

I do not mean to suggest that the fundamental distinction between the function of the civil servant and the function of the political authority - Parliament, the Cabinet, the Minister - has been altered. It has not. Happily, under our Parliamentary system what Sir William Harcourt once said is still true - "Political heads of departments are necessary to tell the civil servant what the public will not stand". Nevertheless, more and more, the very weight of public affairs has forced the Minister to cast an increasing share of the administrative burden upon his officials. And whatever the quantity and quality of his assistance, the tax upon a modern Minister's physical and intellectual capacities remains enormous. The Minister, therefore, in these conditions, cannot do otherwise than entrust to his subordinates almost everything except major policy decisions. At the same time, after more than a dozen years of close association with Ministers I can reassure you on one point - Ministers really do make the big decisions.

These are the circumstances, deriving from the development of our political democracy which have, in recent years, so greatly enhanced the position of the civil servant in our national life. These are the conditions which, imposing these larger responsibilities, have made it imperative, in the interests of the nation, that we should have in Canada a Public Service of the highest quality, of the highest standards.

The failure of an inefficient or negligent civil servant can rarely perhaps be measured in terms of human lives in the same sense as that of an incompetent or cowardly commander in the field. But history, and indeed the world around us today, affords some dramatic examples of what a good and what a bad public service may accomplish. A proud constitution, studded with declarations of human rights and civil liberties, is no sure barrier against corruption, subversion or even the violent overthrow of the state. Indeed no single factor - neither the law, nor political traditions, nor even the character of a nation - are alone sufficient to guarantee stability, order and justice. But an independent, honest and devoted civil service is one of the proven bulwarks of continuity and freedom.

If we are to develop and maintain a Public Service of high quality, we must be able to attract to its ranks some of the best of our young men and women. Here it is that our educational institutions, our colleges and universities, have a major, an essential part to play.

In the first place they must adhere to their best traditions and provide their students with the opportunities of sound learning. More important to the future servant of the state than any courses in government or public administration - however admirable these may be, and they can be of real value - more important still are the basic elements of what used to be known as a liberal education. Special knowledge, special skills of many kinds - these too will be necessary to the aspiring candidate for the senior posts. But such technical qualifications cannot alone provide what the nation most requires of its more responsible officials - the intellectual and moral disciplines which derive from sound general education. Years ago Macaulay insisted on what he called "general intelligence" in contrast to special training as the basis of selection for administrative officers in the British Civil Service. To my mind, among the most important qualification for the higher posts in our own Public Service are those which go to make up this "general intelligence" - a sense of proportion and historical perspective, awareness of social and