



Republic of Mauritius

**THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE
&
THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL SERVICE AND
ADMINISTRATIVE REFORMS**

**LECTURE ON
CIVIL SERVICE REFORMS**

by

Baroness Usha Prashar, CBE

former first Civil Service Commissioner, UK

Monday 14 August 2006

**La Grande Cannelle, Domaine les Pailles
les Guibies, Pailles**

WELCOME ADDRESS BY MR. S.C. SEEBALLUCK, SECRETARY TO CABINET AND HEAD OF THE CIVIL SERVICE

Dr the Honourable Navinchandra Ramgoolam, Prime Minister

Honourable Ministers

Members of the National Assembly

Your Excellency the British High Commissioner

Colleagues of the Civil Service

Good morning and welcome to La Cannelle for a lecture on Civil Service Reforms.

We have in our midst today Baroness Usha Prashar, a Member of the House of Lords who has served as Director and Chairperson of various public and also private organisations in the United Kingdom. At the personal request of the Prime Minister she has agreed to come to Mauritius to deliver a lecture on Civil Service Reforms. On behalf of the Government, I should like to extend to her a very warm welcome to Mauritius.

From 1976 to 1984 Baroness Prashar was a Director of the Runnymede Trust. As Director, Baroness Usha Prashar had enormous influence in the development of social and public policy affecting minorities.

From 1984 to 1986 she was a fellow with Policy Studies Institute where her research included enquiry into Primary Health Care in London.

From 1986 to 1991 she was a Director of the National Council of Voluntary Organisations, an umbrella body for voluntary organizations in the UK.

From 1991 to 1997 Baroness Prashar had a portfolio of activities which included membership of the Royal Commission on Criminal Justice, the Lord Chancellor's Advisory Committee on Legal Education and Conduct, and the Arts Council where she chaired the Arts Council Committee on combined Arts and Cultural Diversity panel.

For eight years she was a Non-Executive Director of Channel Four television and also a Non-Executive Director of Energy Saving Trust for six years.

From October 1997 to October 2000 she was the Executive Chairperson of the Parole Board for England and Wales.

From August 2000 to December 2005 she was First Civil Service Commissioner. In her role as First Civil Service Commissioner, she led the work of the Civil Service Commissioners who are responsible for contributing to the development of an effective and politically impartial civil service.

Baroness Prashar is currently the Chairperson of the Judicial Appointments Committee.

Hon. Prime Minister,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The environment in which public services operate today has changed drastically with the advent of new technologies, globalization, increased focus on delivery and increased scrutiny by an uncompromising media and a citizenry growing in sophistication, increased concern for the environment, law and order, human rights and gender issues. Moreover, the social problems that governments are called upon to address are even more complex and intractable. These challenges assume an even greater dimension in a small island like Mauritius with a complex socio political structure.

The present Government has entered into a contract with the public. It has promised to improve the standard of living of the people and for this purpose, ushered in major reforms. To attain the objectives set by Government, the Mauritian Civil Service will have to re-engineer itself to respond to new economic imperatives. Focus will be laid on outcome rather than on process.

Hon. Prime Minister

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Civil Service in the UK is widely admired and frequently emulated abroad. But the British Civil Service has not been static. As a matter of fact, during the last 30 years especially, it has gone through four or five waves of reforms.

We, therefore, look forward to Baroness Usha Prashar, with such a distinguished record of public service, taking us through some of the important reforms that have taken place in the British Civil Service, the way such reforms have been brought about and the challenges faced in the process.

I now have the honour and privilege to invite Baroness Usha Prashar to address you.

CIVIL SERVICE REFORM

CHANGE IN ETHOS AND ROLE OF THE CIVIL SERVICE

1. Introductory remarks

- (i) Thanks
- (ii) Background about myself
- (iii) Structure of the talk:
 - General trends and some common features –
 - Mauritius Civil Service Reforms
 - UK experience
 - Concluding comments

2. Change – some special characteristics

Every generation tends to believe that they are passing through a period in which change is more rapid, more challenging and more profound. Ours is no exception. What is true, however, is that each period of change has its own special characteristics. What are these special characteristics and what are the implications for the Civil Service?

(a) Special Characteristics

- (i) the public has higher expectations than before and is far more demanding;
- (ii) increase of media outlets and the 24 hour coverage now provided calls for a watching response capacity;
- (iii) advances in information technology have brought new challenges and vulnerabilities and
- (iv) the public accountability of industrial civil servants is increasing steadily.

All this is taking place in an increasingly complex global environment where national borders are becoming less significant and multinational companies are becoming dominant.

Political problems are becoming more complex and less predictable. Any attempt to address a problem is subject to the competing advice and opinions of special interest groups, advisory bodies and think tanks. There is a multiplicity of incompatible perspectives and solutions, which reflect international, national, regional and local circumstances.

All these developments challenge the traditional process of policy making and its implementation and delivery. Consequently the focus and intervention of government's has changed.

The priorities are:

- (i) encouraging innovative and efficient provision of services;
- (ii) creating and managing an efficient labour market and talent;
- (iii) winning markets for products and service;
- (iv) creating an international trade environment in which business can thrive;

- (v) regulating markets to encourage competition and preventing monopoly, exploitation and abuse;
- (vi) addressing skills gap through managed migration;
- (vii) containing threats to security and promoting values of democracy and;
- (viii) seeking ways of ensuring that increasing cultural and religious diversity combined with a heightened sense of security threats internally does not undermine social cohesion.

(b) Three key changes which are of the most relevance to the Civil Service are:

- (i) complexity of problems due to globalisation. The problems and issues faced by any country can no longer be isolated from the rest of the world;
- (ii) economic policy has now to be made with an eye to the state of the economies of countries across the globe and;
- (iii) levels of wealth and information have expanded expectations about the quality of public services have risen accordingly. People expect a more personalized response.

3. These developments require the civil service to respond differently. Traditional ethos and role of the Civil Service needs to change and there is an urgent need for them.

Reform of the civil service gathered momentum in the early 1990's because systems which had been designed to prevent corruption and enable responsibility to be clearly established but which, in the end, through their many rules and regulations got in the way of responding to individual needs. Silo like structures and mentalities of individual government departments were not well suited to dealing with complex cross cutting social problems.

Attempts to deal with these problems of lack of flexibility and innovation led in 1990's to a reform movement known as the 'new public management' or 'reinventing government'. Key elements of these reforms were:

- introduction of financial management;
- drive for efficiency;
- a strong focus on the needs of the consumer;
- setting of targets for public services;
- controls on framework agreements specified what performance outcomes were desired, and managers faced system of accountability more like those of the private sector;
- achieving complex outcomes through government by network, that is, government using its powers to contract and fund non-governmental organizations to achieve its aims. This was designed to encourage greater diversity of method and encourage innovation.

However, behind the systems lie the people involved in making and shaping them. But too little thought has been given to development and training of talent.

A belief developed that leadership skills in business and government substantially overlap. Argument continues whether it is possible to teach leadership and qualities needed to inspire groups to work together to achieve complex long-term goals, when

what constitutes the 'public good' is hard to define. What is a fair reward for producing public goods? How can societies be influenced to respect civil and public servants? Before a high proportion of talented people thought it natural to go into the civil service as their preferred profession. However, as the reputation and financial rewards of careers in the civil service began to fall quite sharply, difficulty in attracting talent increased.

