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ADDRESS OF
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NOVA UNIVERSITY COMMENCEMENT EXERCISES
WAR MEMORIAL AUDITORIUM
FORT LAUDERDALE, FLORIDA
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Elmer B. Staats

[THE ROLE OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATORS
IN A NEW ERA]

Today, the first commencement at which Nova is conferring doctorates of public administration, is a notable occasion for this university. It is a special day for you who are receiving degrees. It also marks the culmination of extraordinary efforts by the founders of Nova, who had

- the foresight to perceive the new issues and problems faced by the public sector today,
- the understanding that management does make a difference, and
- the faith that new educational approaches for public administration could help public managers and society resolve those problems.

For the public service and the academic world, the unique professional education provided to mid-career people in government represents a hopeful and imaginative departure from traditional modes of training. The idealistic cries for academic "relevance" voiced so stridently by restless youth have been converted here into reality. The cross-pollination of academic theory with practical experience cannot help but broaden the horizons and capacities of administrators. At the same time, it should bring new perspectives to the academic world.

While this type of training must be rewarding for Nova's students, it is also filling critical management needs in today's public

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sector. Public administration and related professions, such as accounting and financial management, were first developed in an era when the scope of governmental functions was far more limited and less complex than today.

The prevailing public administration theory, in its early stages, was based on the separability of politics and administration, best represented in the work of Frank Goodnow. When government's main responsibility was providing basic services, the government administrator often was viewed more as a clerk than a highly trained manager or professional. His primary function was to execute efficiently policies determined by political officials. Governmental budgeting and accounting was primarily oriented toward controlling expenditures through strict line-item budgets, and auditing was primarily to determine the legality and accuracy of financial transactions.

Beginning in the mid-thirties, the role and size of government in meeting social and economic needs changed markedly; the role of those who train for the public service has similarly undergone profound change. Today, the Federal Government's major responsibilities include:

- advancing science and technology;
- eliminating poverty;
- providing manpower training to the disadvantaged;
- improving education at every level;
- exploring outer space;
- rejuvenating our inner cities;
- grappling with our critical shortage of energy; and
- protecting our environment.

While Federal responsibilities have grown dramatically, State and local governments have expanded at even a faster pace. Between 1954 and 1974, State and local expenditures increased from 8.2 percent to 14.7 percent of the Gross National Product. Federal spending hovered near 20 percent of the Gross National Product during this period. Similarly, State and local employment rose from 4.6 million workers to 11.6 million over this 20-year period, while Federal civilian employment increased only from 2.2 to 2.7 million employees. Overall, the public sector is the fastest growing component of our economy.

The growth of the State and local government has been partly fueled by the proliferation of Federal grant programs, which totaled nearly \$60 billion in 1976. The web of interrelationships between Federal, State, and local governments became more intricate as Federal funds grew to account for over 25 percent of total State and local expenditures in 1976, compared with 10 percent in 1955. At latest count, more than 1,000 Federal domestic assistance programs are available. A recent GAO study found 228 programs for health and 186 for community development.

THE CHANGING DUTIES OF GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATORS

As government has grown in scope and complexity, the impact of government administrators on policy formulation has also grown. Students of public administration have finally come to realize what practitioners have known for a long time: that administrators play an important part in shaping policy even as they implement it. They are increasingly

called upon for advice in the drafting of legislation which they will later administer. In developing regulations or evaluating grant proposals, administrators are shaping public policy in ways that legislators seldom do. Goals and values expressed in legislative directives can rarely be applied mechanically by technicians; administrative discretion is usually inevitable in executing the will of legislative bodies.

It may appear contradictory, but the Congress is involved in administering programs to an extent not realized in the past. Legislative oversight of program administration has become a major congressional preoccupation. Often, legislation not only mandates patterns of Federal agency organization but also requires organizational patterns in State and local governments as a condition for receiving Federal grants. Thus the interaction between the administrator and the legislator is increased.

In recent years, the Congress and many State legislatures have augmented their professional staff capabilities. GAO and other professional staffs are increasingly called upon to assist hard-pressed Members of Congress in the oversight and evaluation of executive branch performance.

Legislators realize that competent professional staffs can be an invaluable source of knowledge and expertise on programs and issues which had heretofore tended to be monopolized by executive agency personnel. The expanded scope of GAO's work, the recent establishment of the Congressional Budget Office and the Congressional Office of Technology Assessment, and the expanded Congressional Research Service all demonstrate that the Congress recognizes its need for more professional staff assistance if it is to continue as a full partner with the executive branch in making public policy.

