

Civil Service Reforms for Merit and Political Neutrality: Agenda For Implementation

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The Civil Service Commission (CSC), a constitutional body which functions as the central personnel agency of government is in charge of introducing reforms and strategies aimed at upholding and strengthening merit and political neutrality. Since the Philippine government is undergoing transition from dictatorship to democracy, there is a need to improve and reform the bureaucracy. This, could be done by strengthening and improving the image of the civil service, reducing red tape and corruption, orienting/ reorienting civil servants to values of good administration and reviewing and evaluating existing rules and regulations. But the main issue that has to be resolved by the CSC is how to shield the merit system and career officials, including the CSC itself from spoils politics. Only when this is resolved could there be a responsive, and responsible government which can deliver public services with acceptable efficiency.

Introduction

The main thrust of this paper is to outline an agenda of reforms and strategies aimed at upholding and strengthening merit and political neutrality in the civil service while at the same time, improving public personnel administration and management. The agenda of reforms rests on a new contemporary merit system which intends to contain political patronage and strengthen the career service. Suggestion to improve reforms in traditional areas of tenure and performance, progressive pay and compensation schemes, and increased employee participation through self-organization are offered.

The Civil Service Commission (CSC) is at the center stage of these reform efforts that is why a brief discussion of its legal mandate, organization, and the challenges it faces is presented.

Finally, an agenda of reforms and strategies for implementation in selected areas in public personnel is advanced. The agenda revolves around the role of the Civil Service Commission in the over-all program to install a personnel system that will produce responsive, and reasonable government which can deliver public services with acceptable efficiency.

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Constitutional Basis of Civil Service Organization, Coverage and Values¹

The 1987 Philippine Constitution provides for a Civil Service Commission as one of the constitutional bodies along with the Commission on Elections and Commission on Audit. The CSC is a three-man body composed of a Chairman and two Commissioners appointed by the President of the Republic on staggered terms of seven, five, and three years without reappointment.

The Civil Service covers all branches, subdivisions, instrumentalities and agencies of government, including government-owned and -controlled corporations with original charters.

The Constitution also mandates that the values of merit and political neutrality shall be upheld in the civil service. It provides that "appointments in the civil service shall be made only according to merit and fitness" as defined by open competitive examinations, except for positions which are policy-determining, primarily confidential or highly technical. The basic law also prohibits civil servants from electioneering and engaging in partisan political activities.

Security of tenure is distinctly provided by the stipulation that no officer or employee shall be removed or suspended except for cause provided by law. It gives government employees the right to self-organization.

The Constitution clearly defines the role of the CSC as the central personnel agency of government. As such, it "shall establish a career service and adopt measures to promote morale, efficiency, integrity, responsiveness, and courtesy in the civil service." It shall also "strengthen the merit and rewards system, integrate all human resource development programs for all levels and ranks, and institutionalize a management climate conducive to public accountability" and ethics.

The constitutional coverage of the civil service has been further defined in the Philippine Development Plan² to include the armed forces, and categorizes the civil service into the career and non-career services.

The career service shall include: 1) open career positions to which appointments shall require qualification in appropriate examinations; 2) closed career positions which are scientific or highly technical in nature; 3) career service officers; and 4) career officers such as foreign service officers, the armed forces, and personnel of government corporations.

The non-career service shall include: 1) elective officials; 2) department heads and other officials of cabinet rank who hold positions at the pleasure of

the President; 3) Chairmen and members of commissions and boards with fixed terms of office and their personal or confidential staff; and 4) contractual, emergency, and seasonal personnel.

The clarification of civil service coverage of officials and employees enumerated under the non-career service is very useful as it clearly defines the various sectors which participate in public affairs management but which before were faceless members of "branches, subdivisions, and instrumentalities" of the government.

Perspective for Civil Service Reforms

Reorganization and administrative reforms are strategies usually employed by governments during periods of transition following political or regime change. The Philippine society today, led by the government, is undergoing a post revolution transition from dictatorship to democracy.

