fl-istess hin, hawn hafna 'inertia', u jekk ma jittiehdur l-azzjonijiet politici, hafna drabi ma jiccaqlaq xejn. Din hi sitwazzjoni li wkoll trid tinbidel f'pajjizna. Jehtieg li l-process ta' djalogu, ta' l-inizjattivi, tassew jiehu r-ruh f'pajjizna.

Minn naha tal-Gvern nassigurakom li hemm impenn shih. Jien hadt pjacir li stedintuni u accettajt mill-ewwel li nigi nghid ftit kliem fl-eghluq. Mhux accettajt biss, imma ridt nigi ftit qabel hawn biex inhoss u nara jien stess il-'feeling' li hawn fuq dan ir-rapport. Irrid nimmedesima ruhi jiena stess ma' dak li qeghdin

thossu intom. Il-bogħod minn mohh il-Gvern u minn mohhi, li naslu għal xi diktat u ngħidu: "Dawn huma d-decizjonijiet, u se nimponuhom!". Kieku naghmlu hekk, ikun l-ahjar ricetta għal fjask enormi fir-riforma li rridu. Pero', rridu djalogu nfurmat, irridu diskussjoni li tkun verament ispirata għall-ahjar gid, mhux tas-settur biss li wiehed jirraprezenta u jkun qed jitkellem għalih, imma nistenna li d-diskussjoni tkun wahda fl-ahjar interess ta' dan il-pajjiz.

Jien nawgura li dan il-forum huwa pass tajjeb hafna 'l quddiem: gieghlna lkoll inkunu aktar konxji tal-partijiet li donnu hemm qbil generali fuqhom fir-rapport u, mportanti wkoll, fejn ma ahniex naqblu. Irrid ngħid ukoll li l-pozizzjoni tal-Gvern fuq dan hi li rceva r-rapport u ppubblikah kif ircevih. Stajna ghidna; "Ahna rcevejna dan ir-rapport: hemm affarijiet fih li naccettawhom minghajr diffikulta'; hemm ohrajn li rridu niddiskutuhom; hemm ohrajn li ma naccettawhomx". Jien deherli - u rrid ngħid li kienet konvinzjoni ferma tiegħi - li, ladarba għamilna kummissjoni u għamlet dan ir-rapport, id-dmir tagħna kien li nippubblikawh kif inhu, minghajr ebda tibdil - tibdil fis sens li wiehed seta' pppubblika parti minnu - u jkun hawn diskussjoni shiha, pubblika, aperta, franka, fuq kollox.

Dan hu process li issa ma nistghux nirrimandawh. Issa rridu nibdew il-process ta' diskussjoni mal-partijiet interessati, u l-partijiet interessati ma jidhirlix li huma biss il-unions li jirraprezentaw il-haddiema tal-gvern, għax l-effett tar-riforma huwa ferm aktar wiesgħa mill-effett li jista' jkollu fuq in-numru

li jiformaw is-servizz pubbliku. Irridu li jsiru dawn id-diskussjonijiet kemm jista' jkun malajr, u nibdew process ta' mplimentazzjoni. Kif ghidt, jiena cert li hu process li jkun mibni fuq fiducja reciproka, fuq koperazzjoni. Ilkoll konxji li dan hu process li se jkun ta' gid, mhux biss għall-membri tas-servizz pubbliku, imma process mehtieg, u ta' gid għal pajjizna.

Grazzi hafna.

THREE YEARS LATER: THE RECORD OF IMPLEMENTATION

Edward Warrington

A comment about the record of implementation elsewhere

The record of post-war administrative reform in other countries is hardly a reassuring guide to the outcome of the Commission's work in Malta. In the growth years of the 'sixties and 'seventies, public complaints about bureaucratic inefficiencies did not erode public complacency about 'big government'; the security and the patronage that it dispenses furnished attractive compensation. In affluent countries, it was only in the 'eighties that public opinion lent consistent support to political ideologies that are antithetical to administration. During the decade, startling ideas about the future shape of national public services began to be implemented with greater or lesser vigour. Britain's 'Next Steps' and privatization programmes are perhaps the best known, but others are just as radical: they call for alternatives to the nineteenth-century model of bureaucracy which is what most governments have been content to administer with during the twentieth century's decades of rapid change.

