

- EXERCISE 7

The career of a civil servant is not one which appeals to the man of ambition, in the popular sense of the term. The majority of men, at any rate, compromise in their choice of career between ambition and security. Reasonable—some say unreasonable—security the civil servant certainly has. He is spared the kind of anxiety which too often becomes the destroyer of contentment in many other walks of life. There is no 'boss' to dismiss him in a fit of temper, no practice to lose through ill-health or ill luck, no shareholders to satisfy, no bankruptcy to face through caprices of the market or some uncontrollable turn of events. On the contrary, grave misdemeanours apart, he is assured of an adequate livelihood rising to comfort in a modest style; he can look forward to retirement, with a not ungenerous pension, before he is worn out and in time to enjoy a tranquil evening of life. As for ambition, his lot is, at least not one of frustration: no blank, unscalable walls confront his endeavours. With reasonable industry and ability, he can expect to earn regular promotion up to such limit as his talents merit. The influence he exerts will never be spectacular, but for a good many men there is more attraction in becoming a power behind the throne than in occupying the throne itself, for this is power of a kind which may give great inward satisfaction and may even minister to inward vanity, but without the risk of a neckbreaking fall.

One advantage, once established in fact and still established along with butlers and mothers-in-law in our humorous tradition, the civil servant can no longer hope to enjoy. Formerly he could count on strictly limited hours of duty and on never having to take work home, so that if he had hobbies or literary or artistic interests he could find ample opportunity to pursue them. That is

no longer his prerogative : whatever the failings of the civil servant today, he is certainly not an idler. Work has greatly increased in volume and range, and it can no longer be limited to fixed times; in nearly all departments there are recurrent periods of stress when twenty four hours are hardly sufficient for the day.

In return for the advantages he enjoys, the civil servant is expected to give and with very few exceptions does give in full measure, the qualities of loyalty and discretion. Even the highest of civil servants is expected not to obtrude his opinion unless it is invited, but when it is needed he must give it with complete honesty and candour. If it is not accepted and a policy is adopted contrary to his advice, he must, and invariably does, do his best to carry that policy into effect, however much he may privately dislike it. If it miscarries he must resist the human temptation to say, 'I told you so'; it is still his duty which he again invariably performs, to save the Minister from disaster, even if he thinks that disaster is deserved. This tradition would never have grown if politics had been admitted to the life of the civil servants. The British civil servant is appointed for his general ability, not for political beliefs; he keeps his post whatever the political party in power, and he has no politics in the office or in public or, indeed, anywhere except at the ballot box. There are, no doubt, as many differences of political opinion among the personnel of the civil service as among any other aggregate of individuals, but it can be said with confidence that private opinions do not affect the performance of their duties by permanent officials whatever political party may be in power. Loyalty of this kind, so vital in the higher ranks of civil service, matters less among the humbler members of the machine. The form of loyalty demanded of them, and, be it said, given more fully than one has any right to hope of average men, is incorruptibility. There are many forms of corruption, and it is too much to suppose that none of them, direct or indirect, has ever found its prey in the British civil service; but such cases are rare enough to be almost negligible.

As for discretion, an indiscreet civil servant is as much a contradiction in terms as an indiscreet doctor. He does not divulge what comes to him confidentially in the way of duty ; discretion is his second nature. A tradition of this kind is, it would seem, not very difficult to establish, for it is common to a number of professions in which any frequent abrogation of it would soon produce chaos. It easily communicates itself to subordinates. During the recent war a number of important military secrets had, of necessity, to be entrusted to thousands of minor functionaries. Rarely were they betrayed. There are, every year, a considerable number of lesser officials in the Treasury in possession of budget information which would have a high social value as gossip and a still higher market value. Wild horses would not drag it from a civil servant, or whatever degree, except the occasional traitor to his species who is always somewhere to be found among sinful men. (874 words).

Career of Civil Servant

Civil service as a career fails to attract very ambitious people. Most of the people of course are prepared to make a compromise between ambition and security and security of course is provided to a civil servant, even to an unreasonable degree. Not only security, the civil servants are also assured of a good livelihood during service and also after retirement. The rise in career is also assured to a particular level which depends upon to occupy the front seat, they cannot occupy throne, nevertheless they enjoy a kind of power which satisfies many a man. They have to exert a lot unlike the former times when a British civil servant had a lot of times at his disposal for pursuing his hobbies and interests. They are expected to be sincere, loyal and above corruption. They are not expected to meddle with the affairs by putting across their opinion until it has been called for. And if

called for they must present it with all sincerity and integrity. And whatever their personal opinions on issue they are expected to carry out the orders of political bosses with all sincerity. The civil servants hold permanent posts and any changes in the political fields do not matter to them. They are appointed for their general ability and merit. They are not expected to indulge in any sort of politics either inside or outside the office. They can exercise it only at the ballot box. They are expected to remain above corruption. Discretion is another attribute that they must possess in ample measure. They are also not expected to leak out any secret information and except for a rare black sheep they come up to all expectations.

Total words: 874

Required words: 291

Precis words: 285