Reacting to the massive breakdown of values and ideals in the public service during the fourteen years of Marcos' authoritarian rule, President Cory Aquino set down the moral tone for the government: that of restoring the qualities of honesty, competence, helpfulness, and humility in the bureaucracy.

To activate this moral philosophy of public governance, the Aquino government must undertake an integrated rational program which would seek to "prevent and punish the commission of graft and corrupt act in all levels of the public service and instill a commitment to the values of nationalism, people orientation, and efficiency among public officials and employees."³

With these moral and commitment values as bases, the CSC is pushing a program of improving and reforming the bureaucracy anchored on the policy framework of strengthening the civil service; reducing red tape and corruption; improving the image of the civil service; orienting/reorienting civil servants; and reviewing/evaluating rules and regulations.

To strengthen the civil service, a priority area is its professionalization which can be achieved by rationalizing the pay and compensation scheme to attract and retain the best professionals in the service; decentralizing personnel functions to departments and agencies; institutionalizing safeguards and sanctions so that the merit principle is observed in all aspects of personnel management; and adopting policies and programs which will enhance effective implementation of the merit principle.

Simultaneous efforts were undertaken by the Presidential Commission on Government Reorganization (PCGR) which proposed reforms in the civil service

such as rationalizing the government corporate sector; strengthening local governments; streamlining various departments and agencies; instituting thorough, systematic and simple rules and regulations; improving frontline services and functions, and introducing positive changes in the areas of salary and compensation, and security of tenure to ensure high performance.

The PCGR also underscored the urgency to restore the values, positive attitudes and behavior of civil servants. To achieve this task, it proposed a comprehensive program of re-education, re-orientation, and re-training of public officials and employees.

Filipino experts have advanced proposals for administrative reforms to strengthen the bureaucracy and enhance the delivery of public services. One such proposal included improving the public personnel management system through the strengthening of the merit principle/system and its implementation; improving the functions of recruitment, examination and training, and promotion in providing qualified people for government; and improving organizational climate to instill positive values in public servants.⁴

The CSC has also advanced its blueprint for reforms and professionalization.⁵ The measure included a rational cleansing process to weed out from the service the incompetent, the inept and the corrupt; a professionalization process to cover the remaining qualified cadres of personnel through planned and systematic human resource development programs; a retention scheme based on a progressive personnel management characterized by improved realistic salary and compensation schemes, tenure, promotion and incentive awards based on high performance, and more employee participation in personnel management through employee organizations.

Admittedly, these proposals contained much needed reform measures which could transform the civil service into a highly respected and responsive instrument for national development. The crux lies in the successful implementation of all the measures which however, do not strike at the core of the personnel problem, but only at structural and procedural aspects.

The core of the personnel problem rests on two issues: how merit can be shielded effectively from spoils politics, and how the President can get the staff services and advise from the Civil Service Commission and career officials without dragging them into politics.

An emerging issue that needs urgent response concerns the relationship between the military and the civilian bureaucracy. What is to be done with a highly politicized military? Perhaps, the bigger question is whether merit administration is tenable under a political system of coalesced political goals and leaders which characterize the Aquino government.

Reforming for Merit and Political Neutrality: Agenda for Implementation

Personnel Administration and Reforms

There are two important inputs to personnel administration from the history of administrative reform movements which are relevant to this discussion. The first heritage is to eliminate politics from personnel administration through competitive and open examinations, tenure in office, and the political neutrality of the civil servants.⁶ The second, an offshoot of the scientific management movement, was to develop the technology of position classification to insulate personnel administration from politics and to ensure efficiency. Position classification technology provided the selection criteria based on technical competence for public personnel recruitment.⁷

Traditional merit systems required that selection decisions should implement the values of efficiency and effectiveness. Contemporary merit systems, however, allow other values like representativeness, equity, and responsiveness in recruitment and selection to public service. The "politics" of public personnel administration in practice, treat personnel or "positions" as resources to be legitimately exchanged in negotiations regarding fiscal capacity and program priorities.⁸ Thus, the "politics" of public personnel administration is a politically neutral technical function.