These same issues and questions continue to confront us in the 21st century dominated as it is by globalization and information technology.

4. There is now a global and international language about civil service reforms and efficiency. Broadly speaking this has had two distinct but overlapping phases. The first phase in the 1980's we saw economic liberalization and privatization of industries that had been previously state owned. This first stage can be seen in the context of the transition to free market economies that began all over the world in the 1980's and accelerated in 1989 with the fall of the Berlin Wall.

The second phase in the 1990's focused less on privatization but more on administrative reforms of core state functions, that is building the state capacity, cutting down bureaucracy, and making the government more efficient, more modern, more responsive to the citizen. The developed world concentrated on efficiency and good governance and extensive introduction of information technology. The developing world concentrated on building state capacity, decentralization and fighting corruption.

The focus now is on 'how' and not on 'what' are the common aspects of the reform agenda. These are:

- (i) desire for better efficiency and lower costs;
- (ii) new appreciation of quality and performance;
- (iii) improving quality of services;
- (iv) effective use of new technology;
- (v) balancing regulation with economic efficiency;
- (vi) creating honest and transparent government and
- (vii) recruiting, retaining and training talent with the appropriate skills.

5. There is now a growing appreciation that:

- (i) even in a time of borderless economies and international markets, effective states with effective public administrations are the primary prerequisites of successful societies and
- (ii) improving the quality of government services is critical to restoring and maintaining trust in government.

Some of the strategies to improve the quality of government services have included:

- one stop shops or places where citizens can conduct all their transactions with the government at once;
- attempts to find out from citizens what they want and expect from government services;
- involving citizens in helping to shape organizations and behaviour;

- attempts to be more transparent;
 - involving employers in the design of the organisation and
 - training employees in customer service and setting quality standards.
- (iii) true quality in service delivery, however, cannot be implemented without a degree of democracy since improvements in service rely heavily on free participation and input from citizens;
- (iv) resources – both material and human are also essential. Talent is essential but most governments around the world find that they are having difficulty in maintaining or getting a workforce commensurate to the challenges of government. In the developed world the public sector has trouble competing with the private sector while the developing world has trouble competing with the NGO's where wages funded by aid/foundation money tend to be higher.

Sometimes tight budgets lead to a lack of training for staff. In order to improve the quality of public sector workforce the following steps have been taken:

- attempting to reduce wage disparities between public, private and NGO's sectors;
- attempting to reduce pay comparisons in the civil service;
- reforming absolute civil service rules and regulations;
- instituting performance based pay systems;
- targeting scarce skills and opening up the system to new talent and diverse people and
- balancing the need for a stable, merit based system with the need for political direction in the government.

6. Other challenges and opportunities:

- (i) The information revolution is creating the ability to transform bureaucratic government. Digital government has the power to reduce the cost of government, increase citizen input into government, improve official decision making and increase the transparency of government transactions. This however, has exacerbated the need for highly trained information technologists to run the government of the 21st century.
- (ii) Establishing an appropriate effective framework for regulating the private sector is another challenge. Creating a regulatory structure that is honest, reliable, not too burdensome or costly and instilling in the civil service a culture which is enabling and not stifling is an absolute necessity. Drowning legislation activity in bureaucracy and red tape and forcing conformity through rules can stifle freedom and enterprise of individuals and society at large. Given that the Civil Service now works through a network of agencies there is a need to balance regulation and flexibility.

7. The UK experience

(a) Background

The constitutional and practical role of the Civil Service in the United Kingdom is, with integrity, honesty, impartiality and objectivity, to assist the duly constituted Government, whatever its political complexion, in formulating its policies, carrying out its decisions and in administering public services for which it is responsible.

The UK Civil Service currently employs over 500,000 people – about 2% of the national workforce. It provides a vast array of services, including safeguarding the environment, taxation and defence. Its effectiveness depends above all on highly competent staff who are able to serve successive Government Administrations impartially, that is with equal loyalty and commitment.

The Government is therefore supported by a permanent, non-political Civil Service now totaling over 500,000 of whom 3,000 are in the most senior ranks – known as the Senior Civil Service.

Civil Servants are distributed across some 23 main departments and over 100 Executive Agencies. These are management units located within departments responsible for delivering largely executive tasks.

So, for example, we have around:

- 92,000 working in the Ministry of Defence and its agencies
- 76,000 working in the Inland Revenue
- 22,000 working in Customs and Excise
- 45,000 working in the Prison Service.

It's probably true to say that, outside of the war years, little changed in the structure of the UK Civil Service and the way it was managed in the period between the late 19th century until well into the 20th century.

Before the 1980s the management of the Civil Service was very heavily centralized. Virtually all terms and conditions were set centrally, with individual departments having to apply them to their own particular circumstances. It was a "one size fits all" approach with no opportunity for departments to flex the central terms to meet their particular needs or circumstances. There was, for example, no easy way of recognizing in their terms and conditions of employment the totally different circumstances of staff working in, say, one of the major tax raising departments with staff working, say, in a policy development department such as Education.

This approach lent itself to national pay bargaining with the Treasury Department in the lead, and little involvement by other departments or recognition of their particular or local needs.

There were an enormous number of different grades and specialisms with little opportunity or incentive from moving from one specialism to another within a department, let alone for interchange between departments.

Grade and length of service were the main determinants for pay, rather than ability and contribution. The existing pay arrangements were complex and expensive. Being based on

grade and length of service, paybill control was also very weak. There was no link between performance and pay.

8. Reforms of 1990's

The 1980s and 1990s saw the progressive delegation of responsibility for Human Resource Management to departments and agencies. A key driver was the creation of a large number of Executive Agencies within departments and the delegation of management responsibility for achieving targets set down in internal framework agreements. Tight centralized management and pay negotiations could no longer be sustained.

Common characteristics of this period were:

- A reduction in grades. Most departments and agencies opted to develop broad pay bands and allocate existing staff to one or other of those bands regardless of grade
- The ending of automatic annual increments related to age or length of service.
- The development of a system of annual performance pay increases within a fixed overall budget, thereby introducing cost control.

Today the thrust of Human Resource Management in departments and agencies is towards developing performance management strategies linked to Civil Service Reform, comprising

- Finding ways to reward high performers
- Giving incentives to those delivering key objectives
- Encouraging the best people to take on the toughest challenges
- Providing consolidated awards for all effective performers but not the unsatisfactory ones, and
- Greater use of non-consolidated individual and team bonuses.

9. Current reforms

In the recent years the Civil Service has been engaged in a process of reform. That process was given encouragement by the present Prime Minister in February 2004 when he encouraged the Senior Civil Service to adopt a programme consisting of a number of strands.

The aim of the current wide range of reforms is to improve the benefit to the public of the work the Civil Service does. There has been major investment in public services, and there is a corresponding and proper pressure to see that the benefits are achieved. There are five main strands to this agenda.

