

Speech by Sir Richard Wilson: 26 March 2002

Portrait of a Profession Revisited

On the walls of my private office hang the photographs of my seven distinguished predecessors as Secretary of the Cabinet. I sometimes find myself staring at them for inspiration, not always successfully I admit.

A week or two ago I found myself looking at the great Lord Bridges, Secretary of the Cabinet and War Cabinet from 1938 to 1946. I wondered what he would have made of it if in the space of a week one of his predecessors had published an article in *The Spectator* advertised as '*The Descent of the Civil Servant*' and another had appeared on the Frost programme to reassure the world that the Service was still in good shape.

Both predecessors, Lords Butler and Armstrong, I hasten to say, were acting in the most supportive spirit and spoke from what for all of us is a deeply shared view of the role of the Civil Service. But, staring at Bridges, I could see a bubble emerging from his mouth enquiring: what precisely is happening on your watch, Sir Richard?

This a good question which deserves an answer.

What follows is my own analysis, although the Government is of course publicly committed to a Civil Service Bill which I shall come to later. Not everyone will agree with what I say. But the issues need to be aired.

Serving the government of the day

To begin at the beginning, civil servants are employed by the Crown out of money voted by Parliament to maintain the functions of the State in accordance with the wishes of Parliament within the framework of the law.

Because the government of the day commands a majority in Parliament, the Civil Service works under the direction of that government, executes the programme of that government and owes its loyalty to that government. But the Service is not simply the creature of any government: the Crown in Parliament is supreme.

Because governments change, policies change, functions change and laws change; and the Civil Service changes too. It has never remained the same for long. But it has established over time an important character which I would argue makes it an institution of value and a force for good in public life, provided always that it continues to perform well.

Character of the Service

How would I define its character?

First, integrity. I believe that it is a real benefit to the nation to know that the permanent body of men and women at the core of the State are

committed to public service and to the conduct of public affairs with integrity. I do not intend to imply that others lack integrity. I simply make the point because there is ample evidence abroad of the harm that can follow if public servants lack this tradition.

Second, political impartiality. I believe that there is real benefit in having a non-partisan Civil Service. This is not because politics is a dirty business. I have worked for a great many politicians for 35 years and I know them to be decent, honourable people as a breed.

It is however fundamental to the working of our constitution that governments should use the resources entrusted to them, including the Civil Service, for the benefit of the country as a whole and not for the benefit of their political party; and that opposition parties should feel confident that this position is being respected. The non-political character of our Civil Service underpins that convention. Very few countries have such a Civil Service. It is an asset which I believe politicians of all parties value.

Third, merit, by which I mean ability to do the job plus the right personal qualities. We turned our face long ago against patronage. There is real benefit in recruiting and promoting permanent civil servants on the basis of merit rather than their political loyalty or personal connections. Again this is not because political loyalty in itself is bad: it is not. But the vital thing is to get the best people into key jobs. The merit principle does this and underpins political impartiality.

Fourth, the ability to work for successive governments. The permanence of a non-political Service carries with it a commitment to certain standards of conduct and discretion which ensure that it can provide loyal service to whatever government is in power, responding flexibly to new political priorities. It also ensures that there is in every government department a body of knowledge and experience - a corporate memory - which is at the disposal of every government, however inexperienced. I believe this to be to the public good too, all the more so given that much of our constitution is unwritten.

And finally, public service. What attracts many people to the Civil Service is the wish to make a contribution to the community. We have some of the best, most challenging jobs in the economy, at every level. This gives us a deeply committed workforce.

The Civil Service is in transition

Now let me turn to the question: what is happening on my watch?

The short answer is: fundamental change which is not widely understood.

The Civil Service is in transition. Quite apart from the demands of governments, the external world is changing at a pace which affects all governments which come to power. Globalisation, science and technology,

changes in social attitudes and behaviour, the power of the media: all are powerful forces.

The work of the Civil Service lies at these frontiers, and in particular at the frontiers of constitutional change, management change and political change. It is in a sense a shock-absorber at the heart of the State.

Modernisation

The need to modernise is at the top of our agenda. This is not new, but more than ever it is challenging.

The world of Sir Humphrey has long since gone. We are not a static force, resisting change from the trenches. We cannot afford to be. We have to earn our keep afresh with every new government. The size and shape of the Service left by one government may not meet the needs of the next.