Past and present Philippine experiences in reorganizing and reforming the bureaucracy and public personnel administrative system have produced at best, changes in structure, processes and procedures which in turn led to increased legalistic complexity and bureaucratization in the civil service.

The situation being so, the goal of recruiting and retaining competent and motivated personnel in government to implement public policies and programs most effectively is lost in the multiplicity of conflicting laws, executive orders, judicial decisions, civil service and labor relations regulations, auditors opinions, and agency rules which dominate the personnel field. The maze of legislations, together with the characteristics of bureaucracy, has caused recurrent, if not perennial complaints against the merit system: that it is impersonal, unresponsive, legalistic, inefficient, and at times meritless.

Philippine politics, on the other hand, operates not on the basis of issues and platforms, but on candidate popularity, kinship and personal relationships, and political patronage. It is therefore more realistic to expect political considerations to creep in and erode the merit system.

A closer scrutiny of the organization of the personnel functions brings home the point that the problems and challenges which the government must face today are inherent in the personnel system.

The Civil Service Commission, as the central personnel agency responsible for the personnel function is tasked with what appears to be a conflicting dual role. On the one hand, it is to serve the President as staff organization for directing the positive personnel management responsibility of the Chief Executive. As such, it must provide managerial leadership in establishing personnel policies and in advising and assisting agencies on personnel functions. On the other hand, it is also responsible for upholding the merit system, guarding the civil service against the advances of partisan politics and patronage, protecting employee rights, as well as performing adjudicatory functions.

To perform its job the best way it can, the CSC has tried to develop a complicated machinery to guarantee political neutrality and uphold the merit principle, while seeking efficiency and economy through bureaucratic structures and processes designed after executive responsiveness models of administration.

In the context of seemingly incompatible roles arising from its constitutional mandates, the Commission can only follow the vicious cycle of reorganization and reform which lead to more increasing bureaucratization and legalese, hence, more rigidity and unresponsiveness in the civil service. A "breakaway" from this cycle is proposed in the following agenda for reforms and implementation.

New Agenda of Reforms for Merit and Neutrality

The new agenda of reforms outlined in the following sections is expected to transform the traditional civil service system into a developmental, integrated and responsive personnel system. It also aims to strengthen its capability to uphold the values of merit and political neutrality and makes a major consideration in the patronage system.

A distinction between merit principle and the merit system is in order. The merit principle is a practice where employees are recruited, selected and advanced under conditions of political neutrality, equal opportunity and competition on the basis of merit and competence. Merit system means a broad program of personnel management activities which are essential for carrying out the merit principle: recruiting, selecting, policing of anti-discrimination rules, and administering related appeal provisions. Other activities are closely related and desirable: position classification, pay administration, employee benefits and training.⁹

The merit principle is generally viewed as good. But the problem lies in the merit system or the way the principle is practiced. The following proposal aims to improve the merit system while retaining adherence to the merit principle and that of political neutrality.

To move away from the traditional merit system, it is necessary to:

- 1) *Establish a new, contemporary merit system which admits the strict requirement of merit in the patronage system.*

Basic to the new, contemporary merit system is a radical change in perspective with which the merit system and the spoils system are viewed. Traditionally, we view merit and spoils as a dichotomy: that any intrusion of politics into the civil service personnel administration is violative of the merit system. Hence, the merit system must be shielded from politics by upholding the value of neutrality.

The contemporary merit system, on the other hand, views merit and spoils systems as a continuum. It recognizes personnel management not as a purely technical function which can be isolated from politics. Public personnel management, viewed with realism, is an essential element of executive management. To set it apart as a "neutral" technical function and organize it in a manner unsuited to serve the needs of the Chief Executive and the executive branch is to render it impotent and ineffective.