Richard Neustadt's characterization of the Federal Government as "separated institutions sharing powers" becomes even more relevant now as the legislative branch begins to share expertise with the executive branch. Francis Bacon realized long ago that "knowledge and human power are synonymous, since the ignorance of cause frustrates the effect." Indeed, access to knowledge becomes a key to controlling social problems. As the issues that government must address, such as energy or pollution control become more complex and technical, policymakers and administrators are forced to mediate between the experts who hold differing views on the needs of the Nation. Government policymakers must be able to understand the implications of new knowledge for society. The process works in reverse also, when the efforts of experts and scientists are harnessed to meet the pressing problems of the Nation; the large Federal investment in research and development is testimony to this.

This sharing also extends to the courts. Increasingly, the Federal courts are being called upon to make interpretations and set standards concerning the environment, health and safety, and many other complex fields which traditionally were reserved for the legislator and the administrator. Those of you who heard or read the excellent address by David Bazelon, Chief Judge of the U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia, at the last annual conference of the American Society for Public Administration, must have been impressed, as I was, by the extent to which the Federal courts are involved in not only procedural standards but also program standards, as these standards are

increasingly challenged by individuals and public interest groups. I commend this address, entitled "The Impact of the Courts on Public Administration," to all who have not read it.

The same theme has been developed by Robert Kaiser in a recent series of excellent articles in The Washington Post, one of which is entitled "'Imperial' Courts" and another "For Better or Worse, Judicial Activism Seems Here to Stay." He cites cases in which judges have decided that patients of state mental hospitals have a constitutional right to treatment, that prisoners can challenge the conditions of their incarceration, and that judges can specify the exact quotas for school busing. Activism by the courts--not always at the court's own choosing--has major implications not only for the legislator but for the administrator as well. Both must recognize that uncertainty in legislation and regulations leaves little recourse except resolution by the judicial system.

MAKING GOVERNMENT EFFECTIVE
AND RESPONSIVE

An important consequence of the proliferation of governmental functions is the growing demand for more efficient and effective government programs. The Hoover Commission's call for Federal performance budgeting in the 1950's, attempts to implement Planning-Programming-Budgeting Systems at all levels of government in the 1960's, and the new congressional budget procedures enacted in 1974 all represent efforts by administrators and legislators to allocate and manage public expenditures more rationally.

As the stakes involved in managing public expenditures grow, there is increasing impatience with tradition-bound bureaucracies and modes of policymaking and a concurrent demand that public money be spent with maximum effectiveness and efficiency. Some have characterized the Great Society era of the 1960's as "throwing money at problems." True or not, the public today is demanding that government

- provide either more effective services at the same cost or the same level of services at lower costs and
- be more cautious about starting new programs until existing ones are evaluated.

A growing number of public officials are beginning to agree with the Committee for Economic Development's recent paraphrase of Socrates; "the unexamined program is frequently not worth maintaining" or, to use another popular saying, "there is nothing more wasteful than doing something well which shouldn't be done at all."

The recent reform of congressional budget procedures represents a bold and historic initiative by a major institution of our society to define its fiscal goals more rationally. Previously, congressional fiscal policy could be characterized as an unconscious derivative of separate, uncoordinated spending and revenue actions. Now, the Congress has the machinery--if it has the will--to establish and enforce overall spending and revenue ceilings or goals that will guide and constrain all separate fiscal policy decisions it makes.

Impatience with the past is also apparent on the local level, where budget crises are causing drives for more productivity and effectiveness. New York City has just signed labor agreements with its

unions that make any cost-of-living raises for employees contingent upon savings realized through productivity gains.

THE NEW TOOLS OF ANALYSIS

An arsenal of new analytic tools borrowed from the maturing disciplines of social science and operations research have been called upon by program evaluators to measure the performance of government programs. We all know that--in the right hands--these tools can broaden our knowledge of programs and improve their effectiveness. Analysis can be valuable as a supplement to the administrator's own experience and intuition, often inadequate to deal with the rapid pace of change.

However, analysis can also be misleading and misused. In partisan hands, it becomes a potent opiate used to oversimplify and confuse. Overreliance upon public opinion polls is an example. In politically charged situations, Gresham's Law can apply to the use of analytic data--inferior hard data drives out more relevant soft data. Thus, while assisting hard-pressed decisionmakers seeking answers to difficult questions, sophisticated analytic techniques raise new questions and problems of their own. Clearly, all these developments in public policymaking place new demands and challenges on the government administrator.

These developments have also placed new demands and challenges on GAO. Its work has broadened to the point where the primary emphasis is on evaluating the effectiveness and efficiency of programs operated by the administrative agencies.