It is a sobering thought that for over 30 years every government has pressed the Civil Service to improve its performance. We have done a lot to meet this demand: the Service which I leave is very different from the Service which I joined in 1966. And yet the pressure for further improvement is great.

Units over the years

The Fulton Report in 1968 set the ball rolling with an agenda which was hugely influential. It culminated in the major decentralisation of management functions to departments and agencies in the 1990s, the Continuity and Change White Paper in 1995 and the steady move to more open government. The Office of Public Service Reform set up last year is in the direct line of descent of this tradition.

There has been constant pressure to improve policy-making. Mr Heath set up the Central Policy Review Staff with a remit to take a 'synoptic view' across government. Its successors - the Policy Unit in Number 10 in the 1980s and 1990s, and now the Forward Strategy Unit, the Performance and Innovation Unit, the Social Exclusion Unit - have all reflected a need felt by successive Prime Ministers to challenge the thinking and strategy of departments, and to handle more effectively issues that cut across departments.

There has been constant pressure to cut red tape and reduce the burden on business. The Deregulation Unit was established under Mrs Thatcher. The fight still goes on in the Regulatory Impact Unit and its Task Force.

There has been a continuous search for efficiency. The Efficiency Unit under Mrs Thatcher devised 'Next Step' agencies in which over half the Civil Service now work. Later there was the drive for market testing and privatisation. Over twenty-five years the size of the Civil Service dropped by about 40 per cent from 746,000 to 480,000.

Finally, there has been the growing recognition of the needs of the consumer. The Charter Mark Unit set up under Mr Major still continues. The present government has committed itself to major improvements in the quality of key services, supported by the Delivery Unit in the Cabinet Office.

Units at the centre of government are not new. I am not suggesting that they have now reached some final, perfect form. The centre of government has always evolved and searched for new ways to be effective. The search will continue. I am just making the point that establishing new Units at the centre of government to tackle long-standing problems is an old practice.

The message from governments for over 30 years is clear: the Civil Service must modernise and change if it is to remain fit for purpose. We have accepted this and taken it to heart.

Current reforms

What is different now is the scale of what is required to meet the present government's programme of delivery.

Any organisation in any sector would be challenged to do what we have set out to do on education, health, crime and transport. Just consider what is involved in the National Health Service, with a workforce of around one million people, the largest in Europe, one of the largest in the world save only for the Indian Railways.

I and my permanent secretary colleagues recognised this challenge in December 1999 when we published a major five-year programme of reform. We are only halfway through it but we have met or exceeded all our targets so far.

We are opening up the Service to talent. We have increased the number of Senior Civil Service vacancies put out to open competition by 88 per cent in two years: two-thirds were filled from outside. Nine out of thirteen posts at permanent secretary level have been put out to open competition since the reform programme was launched: five have been filled from other sectors. We have brought in over 100 secondees to do prominent key tasks. We have organised 4,000 interchange opportunities in the past year. We are on track to meet our diversity targets.

We are radically improving our management. We have introduced a new system for managing pay and performance in the Senior Civil Service, offering high rewards for the best performers. Everyone at this level, including permanent secretaries and me, receive feedback on their performance from staff, colleagues and managers. And we are strengthening our leadership: the first 100 people have now embarked on our new Public Service Leaders Scheme.

We are competing for talent in a tough market. But people want to work for us. In a survey published last week, three Government departments

featured in the top twenty-five organisations graduates wanted to join. We still attract the brightest and best: we had 11,200 applications for 250 places in our general fast stream competition in 2000.

We are winning prizes. The Knowledge Network, a project led by the Office of the e-Envoy, won a prestigious award for Best Management Practice in IT last year. The Inland Revenue at Cumbernauld won a UK Business Excellence Award in 2000. Central government has been rated first above 14 other employment sectors for its work in championing and investing in women's progress.

We know there is much more to do, but we have a very good story to tell so far. I commend our leaflet *'The Service is changing'*.

A lot more to do

There are of course still many questions we need to address.

Do we need an even greater flow in and out of the Service? Probably yes.

How do we get the people we need to do the job now without necessarily keeping them for life? The search for a greater variety of employment patterns is rising up the agenda.

What skills do we need in the 21st century? Traditionally we have encouraged those required for high-quality advice to Ministers. Increasingly we need top-class managers who can deliver large-scale services and projects. Do we need to do more to equip our people to give them new skills and experience? Certainly.