(i) Leadership

A common characteristic of high performing organizations is leadership. The Civil Service has therefore adopted a leadership requirement which combines the traditional values and strengths with the focus on outcomes and effectiveness essential if it is to deliver what the public needs and expects. So the Civil Service is actively seeking to identify and develop leaders who inspire trust; who take personal responsibility for delivering results effectively and swiftly; who work in teams and across traditional boundaries; who are focused on strategic outcomes, matching resources to business priorities; who are honest and realistic with staff and ministers.

(ii) Careers

In terms of careers, the traditional model of a career for life is fast disappearing. What matters today is the performance and potential of the individual, matched against the needs of the business. No one has a lifetime right to be a civil servant, irrespective of their abilities. Accordingly, recruitment has been opened up radically. Age ceilings to the fast stream have long since been removed. Direct recruitment at all levels is permeating the system. Currently one-third of new entrants to the Senior Civil Service are external recruits through open competition. And one in six members of the Senior Civil Service were recruited from outside the Civil Service. At the same time the normal pension age is moving to 65 and, in practice, the Civil Service is working towards a model of flexible retirement rather than a single cut-off point with an abrupt transition between a paid career and a pensioned retirement. Finally the effectiveness of an organisation can suffer either if an individual stays in post too long and cannot adapt to change, or if turnover is too fast and people leave posts before the key objectives have been delivered. So a four-year posting norm has been adopted, retention beyond which will be at the discretion of the organisation rather than the individual. The onus will be on the person moving on to find another post.

(iii) Development

As part of the normal pattern of service, civil servants are now encouraged to broaden their development through working in other departments or sectors, through experience of front line service delivery, through acting as non-executive directors in industry, or through contributing to the voluntary sector. This is in addition to the formal training and development in relation to particular tasks or managing staff which has long been provided. Special training for those with potential for the Senior Civil Service has been devised. These training schemes include: pathways – for participants from ethnic minority backgrounds who are currently under-represented in the Senior Civil Service; public service leaders scheme – which mixes civil servants with colleagues from the wider public sector; and preparing for top management – which provides training in leadership, strategy and delivery with personal coaching, live case studies and interchange opportunities for those identified as having the potential to reach the Senior Civil Service. For those already in the Senior Civil Service, there are well established and respected programmes which mix public, private and voluntary sector participants and develop their personal and organizational strengths for strategic leadership and delivery at a national level. Finally there is a High Potential Development Scheme for the 50 or so most able performers in the Senior Civil Service who are regarded to have a chance of reaching the very top positions. The scheme is intended to provide continuing development and tailored postings.

(iv) Performance

The Civil Service has been historically poor at giving people honest, constructive feedback about their performance and ensuring that everyone, no matter how able, has a personal plan for improvement. So there is now a greater focus on managing performance. The use of performance related pay in the Civil Service already exceeds that of most EU member states and many Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries and we now differentiate rewards for the Senior Civil Service in both their base pay and through significant bonuses. For the future the intention is to pay particular attention to the performance and development issues for those individuals who, *relative to their peers*, fall into the lowest 20% of performance effectiveness in their current responsibilities. For these the aim will be to identify the causes of the performance weaknesses, and then to work out the best means of addressing them. The answer might lie in training or in opportunities in other posts either in the Civil Service or perhaps on secondment to another organization. Or it might lie in recognition that for some individuals there is no longer a role they can fulfill effectively and who need to be supported to find work elsewhere.

(v) Professionalism

From accountants to veterinary surgeons, the Civil Service already contains a wide range of specialists carrying out functions requiring specific formal qualifications. For the future a need for increased professionalism has been identified. Some of the demand will be met by internal development, but in the short term there will be a need for recruitment to meet capacity gaps. This applies both to traditional professional qualifications, such as accountancy, and too newer areas including human resource management, project management, strategic planning or risk management. For the future three broad professional categories essential to Civil Service business have been identified. All civil servants will be encouraged to develop a 'career anchor' in one of theme supplemented by periods of work elsewhere to broaden experience or particular skills. The *policy expert* will have an anchor in work related to the development of high quality, evidence based stratagems and policies. Those in *operational delivery* will have an expertise in customer services, design of services and management of large-scale operations. *Corporate services* recognize those who are professionals in finance, human resources, procurement, ICT and communications – the corporate services that mean the organization works. Work is underway to establish a framework of competency levels within these professional categories to help civil servants develop their careers within them.

9. Recent developments

In June 2005 the current Cabinet Secretary and Head of the Home Civil Service, Sir Gus O'Donnell stated five challenges which the Civil Service has to face:

- (i) greater sophistication in the traditional policy and analytical function of the civil service. Politicians and administrators have long grappled with the impact of their decisions on the economy and on individual behaviour. In the modern era, the role of the economic policy adviser, as in previous decades, is to analyze the impact of tax and benefits on the individual economic choices and behaviour, such as decisions to save or invest. But today's analyst could also be faced with subjects like public health (through the debate on tobacco taxes for example) and the

environment (with the climate change levy). It is vital that the impact of policy on incentives and behaviour is properly understood;

- (ii) continuing need to transform the civil service as an agent of delivery when consumer expectations are higher than ever. This is not just about improving the capacity of government departments as managers and providers. Many key public services are provided through other agents, involving one or more players from the wider public sector or the private or voluntary sectors. So the more fundamental challenge is to foster an ability within the civil service to work through others;
- (iii) the demand for greater accountability and transparency, reflecting both the importance of services provided by government and the increase of information flows in the 21st century. The civil service has an historic, if sometimes unfair, reputation about the performance of many public services is easily and immediately accessible on the Internet. Freedom of information legislation also marks a change in the relationship between citizen and state. The increase in media outlets and penetration increases the demand for information about public services;
- (iv) to deal with these challenges a greater specialization within the civil service is undoubtedly needed along with the deployment of professional expertise including finance, information technology, human resources and communications. This focuses on efficiency. In the wider political debate on savings and staff reductions the critical recommendations on improving financial management in government and the emphasis on cleverer use of IR are often missed; and
- (v) linked to the point about specialisms, in that the civil service, like the private sector, needs to have a flexible labour market which can adjust to the demands of the age, continues to increase skill levels and is adroit in its recruitment and retention policies.

(b) Capability reviews

In his efforts to ensure that the Civil Service is in a position to meet these challenges he undertook Capability Reviews – the first of their kind in central government. These reviews assessed in the first instance, capability of four departments that is, the Home Office, the Departments of Constitutional Affairs, Work and Pensions and Education and Skills, to meet the future challenges. This was done objectively against an understanding of their respective challenges. The first tranche of the Capability Reviews identified four common themes. These are:

- Leadership: focus on strategy, managing performance and ensuring that staff have the right skills; [**Changing role of the Permanent Secretary**].
- Improving delivery and the way Civil Service delivery – that is looking more carefully at the model chosen to deliver each service, making sure that this is the right model for the task rather than an accident of history; [**Role of National School of Government – formerly the Civil Service College**].
- Responding to the demands of the public – through developing a better understanding of what society wants, getting better information about people's

experiences of services, and using this to design service provision more effectively and **[Changing the culture of the Civil Service]**.

- Skills, capacity and capability reforms – to make sure staff have the skills, equipment and leadership to deliver world class levels of service to their customers and stakeholders. **[Development of talent and performance management]**.