It is from the discharge of its responsibility of upholding the merit principle that the Civil Service Commission derives its strength to ward off the intrusion of partisan politics and uphold political neutrality.

To further strengthen the merit system and the political neutrality of the civil service under a new contemporary merit system, it is also requisite to:

- 1.1) *Define strictly the boundaries of the career and non-career services and clearly set down qualifications and rules for recruitment into them.*

Putting reliable fences around career positions makes it easier for the CSC to police merit violations. It also makes clear to political proteges the positions which are open to spoils and those which are not. At the same time, demoralization and insecurity among career officials during periods of political transitions are lessened. A punishment system for merit violation is a corollary activity to be set in place by the Civil Service Commission. This measure will put politics in its proper place, so that an orderly transition in the public service is assured and chaos in making appointments is prevented.

To complement the reform proposal made in 1.1, the Civil Service Commission should take the lead role to:

- 1.2) *Set up a recruitment system for political appointees based on merit: dedication, ability and competence, character and integrity, positive behavioral traits, and honesty in addition to party loyalties and campaign debts.*

A presidential merit recruitment staff, with the Civil Service Commission as lead agency, should devise a selection system for political appointees to the non-career service which will include merit qualifications as among the criteria to be considered.¹⁰

Even when the final choice is made by the President and it is a choice between merit candidate and the patronage candidate, the civil service is assured that the decision premises were based on merit considerations.

To further strengthen the career service, the agenda for reforms shall include the measure to:

- 1.3) *Restore the positions of undersecretary and assistant secretary to the career officials and keep the posts strictly closed to political appointees.*¹¹

Keeping these positions strictly in the career service is in line with the rationale for political stability. It underscores the need for stability and continuity in government policies and programs during periods of political changes and transitions.

The career service, from the undersecretary to the frontline services personnel are expected to remain politically neutral and to continue to serve any government or political party in power, or whoever is appointed as the new Secretary with equal loyalty, commitment and dedication. Too much layering of political appointees over career officials closes off the career options to the career professionals. The short tenure in office of political appointees (as in the case of Cory political appointees) encourages them to think in terms of their own career rather than the interests of the organization they are running (as in the case of cabinet members who ran for the Senate).

Reserving the sub-cabinet secretary positions to career officials not only increases the rewards system and attractiveness of public service but also provides the required stability, continuity and professionalism in the public service.¹²

Since the political appointees who were recruited under the contemporary merit system may not be too familiar with their organizations and internal relationships, it becomes necessary to:

- 1.4 *Provide a program of orientation and familiarization for new political appointees to prepare them to appreciate and work with the career executives and personnel.*

Teamwork in a government undergoing transition is very critical to its stability. One reason why top positions are filled by political appointees of the President is to maximize responsiveness to the electorate. Unfortunately, there is a trade-off in efficiency and effectiveness for responsiveness. The rapid turnover of positions and reversals of policy decisions in the political appointee system results in inefficiencies.

The sooner the political and career executives could work together, the better it is for the new government and the people. The division of labor between the political leaders and the career executives under the politics-administration dichotomy is practically impossible. The unique contributions of both the political and career executives are needed.

Politics is a comprehensive web of decision-making in government. The work of government is carried out by the Office of the President, the Congress, the Cabinet, the civil service, the constitutional bodies, and lately, a new entrant, the military.

The orientation and "getting-to-know" program being proposed should also cover the President's teams at the Cabinet, the Congressional, and other levels. If we review the coalition government of President Aquino on this basis of working and personal relationships obtaining at the various levels, it is not surprising if we conclude that what we have is a "government of strangers"¹³ if not a government of enemies.