Neither the ideas nor the initiatives that they conceived failed to give rise to considerable controversy. The contributions to the forum on Malta's Public Service Reform Commission canvas quite comprehensively the range of reactions that were aroused here and

elsewhere in similar circumstances. Would equity be sacrificed to efficiency? Would the tradition of public service neutrality be compromised? Would delegation encourage patronage and corruption? Would the initiative be defeated by the very scale of the changes that were envisaged? Would political pressure for improved performance be displaced by greater anxiety over industrial unrest in crucial services? In short, did the political climate favour successful implementation of recommended changes? This short concluding note reviews the principal decisions and initiatives arising from the work of the Reform Commission and the Operations Review.

Outlines of government strategy since 1990

Shortly after the Commission concluded its work, Government published its second stage report for public comment. Both first and second reports were extensively circulated within the public service: the Secretary General at the time formally invited the comments of senior officials. Meanwhile, the Operations Review embarked on the preparation of an information Systems Strategic Plan, having completed the review of the framework of government organisation. The Cabinet Committee for Reform stepped up the tempo of its meetings in order to consider matters requiring early decision, not least the appointment of directors for new central agencies recommended by the Commission and the Consultant.

Predictably, those of the Commission's recommendations regarding delegation and external appointments roused much controversy. The Prime Minister himself, while expressing sympathy with the general tenor of the PSRC report, sounded a note of caution in his public statements: he reiterated Government's commitment to consult and, where appropriate, to negotiate. This attempt at public and internal consultation appeared rather tentative and, perhaps, dilatory. Nonetheless, Government retained the initiative, partly because of the failure of other interests within and outside the public service to carry the debate to firm conclusions. In the absence of a coherent public debate or opinion, Government could work from a position of relative strength.

In the interval between the first decisions on the report and the present, several initiatives were announced. Government has tackled implementation as described below:

- firstly, while the Prime Minister continues to be personally identified with the cause of reform, political direction of the programme of change is underpinned by the full authority of Cabinet.
- secondly, initiatives and decisions have been taken on many fronts;
- thirdly, while the former centralisation of authority in Establishments has been diffused among three 'change

agencies', management of the public service remains highly centralized; and

- finally, 'ir-riforma', as it has come to be known, refined and elaborated, rather than replaced, key concepts of Maltese public administration, especially the notion of a career public service; it tended to accelerate changes that were already in train, rather than to change the course of developments.

The record concerning each element is elaborated below. Omitted changes may be as significant as others that are promoted: noteworthy omissions are also reviewed below.

Political direction of administrative reform

His frequent public statements about administrative reform convey the Prime Minister's personal identification with the matter. He is, of course, minister responsible for the public service, under the constitution. Nonetheless it may safely be said that Dr Fenech Adami has been more emphatically and more consistently associated with new policies for the public service than any other Maltese prime minister.

It is also significant that public service reform rates a standing Cabinet Committee, one of only two policy sectors known to do so, the other being relations with the European Community. A Cabinet Committee underscores the collective responsibility of

ministers for a policy sector which impinges upon each sector of government. It means that policy proposals benefit from being deliberated by the Prime Minister and his advisers on the one hand, as well as by senior ministers, before being formally tabled in Cabinet. Political and technical ramifications of a decision can therefore be considered more thoroughly. Inter-ministerial differences or objections can be identified and tackled before implementation. Decisions are more likely to be well-framed, accepted and therefore generally more implementable than unilateral directives.

In summary, therefore, while the Prime Minister has made administrative reform a mainstay of his political platform, the direction of policy in this field is firmly institutionalised in Cabinet.