10. Civil Service Commissioners

(a) Background

The role of the Civil Service Commissioners – who are responsible for upholding the principle that selection to appointments in the Civil Service, must be on merit on the basis of fair and open competition. They hear and determine appeals in cases of concern about propriety and conscience raised by civil servants under the Civil Service Code.

The first Civil Service Commissioners were appointed in response to a report published as long ago as 1854 on the organization of the Civil Service. The Northcote-Trevelyan Report had identified the then system of patronage, purchase and favor, under which either the Minister of the department or the Patronage Secretary of the Treasury nominated candidates for posts in the Civil Service, as one of the main reason for the Service's then endemic inefficiency and public disrepute. It recommended open competitive examination to test merit. The Commissioners were appointed to run the examinations and to give approval for the appointment of those duly qualified.

The report was accepted and a year later, in 1855, the Commissioners were first formed by Order in Council under the Royal Prerogative. They quickly set up an Office – the Civil Service Commission – and recruited the necessary staff.

From the outset, the role of the Commissioners was not so much about regulation, as about the process of ensuring an efficient Civil Service respected by the public.

The years 1870 to 1920 saw the steady extension of the Commissioners' powers to cover virtually all appointments.

Originally, selection was mainly by specially prepared written examinations. From the 1950s, methods such as interview of those possessing appropriate academic qualifications, psychometric testing and assessment centres were introduced to supplement or replace the traditional examination.

Successive Orders in Council adjusted the balance of responsibility for selection between Ministers and the Commissioners. However, those made in 1995 returned to the Commissioners alone the responsibility for interpreting the principle of selection on merit on the basis of fair and open competition for all Civil Service recruitment.

(b) Civil Service Commissioners today

Today, there are 17 Civil Service Commissioners who are appointed directly by the Crown. Accordingly they are not civil servants and they are independent of Ministers. They are drawn from the general public and come with a wealth of experience in the private, voluntary and wider public sectors. Selection is through open advertisement. All the Commissioners serve on a part time basis for period of up to 3 – 5 years.

The Commissioners' powers are currently derived from the Civil Service Order in Council 1995 and the Diplomatic Service Order in Council 1991. Their powers do not extend to the Northern Ireland Civil Service, who have their own Commissioners, or to any other parts of the public service. The power to hear appeals under the Civil Service Code is restricted to the Home Civil Service. Their key roles are:

- to maintain the principle of selection for appointment on merit on the basis of fair and open competition; and
- to hear and decide upon appeals from civil servants under the Civil Service Code.

(c) Recruitment

If a government department wishes to run a recruitment exercise which is open to candidates from outside the Civil Service, their role is to ensure that potential applicants – internal and external – are given the opportunity to learn about the vacancy, are treated fairly, and that the best person is chosen for the job. It is these principles of openness, fairness and appointment on merit that matter rather than any particular process.

In accordance with the requirements of the Orders in Council, they exercise their recruitment responsibilities in three main ways.

- (i) They chair the selection boards and approve the appointments to the top 600 and other sensitive posts in the Senior Civil Service where these have been opened to recruitment from outside the Service.
- (ii) They publish a Recruitment Code interpreting the principles of openness, fairness and merit. Departments must follow the rules set out in the Code when undertaking their recruitment exercises at lower level.
- (iii) They audit departments' recruitment systems for compliance with the Recruitment Code.

(d) Appeals and the Civil Service Code

Their other key role is in respect of appeals under the Civil Service Code. This Code came into operation on 1 January 1996 and sets out the constitutional framework within which all civil servants work and the values which they are expected to uphold. It provides a means by which a civil servant who is being required to act in a way which:

- is illegal, improper or unethical;
- is in breach of constitutional convention or a professional code;
- may involve possible maladministration; or
- is otherwise inconsistent with the code

can report the matter. It also required civil servants to report evidence of criminal or unlawful activity by others.

When a civil servant has approached his or her department in accordance with the Code but is not satisfied with the response, he or she may appeal to the Commissioners.

When they uphold an appeal, they will make recommendations to the employing department.

(e) Commissioners' accountability

The final requirement placed on the Commissioners through the Order in Council is to report annually on the outcome of their work to The Queen. They also make copies of our report available to Parliament, to Government, to political commentators, and to a wide cross-section of people interested in their work.

The report provides the opportunity for them to report publicly on key aspects of their work. It also provides a way in which they can draw attention to any general issues or concerns that they may feel worth highlighting in the context of their wider role in helping to maintain an impartial civil service which is fit for purpose.

(f) Commissioners' role and approach

The Commissioners therefore, contribute to the Government's wish to entrench the core values that are an enduring strength of the Civil Service but also to raise the capacity of the Civil Service to secure outcomes and adapt to changing circumstances.

The basic principle relating to recruitment into the Civil Service remains important. If the Civil Service is to be equipped to meet the challenges of reform, then it must be able to guarantee that its members have been recruited for their skills and ability to do the job; that is on merit and merit alone.

The Commissioners are regulators, but they are concerned as much with the quality of the outcome as with the integrity of the process. They work from first principles which they need to help departments translate effectively into practice. They are also open to using innovative recruitment methods.

(g) Recent Developments

This approach to their work has been reflected in a number of developments recently.

(i) The Commissioners have agreed with the Cabinet Office a revised formulation for the involvement of Ministers in Civil Service appointments, which accommodates their interest in competitions for certain, posts whilst maintaining a system which gives assurance that appointments are made on merit.

(ii) They have introduced an arrangement whereby each Commissioner is linked with one or more departments and holds regular discussions with them at Permanent Secretary and HR Director levels. This has helped to ensure that both the Commissioners and departments have a clear understanding of each other's role and priorities.

(iii) They have reviewed our Recruitment Code in consultation with departments, and have now published a revised web-based version which they hope will provide a clearer and more user-friendly basis for understanding the principles that they uphold.

(iv) They are being far more proactive than in the past in maintaining a dialogue with recruiting staff at all levels in departments. The Civil Service Commissioners are represented at the regular meetings of departmental HR staff, and regularly give seminars about our work to human resources staff in departments.

(h) Ethical Standards and the Civil Service Code

Equally important at a time of major change are the ethical standards enshrined in the Civil Service Code. They provide an important reassurance to the public that those values – integrity, honesty, impartiality and objectivity – so critical to the way the Civil Service operates in the UK are subject to constant and independent supervision. Recently the Civil Service Code has been rewritten to make it more user-friendly and clear.

The Government has recently accepted a number of proposals giving the Commissioners the responsibility for working with departments to promote the Civil Service Code in addition to hearing appeals from civil servants under it. The Commissioners had concerns for some time that the Civil Service Code was neither well known nor promoted, and that departments had much to do to turn it into a living document.

11. Concluding Comments

What I have attempted to do is share my views about common issues and challenges, and describe developments in the UK with regard to the Civil Service reform.

Future challenges in my view will be posed by continuing technological and information revolutions, that is using the internet to provide real time interaction between citizens and the civil service. This is a potentially deeper and more profound democratisation that will continue to pose ever-greater challenges.