Are we paying enough attention to leadership skills and teams at the top of departments? Until recently, no; but that is changing.

Are we tough enough in confronting poor performance? Answer, not yet.

Has the delegation of management functions to departments made cross-departmental working harder, for instance on IT systems? How do we get more movement between departments, particularly at the senior levels? How do we maintain our drive for diversity? Are our recruitment systems - and salaries - fit for purpose? Is the personnel function in departments sufficiently professional?

These are all questions that I and my permanent secretary colleagues know we have to tackle, and are tackling.

As always with rapid change, people inside and outside get worried that we are losing old values, throwing out the baby with the bath water. My permanent secretary colleagues and I are as committed as anyone to these values. But we know that the best way of protecting them is to move with

the times and to show that we can rise successfully to the challenges we face in a modern world.

Constitutional change

Modernisation is not the only kind of challenge.

I believe that when the history books come to be written they will say that we are living through a period of great constitutional change.

Our entry into Europe in 1973 was a big constitutional event. Over 30 years the implications of membership have broken across Whitehall like a wave in slow motion, as department after department has gradually recognised that the European dimension is integral to its daily business.

Devolution to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland was a big constitutional event. It happened extraordinarily quickly and with apparent ease. But it has required the Civil Service not only to set up the new administrations but also to define new relationships and new ways of working between administrations, and to evolve new loyalties and new accountabilities.

I believe that the Human Rights Act, the Data Protection Act and the Freedom of Information Act will in a different way prove to be important constitutionally because of their potential to affect the relationship between the individual and the State and to alter the ways in which governments and civil servants do their business, internally as well as externally.

The relationship between central and local government is changing. By a complex process over twenty years or so central government is now held responsible by the public for the quality of services delivered locally – education, for instance, or policing – even though statutorily and constitutionally they are not primary responsibilities of central government.

Indeed, central government now sets national standards for many major public services which are delivered, not by the Civil Service, but through local government, other public bodies, the voluntary sector and even in some cases the private sector. Ministerial accountability has become an extended concept.

One can argue that the decision of the electorate to leave one political party in power for eighteen years was a significant constitutional event. We can be proud of the way the Civil Service managed the handover from one government to another in 1997, under Robin Butler's leadership. It went well. But long periods of opposition mean a longer period of learning for all concerned when a new generation of Ministers finally comes to power.

It is perhaps part of the great British tradition that we make big constitutional changes as if we were under anaesthetic and only notice them gradually after many years. It is perhaps part of the tradition of the Civil

Service to present to the world a calm picture of business as usual while paddling away furiously under the surface to make things work.

Neither tradition should obscure the fact that change is taking place, that the Civil Service is at the heart of it and that it is, I believe, managing it well.

I shall come to the idea of a Civil Service Act. But seen in the perspective I have just described, such an Act would be one piece in a much larger constitutional jigsaw which over a longer timescale is greatly altering the world of the Service.

The political environment

The political environment in which the Civil Service operates is also changing.

This brings me to the charge that the Civil Service has become politicised. 'Politicisation' is a difficult term because it is so often used without definition. I would like to address some of the main concerns.

Permanent appointments

First, the charge has been made over the years that Ministers want civil servants who are 'one of us' or alternatively 'cronies', depending on which decade you are in.

In practice there is no evidence that Ministers want the permanent civil servants who work for them to share their political views. I have never known a politician who has shown the blindest bit of interest in which political party I voted for, and I have never heard of a colleague experiencing such an interest either.

What Ministers are interested in, quite rightly, is having competent people working for them, the best people to do the job. The eternal challenge for the Civil Service is to win the trust of the government of the day in its ability to serve them well. It requires a constant supply of able rising stars in every field. But that is not politicisation.

Not being dragged into the political arena

Second, I do not believe that the Civil Service is being politicised by allowing itself to be dragged into the political arena.

Senior civil servants often work closely with politicians in an intensely partisan political environment. We have always done so. We are impartial but we cannot ignore politics or pretend that they do not exist.

This comes as a surprise to some people. There was a complaint a while ago that the Civil Service was being politicised because it was being used to implement the political manifesto of the Government. That is what we are there for.

To pull off this trick, of working closely with politicians in a fierce partisan environment without being drawn into politics, the relationship between civil servants and Ministers has to be one of mutual trust and understanding. This is central to the Civil Service Code, and to the effectiveness of any government. Anyone who has run a large organisation knows that the success of the top team depends crucially on loyalty and trust.