Thus, the scope of our work in GAO has changed significantly toward an emphasis on the performance audit and program evaluation. Although

financial auditing is still with us, today we emphasize evaluating program results and the attainment of program goals. Both the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1970 and the Congressional Budget Reform Act of 1974 gave GAO a congressional mandate to these ends.

This task is, as you in this audience can understand, challenging and difficult. While the GAO staff must be familiar with the findings arising from analytic studies of programs, we must also ask broader questions. Are the quantitative indicators agency administrators use to measure program effectiveness the most useful ones in evaluating the impact of a program in attaining its goals? For example, do numbers of students graduating show the effectiveness of an education program unless we can judge the impact upon the individuals involved?

All public administrators doubtless have faced these and similar challenges. They must keep an ear open to the experts while retaining a broad sense of vision and judgment about the direction and purpose of government. Your effectiveness as a public administrator is enhanced by access to knowledge and utilization of experts. However, your primary asset is that you are generalists in an age of specialization, and coordinators in a time of proliferation and increasingly complex interrelationships of government programs. You must be able to draw from many disciplines in making your decisions. You must be sensitive to the broader public interest in policy conflicts. You must be able to separate data from judgmental values in utilizing analysis. And you must be sensitive to the goals and values articulated through democratic political processes.

Specialists become administrators too frequently without adequate managerial training or general understanding of the history and development of governmental institutions. The United States Civil Service Commission reports that scientific and professional categories account for about 70 percent of all Federal career executive positions. I imagine that the increasing technical complexity of most issues has accelerated this somewhat regrettable trend. Overspecialization in the academic world has possibly contributed to the problem. Somehow more emphasis on governmental institutions and public administration must be brought into the programs of our professional schools of medicine, engineering, and business. As an example, we should welcome the recent trend in establishing professional schools of management.

HOPE FROM NOVA'S PROGRAM

So, today, Nova's program offers new hope to those of us who are still old-fashioned enough to believe in the need for generalists. The multidisciplinary approach is a refreshing antidote to the recent trend in academic programing. Nova's program is wellsuited to provide the kind of professional administrator that this nation needs.

Let me add a note of caution. As George Bernard Shaw once remarked, "Every profession is a conspiracy against the laity." In our zeal to make public administration an integral profession, we must guard against the tendency for professions to insulate themselves and reduce their accountability to the public. In our enthusiasm to gain academic recognition for public administration, we practitioners of the art must

remember that we are not employed to implement scientific principles of management or to apply the findings of policy analysis but to serve the people--the masters of a democratic society.

All government administrators must recognize explicitly that they are involved in making public policy. They must accept the guidance of elected officials, not grudgingly but positively. Professional administrators must realize that elected officials are the ultimate generalists. One might say that they are the only class of public servants whose very survival depends upon their serving the public interest!

Even after your graduation today from a multidisciplinary program like Nova's, you can still learn much from politicians in both executive and legislative branches. The politician's ambition often drives him to seek change and accomplishment where mere mortals fear to tread. This drive for achievement can be refreshing in traditional bureaucracies. It is vital in order for a system to survive the winds of social change and serve the people. One of your tasks is to help him bring about that change!

As I speak of change, what are the most likely central concerns of the American people as we look to the years ahead--concerns with which governmental institutions must both respond to and help resolve? Aside from the overriding importance of national security and world peace, I would like to suggest five basic national concerns and uncertainties which will be major factors in shaping the society in which we will live and in which Government will be called upon to play a major part in the years ahead.

As we view these longer range issues, we must not overlook the importance of solving short-run problems which can affect our ability to resolve the longer range problems. As John Gardner says in his book, Excellence, "if we fail to deal wisely with certain of these (short-run problems), there may not be any long run." At the same time we must ever be conscious of the need for longer range planning, a task which a democratic nation finds very difficult to perform, but which the growing complexity of society makes ever more important.

First, we must resolve the increasingly disturbing dilemma of how to reconcile our concern about the quality of life--health, safety and the environment--and our concern about the frequently conflicting needs to improve our standard of living, to find jobs for a growing workforce; and to maintain an industrialized economy that becomes increasingly technological, dangerous, and destructive of the environment. How we reconcile these concerns will greatly determine the kind of society we inhabit in the year 2000.

Second, how shall we reconcile the apparent conflict between the objectives of an open society, where "sunshine" legislation is increasingly in vogue and freedom-of-information requests inundate agencies from all sides, and the equally important objectives of privacy and protection of individual rights. Earlier this week I testified before a committee of the House of Representatives on proposed legislation to require public disclosure of income and assets by nearly 30,000 top officials in all three branches of the Federal Government. Such legislation, which passed the Senate in the previous week by an overwhelming margin, would override

for these officials the provisions in the Privacy Act of 1974, which declared the right to privacy to be a "personal and fundamental right protected by the Constitution of the United States" and which specifically protected the personnel files and records of Federal employees.