Another continuing challenge will be recruiting, retaining and training talented staff. This means competitive salaries and valuing public service. Top salaries will need to be pegged equivalent to private sector salaries. Above all it is about cultural change, that is, how civil servants work and approach their tasks.

The third challenge is the regulatory capacity and frameworks and how these are managed by civil servants.

Finally, maintenance of transparency in order to retain public confidence and developing appropriate accountability mechanism will remain crucial because it is here that democracy and sound public administration come together. Proper conduct and transparency has always been a prerequisite to good governance. Reform is necessary and because of changes there is a need to give continuing attention to the ethical standards that apply to recruitment and the way civil servants carry out their work. Both the success of reforms and indeed overall confidence in government depends on it.

As Professor Dennis Thompson of Harvard University said:

“When ethics are in disorder, when citizens reasonably believe they are, one should not be surprised that disputes about ethics drive out discussions about policies. Ethics make democracy safe for debate on the substance of public policy. That is why it is so important. That is the sense in which it is more important than any other single issue”.

Above all to enable these changes and reforms we need political will, courage and sustained effort. Sound public administration in today’s world is essential for economic development and stable societies.

QUESTION TIME

MR SEEBALUCK, SECRETARY TO CABINET AND HEAD OF THE CIVIL SERVICE

Thank you very much Baroness for your inspiring Lecture. I am sure it has served to give us an insight in the evolution of the British Civil Service and I have no doubt that a lot of these changes are relevant to the Mauritian context as we do share a lot of common values such as democracy, and accountability. Colleagues I have no doubt that you have a few comments to make and questions to put to Baroness Usha Prashar. The floor is now open.

Question 1

Baroness Prashar, my name is Krish Ponnusamy, I am in the Ministry of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping. A couple of years ago I was in the Ministry of Civil Service Affairs and Administrative Reforms and I attended a meeting where African ministers of the Public Service met and debated the issue of performance in the Public Service, and looking at the priorities of the activities they picked up, leadership has been identified as being the main characteristic to influence the modern civil service and you mentioned leadership as well. How successful has the British Public Service been on this score of leadership bearing in mind that we talk of leadership both for the political class and also for the Civil Service class?

Answer

Thank you for that. I think that you are right that leadership is something which everybody talks about. In the British Civil Service there is a great deal of emphasis on the kind of leadership that is to be provided but in terms of success I think it is very difficult to measure at this stage because it is the early days. I think it has been recognized that the role of the Permanent Secretary, the leader of the department is essential because, before, traditionally they were managing upwards, they were basically providing advice to Ministers. Now, that role continues, but they are now having to be managers of their departments and I think that there is a recognition that one task they have to do is to create a team of people at the top of the department who will supplement the skills that they need and that is the policy career anchor I was talking about. Someone would be good in terms of delivery, someone good on corporate services. So it is the team that they will actually create and I think you are right to say that on the other side the leadership provided by the political masters, because that is really where understanding is very important. And I think sometimes there is a tension because by their very

nature, the political imperatives are short term because you are elected for four to five years and you are to deliver very quickly and there are some of the long-term imperatives. In a book that we published last year called Changing Time which was commissioned by the Civil Service Commissioners to mark their 150 years, we talked about the wicked issues that are very unattractive, the social issues which require long term strategy and I think that now it is important that you don't just look at leadership in the Civil Service as the kind of leadership that is provided by the political class. Now to do that in the U.K the Civil Service College has tried to run some courses for politicians in a special division. So there is a better understanding and the kind of leadership that needs to be provided. But this I think will remain an ongoing issue, but I think that there is no doubt in my mind that leadership is important but one needs to make sure we don't look at one side of the equation but also at the other side of the equation which is to do with the political Civil Service as much as the Civil Service.

Question 2

My name is Vijay Ramgoolam. I am the Director of SEHDA, the institution catering for Small and Medium Enterprises. I would like to thank you Baroness Prashar first of all. My question is that I have got 34 years careers in government, 23 years in the Ministry of Industry but what I have noticed Baroness is that very often, I don't want to generalize, but very often we are a group of people having a positive mind, we have at heart the interest of the country, we want to be positive but then we are faced with other groups of people who are negative. They do not have any feeling they are cut off with reality. So we become weak with them. These people when they take decision, it is against the interest of the country and politicians at times are hardly aware that they loose power because of these negative decisions. So did it happen in the United Kingdom or in any other country and how did you deal with such type of attitude? Thank you.

Answer

I think it is almost necessary given the change that has taken place globally, that taking no action is not an option really. It is now almost a necessity and I think at least in the context of the Civil Service I can say the question of performance management becomes very important because in a way people who resist change will remain as dinosaurs that do not want to do any change. They will actually be weeded out so they will not want to do any change. Now that is why the question of performance management pay award becomes very important and this is what goes back to my point about long term cultural change and sustainability and of course

bureaucracy which has grown over the years. That will take time but it requires political will and perseverance. That is all I can offer you at this stage.

Question 3

Thank you Baroness. My name is Neeta Deerpalsing. I'd just like you to comment on one particular issue, but first of all when you were saying that there are 2% of the workforce in the Civil Service in the U.K., I was just checking with the Minister of Finance here. Here it is about 10% if not more. So this gives you an idea of the huge challenge that we have and the 10% is there. I don't want to make a value judgment about this because we have historical and sociological factors behind the way our society is organised. We have major challenges around that issue. There are 3 points that I would like you to comment on The Silo structures, I think we find out a lot of them in Mauritius, and there is no synergy until they are Ministerial and inter Ministerial Committees that are set up. Then the issue of talent. I think that talent is there in the Civil Service but it is question is attitude and motivation. I mean how do you make the system become a system which encourages positive attitude and motivate people for performance? The third one which I am most interested in and I would like to hear more about is the procurement policy. Because procurement policy has an impact on corruption ethics and good governance. So we could share your experience about procurement policy. Thank you.

Answer

Let me take the question of the Silo mentality and how one's gone about working through that. I think it is very similar experience in the U.K. It is very difficult to break down the barriers but we have made Ministerial Committees set up better incentives. But a very good initiative was taken when they were trying to bring up joint criminal justice. Therefore the link between the Constitutional Affairs Department, the Home Office and others. The Budget was given which would only be unlocked if there was a joint up initiative. So that was in almost all financial incentive to make sure that government department work together. The other thing which is a long term thing is that now you are getting much more of a kind of corporate centre because one of the thing that is developed is that what we call a Senior Leadership Committee, chaired by the Cabinet Secretary on which a number of Permanent Secretaries sit. Before they were kind of little Barons of their own departments and very jealous of their departments. They are now looking at the Civil Service as a Corporate whole while respecting their departmental responsibilities. At the center they are looking at the capacity they need and how they might work together and there is much more interchange of staff because the role of the Senior

