

ADMINISTRATIVE  
REFORMATIONREFORM  
THE  
WAY  
OF  
CARRYING  
OUT  
REFORMS  
FIRST

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The administrative reformation has been set forth in the VIII Congress of the VCP Central Committee, and this party policy detailed in the Decision No 38 of the Government dated May 4, 1994. In the eyes of the people this policy, for the past over one year, has remained a determination, not become a reality yet. The government officials, who are responsible for carrying out the reformation, grew restless with the long waiting for practical guidelines and wondered what would happen to their jobs, positions and offices.

The first reforms were carried out in procedures for importing and exporting goods; getting entry and exit visas, building licence, or permission to establish new business, etc. These reforms, however, didn't go beyond some directives which ordered that the paperwork and procedure should be reduced, the government offices should shorten the time it took to complete a procedure and should supply one-door service to the people. But these reforms produced little result and couldn't stand comparison with reformation in its strict sense. The administration supplies one-door service, but with many locks, as some foreigners put it. The reformation is still rather troublesome.

In HCMC, a plan to reform the administration in the third quarter of 1995 was made by local authorities (official letter No 1685/HCVX dated June 24, 1995). This showed that the local authorities were determined to reform many things, but not the way of carrying out reforms.

For example, all public services are required to compile and publish books on administrative procedures and supply to the people and ward-level authorities. This task is necessary but only if each procedure has been experimented and produced good results is this task performed. This waste of paper gave birth to a 1000-page book systematizing all law documents about land and housing which had been obsolescent because a lot of new documents were issued after its date of publication. And such a monumental work has soon become meaningless.

#### 1. The administrative reformation: both content and appearance should be uniform

People coming to public services nowadays usually have a common impression: the civil servants dressed elegantly, the offices were bigger, tidier, more comfortable and well-equipped, but the way officials do their tasks showed no changes in

comparison with their offices.

People keep on being bashful before harsh and curt words, waiting for officials who come late and go soon, or wandering around or from one office to another because of officials' way of disclaiming responsibility, prolonging the agony and waiting for decisions from related offices.

Another reason forces people to wait is: the office, or office holder, is in conference. Holding conference may be a problem that should be reformed soon. All governing bodies and office holders have to spend too much time on conference. Many directors of government services and departments had to be present at various conferences in a day at the main office of the HCMC People's Committee and they had to run from this conference room to another one. Quite a few leaders thought that to work meant to be in conference, or without conference, one couldn't know what to do. Just because of this, someone has said ironically: "Why don't we remove all chairs in conference rooms in order to make the meeting shorter and more effective?"

#### 2. The administrative reformation: from big to small things

It's not easy to change ways of doing task which have become force of habit, and innovate the administrative machinery from central to local levels. The reformation should solve many complicated problems scientifically and radically. Therefore, the administrative reformation could not be completed within several years when the machinery should carry out reforms in itself and at the same time, control a fast-developing economy.

Many people argued that in procedural reform, the main task was to simplify procedures. I am against this opinion. There's a shortage of necessary laws now, so we should make more laws to control and codify all socio-economic relations more and more strictly. So the administrative procedure should be more detailed in order to reflect all legal regulations. If the procedures are simplified, they will not meet the government requirement in managing the economy. In developed countries, the administrative procedures are also very complicated and there must be an army of lawyers and law advisory firms. The problem is to make procedures strict, reasonable, scientific, understandable and clear.

In reforming the administration, however, there are big and small tasks. The big tasks having effect on a large scale should be studied minutely in order to avoid taking half



measures, because we should remember that more haste, less speed. On the other hand, what can be done immediately should be done at once in order to make changes and win the people's trust.

For example, at government offices, there is the discrimination against local people: the main gate is open only to the superior and foreign visitors, while local people have to come in by side door when they want to meet the committee of their own. The people will give a big hand if all main gates of the government offices are opened to welcome them. Everybody can come into the office by main gates, that is, everybody is treated equally. Say no to side door or back door. This is small but meaningful thing which could accelerate the reforming process. How can one perform important task if he can't complete a trivial one?

### 3. The administrative reformation: demand for a master program

The government's management mechanism includes three factors:

- Machinery structure: made of a system of government offices and departments.

- Personnel structure: made of a system of officials of all ranks and echelons.

- Operating structure: made of a system of law documents, procedures which influence all administrative actions. The smallest unit of task is the professional code of practice in each stage of the administrative procedure.

Of the above-mentioned factors, we think that we should, first of all, reform the professional code of practice at each office, and then, at inter-office level, thereby restructuring the government machinery and reorganizing personnel.

This task certainly requires a scientific method, the management analysis, to do job study with a view to rationalizing all process, methods and operations in office.

By doing job analysis, we could discover and examine all unnecessary and irrational acts; wastes of time; too simple or too complex forms, unwanted signatures, seals or expenses; all intermediate acts which need to be eliminated; important parts which need to be inspected and supervised, parts which need more, or less employees; all knowledge and skill requirements to both leaders and employees, etc.

Based on this, the reformation will be carried out by adjusting, or designing new processes: from making decision, realizing decision to inspecting and supervising; rearrang-

ing from working rooms, desks, passage ways to personnel; from designing new forms to establishing the system of information code, documents, files and programing the computer network; from re-examining expenses and time needed for completing a task to setting forth efficiency norms and expense limitations, re-estimating demand for office equipment and redistributing it, etc.

By experiments, if these new processes could prove effective (reducing waste of time, money and energy; centralizing power; reinforcing inspection; clarifying functions, tasks and responsibility of each official, etc.), we can apply them to the reformation of procedures, and then, adjust and regulate imperfect rules, rearrange system of offices and organize training courses for officials.

Moreover, the administrative reformation program should set forth a list of practical goals for each stage in which all goals are arranged in order of importance and priority. At the same time the Government should issue general regulations in order to make the reformation process more consistent and uniform.

Finally, who will carry out the reformation? The administrative reformation has been so carried out in many countries by many generations that the public administration and state management has become a science. Their experience shows that reformation doers can't be the holder of the office which need to be reformed, the office holders will be subjective, because of their vested privileges, force of habit or other secret reasons. Therefore, in order to carry out the reformation profoundly and continuously, many examinations should be organized to select an army of cadres who have enough skill and knowledge to make the master plan of administrative reformation.

In short, we had better reform the way of carrying out reforms. If not, it's very difficult to build the modern public administration having ability to control the macro-economy and make the economy develop stably■