We ought perhaps to ask whether the dangers of drawing civil servants into the political arena are growing.

The political environment now includes much more news coverage around the clock, more competitive, more aggressive, more questioning, less respectful of authority.

The public profile of civil servants is becoming more prominent. Our degree of scrutiny by Parliament is becoming more real, not least as Select Committees grow in importance. Our actions are becoming subject to greater public comment, as if we were figures in our own right rather than servants of the government.

We have a strong gene against this.

The trap is obvious. If permanent civil servants were to become public figures in a way which led Parliament and the media to look to them for their personal views and advice to Ministers, as opposed to the policies and views of the Government they serve, it is easy to imagine how loyalty and trust could be eroded.

This is a question both of principle - we are there to serve the government of the day - and professionalism. The pressures for politicisation would become much stronger if political appointees were the only people the Minister could trust.

I think the Civil Service has been remarkably successful in avoiding being drawn into the political arena over the years. But the importance of the Civil Service Code and the boundaries which it draws around behaviour is very great if we are to continue to maintain a correct relationship with successive governments.

Leaking

Perhaps the biggest threat to mutual confidence over the last decade or two has come from unauthorised leaking.

Given how much happens in government it is striking that there are relatively few serious leaks. The great majority of civil servants understand the importance of trust. But just a handful can do great harm by leaking against the government of the day. It is deeply corrosive when it happens, under whatever government, and I strongly condemn it.

I believe however that there needs to be a better avenue of redress for people who are discontented for whatever reason, to reduce the temptation to leak to the press or the Opposition. At present the avenue of redress leads through an individual's line manager to the permanent secretary and beyond that to the Head of the Civil Service or the First Civil Service Commissioner. People see this route as too daunting, 'too nuclear' as one individual said to me.

That is why I would like the Civil Service Commissioners to have a more formal responsibility for ensuring that there are effective, accessible arrangements in place for individuals with grievances in departments, and for taking a more active role if things seem to be going wrong, although equally we must not put them into the position of having to investigate or refuse to investigate every unsubstantiated allegation that gets thrown up. Their role should be internal, free from partisan external pressure.

Using the resources of government for Party advantage

Let me return to the issue of politicisation. It is a longstanding convention that governments must not use the resources of the State improperly to gain Party political advantage. Here again, I do not believe the Civil Service is being politicised. But for many years the conditions in which we operate have been slowly changing, not least because of the pressure on all political parties to maintain a permanent level of campaigning between elections.

Thomas Szasz, the American writer, once said:

'In the animal kingdom, the rule is, eat or be eaten; in the human kingdom, define or be defined.'

This is certainly true in modern politics. No government can afford to ignore how it is being defined in Parliament and the media.

It is this perhaps that gives an edge to allegations about 'spin'. It has always been the case that the actions and words of government have a political significance. No one has ever seen this as a problem for the Civil Service provided that presentation was handled in a proper way for the purposes of government, not Party.

Here again, I believe that the Civil Service has done well in advising successive governments about what is acceptable, and governments have accepted that advice. But the issues and judgements perhaps become more difficult over time.

Certainly the demand for high levels of professionalism in the Government Information and Communications Service have become ever greater, simply because in this media age any major organisation must take seriously the press and media, and deal with them professionally.

Special advisers

Finally, I would like to come the question of special advisers about whom all sorts of concerns have been expressed.

I am conscious that anything I say - or do not say - on this subject is liable to be misinterpreted, either as an attack on the Government, or a rearguard action to protect Civil Service interests, or a mouthing of words given to me by somebody else. None of these is true.

Let me be clear. Special advisers have long been part of our political system, and as an institution they are here to stay. In my view we should take a positive approach to their role, bring them in from the shadows, put them on a proper footing, as clearly as we can, and recognise that they have a legitimate contribution to make to the working of government as it is evolving.

I believe it is right that Ministers should be able to have special advisers to act as their political eyes and ears, help the department understand the mind of the Minister, work alongside officials on the Minister's behalf and handle party-political aspects of government business. They can help protect the Civil Service against politicisation.

I think a debate about their role is useful. I welcome the consultation document issued by the Wicks Committee.

The debate needs to address the facts. For instance, only Ministers who attend Cabinet are allowed to appoint special advisers. The usual limit is two each.

There are 81 special advisers compared with 3,429 members of the Senior Civil Service.