The inherent conflict between accountability goals of public officials, on the one hand, and the right of privacy, on the other hand, represents one of the most difficult dilemmas confronting the Congress in these uncertain times. On the one hand, in the wake of "Watergate" and other more recent disclosures, it is easy to understand congressional concern with accountability and avoidance of conflicts of interest. On the other hand, the right of the individual to privacy is deeply ingrained in our system of government and our society. This dilemma is further reflected in legislation designed to protect taxpayers' records and the establishment of a National Privacy Protection Study Commission at a time when 30 States have recently enacted legislation providing to the public information on an employee's financial interests previously regarded as strictly private.

Third, I have already referred to the public's loss of confidence in government. Are such frustrations inherent in the management of big government? How can we reconcile the dilemma of the demands for equitable and consistent treatment of low-income citizens, for example, while providing the necessary modifications to meet the varying problems of individuals and local groups? How can we balance the need for national policies and national standards and still make the necessary adjustments in situations where the application of these national standards just doesn't make good sense?

Fourth, how can we satisfy those who have lost confidence in the ability of Government to critically evaluate the effectiveness of programs and to provide for a better method of establishing priorities in Government programs-- programs which are taking an increasing share of our national income? In vogue today is not only "sunshine" legislation--full public access to Government--but also "sunset" legislation which would attempt to provide, legislatively, an approach to difficult decisions to eliminate low priority programs--the programs which systems analysts would agree are not cost effective.

In other words, how do we as a society provide a better system for analysis and collective judgment in establishing national priorities? The Congressional Budget Act is a hopeful step in this direction. But most of the issues I refer to require value judgments, and, in many instances, do not lend themselves to convincing analysis from the objective program evaluator, particularly where economic benefits to individuals and groups are involved.

Fifth, and last, I refer to the need to find a better way for government and business to work cooperatively and still maintain a free competitive enterprise system. As a Nation, we are lagging behind many others in productivity growth. We seem to be unable to find an effective government-industry relationship in conserving and developing of energy resources. And we have certainly not realized fully our objective of greater involvement of the private sector in community development and planning.

I believe universities can play an important role in improving industry-government cooperation. The interdisciplinary needs which I have

earlier referred to apply particularly here. Universities can take the lead in fostering closer cooperation between the schools of business, schools of engineering, schools of medicine, and other professional schools with the schools of public administration. This long-recognized need is more critical than ever as the solution to our problems becomes more complex.

Observance of the Nation's Bicentennial reminds us that we must look to the future; we cannot risk being complacent or too tied to the past. As we face new problems, we must guard against doing things in traditional ways. We cannot be hesitant in seeking new solutions or trying out new ideas simply because things have always been done in a certain way.

As individuals, we must look beyond mere "satisfactory" performance in our daily work. Innovation, experimentation, pilot testing--these must become our watchwords if we are to resolve the dilemmas which I have described. We cannot avoid change; indeed we would not want to if we could. The loyal career public servant should not expect to be rewarded solely or primarily for his carefulness in carrying out his superior's directions. Loyalty must also include suggesting alternatives which might better achieve policy objectives, even at the risk of incurring the disfavor of that superior.

As you complete your work at Nova, I hope that you will heed the advice of an anonymous philosopher who said:

"It is practically a law in life that when one door closes to us, another opens. The trouble is that we often look with so much regret and longing upon the closed door that we do not see the one which has opened to us."

Tom Paine said back in 1778 that "it is the practice of the New World, America, to make men as wise as possible, so that their knowledge being complete, they may be rationally governed." This is worth noting at graduation time and at the beginning of America's third century.

August 3
Oak Ridge, Tennessee

June 30, 1976

Mr. Tom Connolly
United States Civil Service
Commission Executive Seminar Center
Broadway and Kentucky Avenues
Oak Ridge, Tennessee 37830

Dear Mr. Connolly:

Confirming your conversation with Mr. Hughes yesterday, I will be glad to accept your invitation to attend the 100th Seminar of the Civil Service Commission Training Center at Oak Ridge on August 3.

I would appreciate your writing me with respect to details and arrangements, including topics which you would like particularly for me to cover. I would be interested in visiting the Oak Ridge National Laboratory and, if there are other things which could be worked in the timetable suggested, I hope you will make suggestions.

Sincerely,

(Signed) ELMER B. STAATS

Elmer B. Staats

cc: Mr. Hughes
Mr. Morse
Information Office