Decisions and initiatives

Between May and July 1990, Government announced the appointments of directors for the Management & Personnel Office (MPO), the Staff Development Organisation (SDO) and the Management Systems Unit (MSU). Career officers head the MPO and SDO under the terms of performance agreements, an arrangement that was not extended elsewhere in the public service until July 1992, when permanent secretaries were appointed. An expatriate management consultant was appointed Director of the MSU. Shortly after, the MSU was incorporated as a limited

liability company having Government as the sole shareholder: it became the vehicle for engaging local and expatriate consulting expertise as well as the principal target for criticism of the reform programme.

It is not my purpose here to pass judgement on the results of three years of activity by the 'central change agencies'. 'In-house' reports suggest a remarkable tempo of activity; they are countered by criticism voiced within and outside the public service to the effect that results are not commensurate with the expenditure of effort and funding on the various projects. I suggest that this is a flawed exposition of the problem of evaluation. Rather, it is necessary first to identify the level and kinds of initiatives that have been undertaken, in order to evaluate their scope and complementarity. At this stage of implementation, measures of activity, or productivity or quality are inadequate as statements of results.

The three central change agencies have undertaken to address a broad range of problems at various levels of decision-making and administration. They may be classed as follows.

1. Points of contact between citizens and public services

Among its earliest commitments, the MSU undertook to effect improvements at the Parcel Post Office and the Police Licensing Office, both of which were notorious for delays and poor customer relations. Though there has not been adverse comment on the

outcome of these exercises, it does not appear that the programme was extended to other departments which similarly deal with large volumes of 'routine' public business.

The MSU also launched a 'communications strategy' which was intended to improve the quality and availability of information about public services as well as to promote understanding of planned changes among government employees . At present, only 'Il-Holqa', an in-house newspaper for the public service, seems to represent the communications strategy.

2. Departmental restructuring

In this class, three initiatives have been announced: reorganisations of the Public Works, Customs and Social Security departments. The Public Works Department was reorganised as two 'divisions': one supports the newly-established Planning Authority, which regulates land use; the other retains responsibility for more traditional public works such as road and factory building, and maintenance of the government's real estate. Reviews of Customs and Social Security have not, so far, been accompanied by reorganisation on such a scale.

3. Top structures

The initiatives mentioned in the foregoing paragraphs have not been so numerous as to establish a clear pattern of complementarities. However, the highest decision-making reaches of government have seen several important changes that are clearly complementary in terms of their objectives and their effects. Their significance might be described as both constitutional and managerial. The objective seems to be twofold: firstly, to complete the Executive framework contemplated in the constitution; secondly, to refine, develop and consolidate the difficult relationship between ministers and civil servants. Late in 1990, the Prime Minister circulated an instruction on roles and responsibilities of ministers, parliamentary secretaries, permanent secretaries, heads of department and ministers' private secretaries. This constitutes the first attempt ever in Maltese public administration to define conventions governing relations between political office holders, their private staffs and the permanent civil service. In December 1991, section 6(c) of the Interpretation Act was amended to remove a long-standing grievance of permanent officials, whose discretion had, by the terms of the earlier provisions, been entirely subordinated to ministerial discretion. The amendment now requires ministers to give certain directions to heads of department in writing, and thereby strengthens the provisions contemplated in the earlier administrative instruction.

In July 1992, for the first time since independence, Government gave effect to the provisions of section 92(3) of the Constitution

by appointing permanent secretaries to eleven out of thirteen ministries. The appointees are all career general service officers. They hold office for three years on a performance contract, while retaining their substantive grade in the public service hierarchy.

During the summer, too, heads of department were briefed about the results of a review of top management structures in ministries and departments, as well as about planned innovations in the selection of candidates for these posts. In this connection, it appears that the previous informal method of identifying candidates has been replaced by a more formal process of search and vetting under the direction of a standing selection committee comprising the Head of the Civil Service and senior permanent secretaries.

4. Improvements in administrative procedure and technology

During the past three years, the complex task of revising personnel administration and financial management policies has been undertaken. The best known initiatives include the preliminary agreement on public service reform between government and unions; the notable expansion of in-service training; and the institution of business planning.