Leadership Committee on which I was able to sit as First Civil Service Commissioner was basically to look at succession planning, which meant that people were encouraged through their Permanent Secretaries to make sure that there were much interchange of staff as well. So people actually worked. I mean for example even from the foreign office you would get people going to the Department of the National Development or some to the Home Office. There were a number of initiatives at different level which encourage that but I think that the most subtle change is getting to look at the Civil Service like a corporate whole and there is a really change here and the capability reviews for example means that the permanent secretaries now the relationship of the Cabinet Secretary is different. It is one more of accountability. I think that sort of change is taking place as well. It is a question of incentives through money, inter-ministerial development and also this long term the whole thing of developing the corporate whole of the centre. Now on procurement I think your are quite right, I mean there are obviously a very heavy guideline and framework which have documents been developed to make sure there is transparency and accountability and also procurement to see that you actually give contracts to people if they have not got any equal opportunity policy for example. But the other way is we have a Business Appointment Committee, if you are in the Ministry of Defence for example, you cannot take a Business Appointment for a number of years and then you got to got clearance through the appointment committee in terms of movement in an hour. Now this has caused a tension because to some extent if you want to encourage more people to come in out of the Civil Service what are the Business Appointment rules that need to underpin that. Last year an enquiry was set up and currently I think they are considering for what kind of Business rules that they should have which both ensure that there is not any kind of conflict of interest, both at the same time encouraging flow. So these are some of the things which are underway. Let me say one word about procurement and framework and documents because if you are giving contracts out to people when you are getting services while you want accountability and transparency you don't want sort to make them so tight that your managing actually affect innovations. That is the real challenge. But it is not in terms of procurement but it is in term of setting up executive agencies. You create non department public bodies and then you bind them with strict rules and regulations so you stifle innovations. And that, mind you is to do with the culture of the Civil Service which traditionally has become very risk averse because of the accountability and therefore almost strive to micro manage people they actually contract out to. And that's another area I think where a lot more work needs to be done in term of cultural change and where you have proper frameworks where you encourage accountability but do not stifle innovation.

Question 4

I have been working in the area of public sector reforms for the last fifteen years and now I am in the Prime Minister's Office. Baroness Prashar, I would like to ask you how in England they have been able to change the administrative culture into a managerial culture. By this, I mean many of us, in Mauritius, have been groomed in a system of public administration which makes us more accountable for policy and giving advice rather than really managing organisations to deliver results. This transition from being a pure administrator to become a manager really accountable for results, instead of being accountable for writing minutes or cabinet memoranda and giving advice and to really manage resources, managing people, financial, material, physical resources to get results. In one line, in Mauritius one of our major hurdles is this transition to get people to think that we are managers in our own right instead of being mere public administrators. I would like Baroness to hear how you have been able to do that in the U.K. Thank you.

Answer

I really would not have been able to do it, we are in the process of making that change, that is, I think a million dollar question. I would tell you a story. We appointed someone from the outside who was going to be the head of the Court Service and he went to his Permanent Secretary and said "Would you like the Court service to be administered or managed?" Now he could see the look of puzzlement on the face of the Permanent Secretary because for him he had really not thought this through. But I think you are right that we are trying to change administrators into managers. The question is that you have to make sure that you get people to understand that you were actually giving policy advice, writing minutes and administering the service, now, people are looking for outcomes and how you are able to manage that delivery. I think it is being done in two ways. One has really been to get more people from outside because unless you get people outside from a different perspective, and hence my story about the guy who is going to run the Court service came from outside and became a very good manager. People are coming in and you learn from them how this is to be done. So, in terms of opening up the competition to make sure that we get people in, and secondly, I think it is the question of training on the job because, when you have got to train people and some people are responding to the challenge, others are not. And I think that would be natural wastage of those who do not respond to these changes. But, on the other hand, I think it is important that we don't want to turn everybody into a manager because in a way the role of the Civil Service, the policy adviser implementation is very important. Now, when I became the first Civil Service

Commissioner five years ago, they were still dealing with capacity deficit and there was a lot more competition wanting managers but there was a neglect, if I may say so, of the policy analysis. And now, there is recognition that you need people who are good policy analysts. Those who are good at implementation are able to manage the delivery of these services. And then you need the capacity in terms of the corporate services required. Now, there is a much better understanding, but before you do that you get to start from the fundamental question “what is the Civil Service?” Therefore, because the danger in the early days that we had in the U.K. is that it had become a delivery machine. And now, I think there is a better appreciation that it is not just purely a delivery machine, it is policy analysis delivery but also delivery through others. In other words, can the Civil Service deliver service centrally or do you have to do it through local agencies or through other bodies? I think it is a question of that and then looking up of what kind of people you need and some with managerial capability but not all.

Question 5

I am Mr Dabee from the Attorney General’s Office and my position is that of Solicitor-General. You mentioned an increase in tendency in U.K. for direct recruitment as well as recruiting people on contract. In our own field, in the judicial and legal field, especially in the judicial field, there have been certain unfortunate experiences about recruiting people under contract. I even recall that there have been contract judges and for a number of reasons it was felt that this was not appropriate. Amongst other reasons, it was felt that it would affect their independence, the security they would need for their appointment to last over time. With these disadvantages, it was felt that their actual appointment to the Judiciary would not be appropriate and this is a standard that is being upheld at the level of Commonwealth as a whole. How then if contractual appointment do cause these disadvantages in the judicial or legal field? How can these disadvantages not be apparent or be done away if they were to be a generalization of senior recruitment on contract in the Civil Service?

Answer

I have to make one thing clear on the appointment of judges is a separate recruitment process which I say had been recently taken over with the recent development because the recruitment of the civil servants is very much essential. In terms of open competition and getting recruits from outside, I think this is why the role of the Civil Service Commissioners becomes very critical because if there is an open competition at the senior level recruiting from outside it is run and managed by the Civil Service Commissioners in conjunction with the department. And

obviously, there is due diligence and security checks to make sure that people who are recruited are, of course, on merit. Having done that, of course, there is a proper question of induction into the Civil Service. Now, the appointment of Judges has recently changed because until April this year it was really a matter for the Lord Chancellor and the Department for Constitutional Affairs. Following the 2005 Constitutional Reform Act, three things happened - one is the establishment of the Supreme Court which is going to happen later as in 2009 and thereafter, but now, the Lord Chief Justice is the Head of the Judiciary and no longer the Lord Chancellor, and they established the Judicial Appointments Commission whose function is to select Judges for appointment and this is the one that I chair. I have about 15 Commissioners, some legal and our job is to do selection of Judges, to make a recommendation to the Lord Chancellor. We only make one recommendation and, of course, there will be a very rigorous process for that, and again, the appointment will be on merit. So, the safeguard is really on the appointment processes, on how Judges are appointed and Civil Servants are appointed.

Question (Mr Dabee)

How does one ensure that the contractual Senior Civil Servants does not try just to be at the service of their political masters to ensure that they keep having a renewal of their contracts?