Most special advisers are not 'spin doctors'. There are 11 out of the 81 who are employed primarily in the field of communications and perhaps another 30 who, as well as policy development, deal with presentation and speeches without necessarily talking to the press themselves. But most contribute behind the scenes in ways that could by no stretch of the imagination be called spin.

These are the facts. The question is: what should be the framework within which they operate?

Framework for special advisers

I would like to test out six propositions as a contribution to the debate.

First, as I say, we should accept that special advisers are now established as a proper and legitimate feature of the constitutional framework within which Cabinet Ministers work.

Second, as the Government has already agreed, there should be a limit on the number of special advisers in each government, set by Parliament at the beginning of each new Parliament.

Third, rather than engage in abstruse discussions about what special advisers can do, we should say clearly and firmly what they cannot do and, beyond that, leave each Cabinet Minister to determine how they want to deploy them.

I think it should be possible reasonably briefly to define the things which special advisers must not do. For instance, without trying to be exhaustive, I have in mind the following.

Special advisers should not behave illegally or improperly. They should observe the same standards of conduct expected from permanent civil servants other than of course those relating to impartiality and the ability to serve future governments. The Special Advisers' Code already sets out standards.

Special advisers should not ask civil servants to do anything improper or illegal, or anything which might undermine the role and duties of permanent civil servants as described in the Civil Service Code. This means for instance that they should not do anything to undermine the political impartiality of civil servants or the duty of civil servants to give their own best advice to Ministers.

Special advisers should not have any role in the recruitment and promotion of permanent civil servants, or in their line management including the assessment of their performance and pay. Acting as eyes and ears, they are an extension of the Minister, not part of the permanent department.

If this general approach were adopted, the debate could then be about the precise boundaries of what was and was not acceptable, in relation to special advisers both in departments and Number 10 where special conditions apply.

This may sound a negative approach. But by defining the area of what was not acceptable it would free up Ministers to deploy their special advisers as they wished within the framework which had been created. We might consider whether the Minister should agree with the permanent secretary, who as Accounting Officer has responsibility for the governance of the department, what role each special adviser would play, and with what authority, from the outset of each appointment, though this would need to be thought through.

I believe we can do more to help special advisers play their role effectively, for instance through proper induction training. We are now organising this.

Fourth, there should be an effective grievance procedure for any civil servant who felt that a special adviser was abusing his or her position. I have already touched on the role the Civil Service Commissioners might play.

Fifth, special advisers should work under the direction of the Minister who appoints them. They should account to that Minister and to the Prime Minister who authorises their appointment. The Minister should be able to ask the permanent secretary to handle some aspect of a special adviser's management if necessary. But the basic responsibility for special advisers, for their selection and their actions, should rest with the Minister who is accountable to Parliament for them.

Finally, where a Minister wants an expert adviser who is non-political and needed solely because of a particular expertise, this should fall outside the special adviser system and be handled through the Civil Service Commission, perhaps on a short-service contract.

These are the main propositions which I would suggest for discussion. If they, or something like them, were to be generally acceptable, they could be embodied in a Civil Service Act.

Arguments against an Act

Let me turn finally to the question whether we now need a Civil Service Act. A certain amount depends of course on what it would do, but general opinion over the years has been against an Act, regardless of what it said. Let me briefly run through the arguments against an Act.

First, it is said, the Civil Service is an institution of great pragmatism that evolves over time and works best without being hamstrung by legislation.

Second, it is unwise to stir things up if you are unsure what demons you may accidentally unleash in the process.

Third, 'if it ain't broke, don't fix it'. For all the media comment, so the argument runs, things are still working well. What is it that suddenly requires a Bill?

Fourth, an Act would achieve nothing. Many of the things which would be in a Bill already have the force of law through Orders in Council. If there are issues, they are issues about behaviour. Legislation would add nothing except perhaps greater legalism in the relationship between Ministers and civil servants which would be a pity.

Finally, a Civil Service Act would make no sense unless it was part of a larger piece of legislation which covered the constitutional position of Ministers themselves and of government: in short, a written constitution, something which I hasten to add is not in contemplation.

Case for an Act

These arguments have weight but over the last decade the balance has gradually been tipping the other way.

I myself do not think for a moment that an Act would solve everything. In particular, it would be no guarantee of good behaviour. It would be modest and useful rather than earthshaking. But I would welcome it. Let me summarise why.