The agreement signed by Government, General Workers' Union and Union Haddiema Maghqudin in December 1990 opened the way to reclassification of government employees in accordance

with the pattern proposed by the Reform Commission. It incorporated some novel features, notably, a declaration to the effect that Government reserved the right to withhold, suspend or postpone the full implementation of the salary awards if, in its judgement, it was not satisfied with progress in implementing other changes contemplated in the agreement. Government also committed itself to further negotiations within five years from the date of the agreement. Since then, negotiations have dealt with specific groups: despite disputes associated with salary relativities between occupational groups, there has been little industrial action. Task forces comprising officers from MPO and MSU reviewed staff complements. A new system of performance evaluation is being developed.

The SDO has perhaps been the most visible and least controversial of the new central agencies. It offers training in the form of short, non-residential courses for small, homogeneous groups of staff. The general service grades constitute the principal target group. However, departmental and professional grades are increasingly well-represented on its courses. A significant proportion of training offered is developmental, that is, it anticipates promotion to higher responsibilities. The SDO collaborated with the University of Malta in reviving a Diploma in Public Administration for mid-career administrators, as well as providing instruction for the examinations of UK certificating bodies in the fields of training and personnel management. It has also established a programme of 'role conferences' which provide senior officers with a forum for exchanging views.

The financial management system has seen three principal innovations: the introduction of business plans; a new format for the annual financial estimates; and the development of internal audit capabilities in selected departments.

At the end of 1990, the Operations Review consultant completed the Information Systems Strategic Plan (ISSP) for government. The MSU then began to formulate technology standards, to procure equipment and to develop major data processing systems. Its responsibility for implementing the ISSP is now formally exercised by an Information Systems Division within the Unit.

Some changes which have not taken place may be as significant for the future of the public service as the initiatives which are mentioned here. Three are particularly noteworthy.

Firstly, graduate recruitment into the administrative group has not been vigorously pursued. Concomitantly, numbers of clerical staff continue to be promoted into higher ranks with virtually no assessment of their ability. Government may be unwilling to challenge the unions on the creation of 'fast track' career streams and on the re-institution of a 'higher division' in the administrative group.

Secondly, Government has not attempted to amend the constitution to allow external appointments to top posts. The newly-appointed permanent secretaries are all career officers of long standing, as were the directors of the MPO and SDO. On the other hand, the

field of selection for these posts seems to have been broadened, though this is a subject requiring further research.

Finally, there has not been any revision of the Public Service Commission Regulations 1960, or of the General Financial Regulations 1966, to permit delegation of responsibility to heads of department in the fields and on the scale contemplated by the Reform Commission. Delegation down the line is, in fact, one of the cornerstones of the Commission's recommendations. There may be several reasons for this notable omission from the changes announced thus far. Departments may be unprepared to accept full managerial responsibility: the task of preparing them must compete with the more mundane considerations of 'getting on with their jobs'. The public service profession, in retreat for many years, may still lack the esprit de corps which would allow it to take greater initiative in its own reformation. And, of course, the complexity of the exercise and the number of players involved militate against speedy delegation: the central agencies must first have the capacity to set standards and to supervise compliance.

Central 'change agencies'

Maltese public administration has historically been highly centralized. The PSRC sought not so much a redistribution of power from the centre to the line departments as a restatement of their respective roles, in order that the former might govern the public service and the public purse through regulation and

supervision, rather than, as at present, through appropriating decision-making authority on a case-by-case basis. For the present, the thrust towards reform has paradoxically served to increase the remit and influence of the centre. While rule-making and supervision has increased as envisaged by the Commission, case-by-case administration of personnel and public funds continues to reside in the Ministry of Finance and the MPO. The structure and terms of reference of the Ministry of Finance in budgetary and expenditure matters remains virtually unchanged. In the Office of the Prime Minister, Establishments Division, which was the personnel administration organisation for the public service, became the MPO. SDO and MSU both report to the Prime Minister.