Answer

This is the bed rock of the Civil Service i.e impartiality, and the Civil Service Commissioners' role is to very much safeguard that impartiality and that is why the question of promotion within the Civil Service is a matter for the Permanent Secretary and for not the Minister concerned. And there are, of course, codes, there are codes for special advisers, codes for Ministers and the Civil Service Codes and the Civil Servants are there to service to actually serve the government of the day with commitment on loyalty but to offer honest and objective advice. Now, what does that mean in practice is that something is part of the DNA of the Civil Service who have been there all the time. How you inculcate that notion of impartiality and this is why we, the Civil Service Commissioners, are very concerned about that and that is what lead to rewriting of the Civil Service Code and making sure it is properly monitored and promoted. And we will be actually monitoring to see how this is being promoted. So, guarding the impartiality of the Civil Service is not just the role of the Cabinet Secretary and the Civil Service Commissioners. It is incumbent even in the ministerial code for the Ministers and the Special Advisers to make sure that they do not ask Civil Servants to do anything that would impinge on their impartiality and of course there are tensions. That is what has been managed, I

think through all of this. About now three years ago the Committee on 'Standard in Public Life did an inquiry into the relationship between the Ministers, Special Advisers and his Executives, and they made certain recommendations and this is one reason why there is a push in the U.K. now to entrench these codes into a Civil Service Act. So, there is a whole movement there which is to safeguard this, while at the same time facilitating reform and making sure that people coming in the Civil Service at senior levels even if they have not actually been a part of that. Now, I would say be fair to say that it is sometimes difficult to recruit staff at the senior level from the outside particularly from the private sector because they do not like the level of accountability, because they are no longer their own masters, they are basically accountable to the Public Accounts Committee and, of course, to Parliament. Salaries are another disincentive as well. And those that join, at the bit end of their career they feel that they want to make something back in the society. And, of course then, they are probably inducted into what the Civil Service values are. We used to do appointments, I remember one of my questions used to be to anybody from outside is that if they were to get this job they would be converting themselves into a civil servant, do they know what it means. And we make sure that the application form and the information pack has within it the Civil Service Code, so, they were required to read it. So, we took steps to make sure that we did not unintentionally erode the values of the Civil Service because I do think that the impartiality in the Civil Service is being very important. And I was always astounded by the number of overseas visitors that I used to get as a Civil Service Commissioner who wanted to emulate the Civil Service that we have.

Question 6

Baroness, my name is Dass Appadoo, I am a Principal Assistant Secretary at the Ministry of External Communications. One word that has come out very prominently during your exposé is accountability and I would like to have one question on this concept of Public Sector Accountability. You know that it has become very fashionable these days and the trend is to set up Public Companies where the state is either directly or indirectly the shareholder and one direct consequence of this, the setting up of Public Companies, is essentially the erosion of Parliamentary Accountability. In Mauritius as in Britain and elsewhere, you have a lot of publicly owned companies; I would like to know from you how this concept of Public Parliamentary Accountability is ensured in your system. Thank you.

Answer

Now, you are absolutely right about accountability. Of course, there is Parliamentary accountability and the way this is really ensured is through the various select committees, the Public Accounts Committee. There is a very active select committee on public administration that takes very active interest in all issues to win public administration; they do inquiries where people are accountable. Now, in the Private Sector, there have been a number of inquiries into corporate governance, the rules and regulations which are there and corporate governance has become quite an important part of any company, in terms of the way they are run and how their accounts are filed. So, this is very heavy, regulating system. I think, if anything there is a view that industry is probably over-regulated in the U.K. and a better regulation taskforce was set up and they have recommended that there should be better regulations rather than over-regulations. So, this is another on-going debate in terms of how you regulate and I think it is again striking a balance between not shifting innovation and making sure that there is proper accountability with the whole range of regulations which apply to the private sector. But in terms of public sector, it is to Parliament and to select committees and even for the voluntary sector the accountability is through the charity commission. So, there are systems in place. But I think it is really striking the balance to make sure that there is not over-regulations but there is better regulations.

Question 7

My name is Kalyanee, my question is simple, Baroness. As you said before, Ministers are usually dictated, I would say rather advised by their Permanent Secretary and followed by the Civil Servants. What happens in cases whereby the Civil Servants or the Permanent Secretary mostly, if they are politically biased. In those cases, do you have a special clause in the Civil Servant Act whereby there is disciplinary Board or things like that? Thank you.

Answer

As I said, we do not have a Civil Service Act at the moment, the relationship between the Ministers and the Permanent Secretaries and the Civil Service is really laid out in the Ministerial Code and the Civil Service Code. It is incumbent on every civil servant to provide objective advice. The Minister can pay heed to the advice or not, but once a policy has been adopted and even in any country you would advise the civil servants to make sure that it is executed with commitment and loyalty. So, I think if there is a breach of the Civil Service Code or anything that happens, a different course of action and if a Civil Servant feels that they are asked to do something that they do not feel appropriate they can appeal under the Civil Service Code or as

a matter of conscience, some 50 of them do resign. But I think it will be contrary to the whole basis of the way the British Civil Service is organised, that Civil Servants will offer out a politically biased advice. If they do so, they will be doing something contrary to what they are required to do. But in my experience, I did not have a case of that nature. If anything, given the changes and the push of the Civil Service Reform, I think there has been a talk whether we want to go to the system like America, where you actually appoint civil servants to serve that particular administration and I think that has been resisted and the value of being impartial, Civil Service has been reinforced. Nobody cross parties, I think there is a commitment to an impartial Civil Service, that is not to say that there has been stringed at the edges and there is an the body like the Civil Service Commission and the Civil Service Code and of course the Parliament itself has made sure that that does not happen. It is something which has to be constantly watched, we have to be vigilant.

Question 8

I am Tulsiraj Benydin, I am President of the Federation of Civil Service Unions. I happen to be a trade unionist and a sort of a dinosaur because we resist changes from time to time not that we are against reforms but the way changes are being imposed on us. That is why at times we are opposed to them. For example, because you referred in the U.K. now you are working on the retirement age at 65, but we know I have read in various articles in the press that even the civil servants there they feel that, of right you should retire at 60. Those who want to continue, I think they have the option to go forward, if they want to stay two years more they are sure that they will be paid their full pension at the age of 60. We would like to know your advice on this issue. But at the same time, I know that some people want to work longer because also in the United States it is said that there has been a study which says that people will now live more than 100 years. Maybe 120 and at the age of 60 they will have their second or third diploma and at the age of 65 they might get married for a third time again. But what we should like to know we say that O.K if we have to proceed to 65, but we would like to know of right whether it should be at sixty years and also about the Public Service, we are a bit worried because when we speak about change Reform in the Civil Service at the same time we see that through globalisation, through outside pressure, there is the policy of privatization or commercialization or corporatisation. I think that while we want to give a world class civil service, a better service to the nation. On the other hand also, we are privatizing the services, so I would like to know what is your opinion on the issue. Thank you.

Answer

If I may say so, issues like that are no different to what you are stating. You know, there are obviously negotiations with the Civil Service Unions on some of these changes, inevitably any change produces consequences for one or the other. On the question of time limit, they would like flexibility, I would say and I think to some extent people who feel that the change is too much for them are choosing to retire early even 50 and 55. And it seems to be a better age to do so if we are to have a second career. I think they were looking at that as a possibility. On the question of privatization, obviously every organisation is looking for efficiency and getting better value for money and of course in areas like the National Health Service, for example, there is a move towards privatization and contracting out services and so on and so forth. And this inevitably has an impact on existing staff and jobs and so on. But I think if I may say so, there is some inevitability about some of these things. But ultimately, I think even if we are privatizing, the importance is that there is no deduction in the service provided because its objective is to make sure that there is good quality service, that should be the criteria. And one should automatically assume that privatization will lead to better quality service and I think it is a question like most things that whenever change happens, you have to work in partnership and I think the Civil Service Unions in the U.K on the whole has a very good dialogue with the senior managers. At the same level, for example, when I was first Commissioner I had a very good relationship with the officer who was in the first division Civil Service. In other words, there were prior discussions to some of these changes. Of course, round the table one would be able to say what is the impact and how this is to be managed but I think that there is some inevitability that the changes would bring, some fall out, and that something has to be managed.