As I have explained, the Civil Service for some years now has been going through great change, partly constitutional, partly managerial, partly in the political environment. It faces even greater change now because of the challenge of improving the quality of public services.

An Act could provide a forward-looking framework for the continued development of the Civil Service. Ministers and the public are entitled to expect that the Service has the people and the culture to perform at a high level of effectiveness. Recruitment, and the role of the Civil Service Commissioners who oversee the principles of recruitment, is at the heart of this. The Act would put the Commissioners onto a statutory basis, as the Government has promised.

The process of change occasionally throws up issues about the conventions which underpin the Civil Service, not just under this government but previously. These issues are many and varied: they concern for instance the role of special advisers, the role of Ministers in management matters, the principles governing Government communications and publications, opening up the Civil Service to outsiders, modernising recruitment, structures, ways of working, and so on.

Very often these issues are about boundaries, the boundaries between what is and is not acceptable, the boundaries between Government and party, grey areas where judgements are difficult and different people acting in good faith may properly come to different conclusions.

There is a danger that if we continue to leave these issues unattended they will fester. They could increasingly become rubbing points, matters of political controversy used to embarrass governments, damaging the Civil Service and perversely making it more difficult to bring about the changes which are needed.

A Civil Service Act could play a positive role in providing a framework for clarifying the boundaries, easing the rubbing points and providing a confident basis for accepting the kind of modernisation I have described without the fear that something important was being lost.

Finally, an Act would bring the Civil Service more directly under the oversight of Parliament.

What would the Act cover?

What specifically would the Act cover? This is for debate; but I would make it short and brief, and cover five main things.

First, it should take power by regulation to define the Civil Service. At present there is no definition of a civil servant.

Second, it should recognise on its face the fundamental principles of selection and promotion on merit and the political impartiality of the Service.

Third, it should provide for the Civil Service Code and the Special Advisers' Code to be given legal force by regulation subject to the approval of Parliament.

Fourth, it should put the role of the Civil Service Commissioners onto a statutory footing, both as guardians of the principles governing recruitment and in relation to grievances under the Codes, as I mentioned earlier, making their annual report to Parliament.

Finally, it would implement the Government's commitment to the regulation by Parliament of the number and the role of special advisers.

There are aspects of this which need more thought. The Government plans to issue a discussion paper. But in essence the Act would bring together and codify a great deal of work which has already been done in these areas, not least by the Cabinet Office on the two Codes and by the Civil Service Commissioners on recruitment.

It would be an Act rooted in the need to serve present and future governments and the public, and not a vehicle for vested interests or nostalgia.

It would be based on a broad consensus of cross-party support and informed opinion, and not become a political football.

It would be framed in a way which supported the modernisation of the Civil Service without making its management rigid or inflexible.

If we can meet these requirements - and I think we can - it would be another building block in our ambitions to modernise the Civil Service.

Conclusion

I started with Bridges and I will end with him.

His celebrated Rede lecture, *'Portrait of a Profession'*, in 1950 painted a picture of a Civil Service which had changed with the times but developed a strong and enduring character and culture which he believed provided the country with outstanding governance.

If he were to return today he would, I suspect, be astonished by the world in which the modern Civil Service works. But he would recognise the enduring character of the Service.

He might ask whether people were still proud of the Civil Service. I would have to remind him that he said, rightly, that the British are not fond of authority and that civil servants must be content to be ranked as figures of fun with mothers-in-law and Wigan pier.

But the question needs to be asked. People going through great change deserve encouragement when they do well. I would like to pay a warm tribute to the quality and character of the Civil Service and to the way in which civil servants at all levels have responded to the call for change in the time that I have had the privilege to be their Head. They are marvellous people.

I think we can be confident that the Service will in Bridges' phrase continue to be one of the most worthwhile, if also perhaps one of the least understood, of professions. We can be confident that it will continue to serve different governments well, that it will go on changing to meet the needs of the times and that it will retain its enduring character.

A Civil Service Act would not alter that. It would free us up to get on with the job within a clearer framework.

In the words of the Northcote- Trevelyan report, *'A few clauses would accomplish all that is proposed in this paper, and it is our firm belief that a candid statement of the grounds of the measure would insure its success and popularity in the country'*.

It has been my aim today to provide this candid statement; and it is also my answer to Bridges' portrait hanging on my wall.

Thank you for listening so patiently.

rtjw
26 March 2002