It may also be argued that the central agencies have acquired a larger measure of power to intervene in departmental management, a power which was previously exercised only occasionally and on a small scale through the former Efficiency Development Branch. Though MSU intervenes nominally at the request of individual departments or ministries and a 'facilitator' or catalyst, in practice, by having a virtual monopoly of high-level managerial expertise and technology, it must inevitably play a predominant role in shaping the departmental agenda for change. Moreover, its business plan reflects a government-wide perception of what merits priority, and its Chairman enjoys direct access to the Cabinet Committee for Reform.

The Public Service Commission occupies a central place in the management of the public service (though it stands at one remove from government), and accordingly was the subject of numerous recommendations in the PSRC reports. Its effectiveness as guardian of the merit principle has, throughout its existence, been hindered by its dependence on Establishments records and by the absence of a capacity for 'auditing' the information on which its recommendations are based. There is no evidence that its capabilities have improved. Indeed, now that the central agencies are so much better organised and resourced, the Public Service Commission's limitations acquire added significance and further skew the balance of power in favour of the Executive.

Underlying continuity

Considered together, the initiatives reviewed here constitute a remarkable set of changes in Maltese public administration, perhaps the most significant changes since the creation of the contemporary civil service in 1946/47, following the work of the Salaries Revision Committee. The accelerated pace and the wide scope of change are equally noteworthy. They suggest that the programme of directed reform has both acquired momentum and continues to enjoy high-level political support. The omissions mentioned earlier may be justified by present conditions within the public service; the changes undertaken so far increase the likelihood that other, desired initiatives will be successfully implemented. In reviewing the foregoing record of implementat-

ion, I have not passed judgement on the merits of individual initiatives and do not propose to do so now. In concluding, I intend merely to assess whether the changes constitute fundamental departures from the pattern of Maltese public administration established during the past forty-five years.

In summary, I would argue that the decisions recounted here constitute, firstly, consolidation of the framework and ethic of Maltese public administration; and, secondly, acceleration of trends which were discernible thirty or more years ago. Correspondingly, the current effort at administrative reform favours continuity, though the agenda is ambitious and the approach unconventional.

Evidence for consolidation is most clearly discernible in the crucial working relationship of elected, political executives and permanent officials. This is the cornerstone of Maltese public administration: the changes instituted so far have sought not to recreate the framework but to complete and refine it, by appointing permanent secretaries; by clarifying roles and relationships; by establishing top structures. None of these initiatives required constitutional change or disturbed the tenets of a career public service.

In negotiating with the trade unions on matters such as selection, pay, grading and complements Government recognizes their well-organised, articulate presence in the Maltese public sector: it made no attempt to decentralise negotiations, as happened in Britain, where the 'Next Steps' programme fragmented the bargaining

power of public service unions. In this as in other ways, Malta's programme of administrative reform favours continuity, rather than a sharp break with the past.

An alleged break with past models appears to be most pronounced and most irreversible in organisational matters, chiefly in the divestiture of departmental functions and their subsequent reincarnation as statutory authorities – witness the creation, during the past five years, of an Employment & Training Corporation, a Water Services Corporation, a Planning Authority, and a Malta Maritime Authority, with others in the offing. To many public officers – particularly to generalists – this represents a profound threat to the classical departmental organisation. I suggest, however, that these represent merely acceleration of a development that began shortly after the end of the Second World War, and which saw the creation of the Malta Gas Board, the former Electricity Board, the Central Bank, the Malta Development Corporation, the Malta Dockyard Corporation, Telemalta Corporation and Enemalta Corporation. Managerial arguments are traditionally employed to justify re-establishing departmental services as statutory corporations or, indeed, as government-owned limited liability companies. I suggest, however, that in Malta's present circumstances, the politico-legal significance of this trend is greater than the managerial. The existence of statutory and non-statutory corporations has broadened the scope of ministerial discretion and increased the potential for ministerial patronage. They have also removed large areas of Maltese public

administration from the purview of bodies such as the Public Service Commission.

As a nation we remain complacent about 'big government', perhaps generally unaware of its extent outside the boundaries of the public service. In future, I suggest, leading issues of Maltese public administration will arise in our growing 'parastatal sector', rather than in the conventional public service. Perhaps a future Reform Commission might be required to chart the fragmented realms of this obscure territory.

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