Question 9

Baroness Prashar, I am Prem Beeharry, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development. My question would relate to the Civil Service Commissioners. You spoke about the role and functions of the Commissioners. Perhaps you could elaborate about the mode of appointment and the tenure of security. Here in Mauritius, we have the Public Service Commission, perhaps the roles and attributions are not the same as the Commissioners in U.K., but here, this body is the central body responsible for recruitment and discipline in the Civil Service. The tenure of the Commissioners here depends on the government of the day. Perhaps would you be able to elaborate on the mode of appointment and role and the tenure of office of the Commissioners in U.K.

Answer

Just to clarify the role of the Civil Service Commission in the U.K. is with recruitment only, they are not concerned with discipline, that is a matter of the departments themselves. Now, in terms of the recruitment The Civil Service Commissioners are appointed through open competition. When I was appointed, I applied for it, through open competition and the tenure is 3 + 2 i.e. 5 years maximum. In other words, we are not dependent because we are neither appointed by the Ministers and neither Civil Servants. So, in that sense the independence of the Civil Service is underpinned through that. So, I was appointed in 2000 and I left in 2005. So, in other words, there is independence and open competition of recruitment of Civil Service Commissioners, and I think that is very important because it gives them the independence. There were other changes which came about through my recommendation, was that whenever a Civil Service Commissioner is appointed, it used to be done with the approval of the Prime Minister of the day. He makes recommendation that he feels and I suggested that if the Civil Service Commissioners are there to guard their impartiality, appointment should be cleared with the opposition leaders. So, my successor, when she was appointed, her appointment was not cleared by the Prime Minister but was by the leader of the opposition to reinforce their independence.

Question 10

Thank you, Baroness, for this interesting lecture. I am actually a trade unionist. My name is Sadien. I am happy to say that in U.K. trade unions are partners in progress. I believe that the best way to bring reforms is to own it at the very initial stage when these reforms are being discussed. I have got in fact two questions. At this point of Budget restrictions, this is a problem that many countries are facing right now. How do you reconcile the retention of talents and the budget restrictions in terms of getting the best talents to stay in the Public Service instead of going elsewhere where there is more motivation? Secondly, I need to be corrected, I understand that in U.K. there is a category of officers who are allowed to do active politics. If this is the case, because I learnt in some of those documents in the past, that there is a group of Public Servants that are allowed to do active politics, so, if this is the case, how do you ensure, if this is not the case, the question is not to be answered? I mean, how do you ensure impartiality on the part of these Civil Servants? And thirdly, very quickly the cause of privatization, your own experience in U.K. of privatization. When the Public Service is not delivering, the best way is to privatize. So, what are your comments on this?

Answer

On the question of active political career this is not the case for the Civil Service. It is allowed in some circumstances in local government, but not in the Civil Service. On the question of privatization, for me, it is not a panacea that everything in the private sector is good and everything in the public sector is bad and I think this is something that is around where you want to emulate everything in the private sector and my conversations with the private sector people was when they come in, they find that managing the ambiguity in the public sector and specially accountability issues are far more complex than ever in the private sector because in the private sector they are concerned with the bottom line whereas in the public sector you have to reconcile a number of perspectives. And I would tell you a couple of my colleagues who were Civil Service Commissioners came from the private sector, and when they actually began to see what was actually going on they were quite astounded. I think that managing the ambiguity is quite a skill, but in terms of delivery of services I think I go back to the point I made in my speech that we have to see which is the best mode of delivery which will give you the best results and I think a lot more work is to be done, and that is why I am pleased with the National Government that it started to look at this, which is the best mode of delivery and how you would deliver and what is the best method. What can the Civil Service do itself what it can do through others and what it can do through privatization? I think that what is called blindly following one course of action, that I object to. I think it is a question really of what the Civil Service is for and how best it can do the best service and through what method and that is really where I think the Civil Service itself has to develop a capacity to be able to have the knowledge and know-how, rather than blindly following the policy of privatization.

Question 11

I am Commissioner Gopalsing, Head of the Mauritius Police Force. In the context of the current global war on terror and the increased security concerns that need to be addressed on all fronts - we don't only need effective managers, but we need people of high level integrity and security trust, especially in what we call strategic positions - having to do with defence, security, Home Affairs, immigration control. I would like to know what is the current policy with regard to vetting, both open and secret in Civil Service in U.K. Thank you.

Answer:

I don't have a close knowledge of vetting in the police service as it is a separate service but in the Civil Service there is obviously due diligence and if you are joining the security services there are redress processes as if you are joining the Home Office, or it is to do where security is an issue. But frankly to say, I do not have a detailed knowledge. Obviously, it is very complicated because given the pluralistic nature of our society these days, you have to reconcile with issues that have to do with discrimination, legislation, and of course, security matters. So, it remains a very delicate issue, but needless to say, it is increasingly important.

VOTE OF THANKS

Hon Prime Minister, Hon Deputy Prime Minister, Hon Ministers, Hon Members of the National Assembly, Baroness Usha Prashar, H.E The British High Commissioner, The Secretary to Cabinet and Head of the Civil Service, Supervising Officers of Ministries, distinguished guests, colleagues, ladies and gentlemen. I deem it a great privilege to have been requested by the Head of the Civil Service, to extend the vote of thanks for this function.

Everyone present here today, is indeed privileged to have had the opportunity of listening to such a brilliant lecture on Civil Service Reform. I would like therefore, to first and foremost thank Baroness Usha Prashar who, in spite of her significant commitment as cross bench member of the House of Lords and Chairperson of the Judicial Appointments Commission among others, has kindly agreed to visit Mauritius and to share with us this morning, her rich experience in the Public Service. There is no doubt that her short stay among us will help our civil service in its endeavour to deliver world class customer focused services. Our Mauritian Civil Servants are keen to learn from the best examples of change, wherever they are to be found, and to apply what they learn with the confidence and skills required for that purpose. The interactive session, we had just now been through, is proof enough of our passion for the sector we are serving and our unlimited quest for more information and knowledge.

I would like now, to express our hearty thanks to The Honourable Prime Minister, who has, without fail since his coming into office, seized every single opportunity to bring a building block to the reform of the civil service. The recent decision for the institution of a Public Service Excellence Award is another reflection of your commitment and that of your Government for a quality civil service.

A special word of appreciation goes to the Secretary to Cabinet and Head of the Civil Service for his relentless effort to the cause of reform in the public sector.

I also wish to thank our invitees for taking the time and trouble in being with us this morning.

On behalf of each one of us present here, I would like, once more Baroness, to thank you for your inspiring lecture and for the insights that it has brought to us. We wish you happiness and success in all your endeavours in the years to come. Thank you.

Hon Prime Minister, Hon Ministers, Colleagues and Friends, I would now like to invite you for refreshments.