The orientation program for political appointees shall include a general orientation on government policy and program directions, department and agency briefings to start the communication/dialogue between the political and career executives, and regular roundtable meetings and reporting. Workshops on political-career executives relations with problem-solving and social interaction components shall round up the orientation.

Another sensitive area where reforms must be introduced is in the relationship between the military and the civilian bureaucracy. The problematic issues are: 1) the appointment of military officers (usually retired) to executive positions in the civilian bureaucracy, particularly to boards of public corpora-

tions and special commissions, and 2) the dominance of military officers in executive positions at the Department of National Defense.

These practices have been with the civil service even before the February Revolution of 1986. But the special liaison forged between the civilians and the military at EDSA, the continuing politicization of the military, and the narrowing skill differential between the military and civilian executives exacerbated the issues.

To mitigate the first problem of appointing former military officers to top civilian posts, the proposal on political appointees should be applied.¹⁴ The second problem posed by the practice of having military officers filling executive positions in the defense department created a feeling among civilian employees that they are treated as second rate citizens. The infiltration of DND posts by incumbent military officers deprives civilian employees of promotional opportunities and causes demotivation. To help solve this problem, there is a need to:

- 2) *Define which jobs/positions shall be filled by career military and by civilian personnel. Then create a Defense Executive Service (DES) from where eligibles to fill career executive positions in the defense department can be drawn.*

The defense department is an executive department in the civilian bureaucracy. The Office of the Secretary of National Defense is an "office created by the citadel of civilian control of the military."¹⁵ The Defense Executive Service (DES) can be comparable to the Career Executive Service (CES) but because of the unique situation in the Office of National Defense, as well as of the nature of its functions, the National Defense College can be asked to handle the proposed selection and qualifying process, including training, together with the Civil Service Commission and the Department of National Defense at the direction of the President.

The military officer entering the Defense Executive Service would be converted to civil service status without retiring, and carry his full retirement credits into the civil service for the purpose of future retirement and personal benefits. If he elects reverting back to the military service, his stint in the DES shall not block his chances for career progression in the military service and his work experience and performance in the parallel civilian service level shall be taken into account. For the civilian employees, they will gain equal chances with the military officers to compete for executive positions in the defense department, and gain for them entitlement to the DES and CES¹⁶ if in the future they would want to go to other executive departments.

Agenda of Reforms for Improved Public Personnel Management

The dysfunctions brought about by the civil service reorganization and reforms as manifested in employee insecurity, low morale, and nonproductivity could have been prevented by a well-articulated, well-conceived manpower plan encompassing the whole bureaucracy. Its presence in the midst of the ongoing transition could have provided for more stability and equilibrium, as well as thwart the political manipulations of the personnel system and its management. With the advent of information technology and computerization, the need for accurate and timely information inputs to rational planning and decision-making regarding personnel matters can readily be generated. But this is not so in the Philippine Civil Service. Although the Civil Service Commission has attempted to computerize personnel data covering some pilot agencies, it has not yet completed the project to warrant government-wide coverage.

The CSC is hereby strongly urged to push toward this direction by undertaking the:

- 1) *Immediate setting up of a manpower planning system and its complementary personnel information system.*

Some may argue that this proposal is ambitious and that there are other priority areas that need CSC resources and attention, but the Commission will have to deal with this problem now. To delay action on this will only prolong the Commission's resolution of personnel problems and decrease its capacity to develop a progressive civil service manned by highly motivated, competent, and responsive personnel. Without accurate personnel information, planning and decision-making, the civil service will remain haphazard and deficient. Recruitment, training and development, and personnel management, will never be contingent to the magnitude and complexity of future public personnel concerns.

Two strategies of implementing the proposed manpower planning and personnel information systems are: First, the undertaking of a manpower inventory immediately upon the completion of the ongoing reorganization. The objective is to empirically establish the strengths and weaknesses of the civil service after the devastating and decadent effects of the Marcos regime on the bureaucracy.

Second is a human resource accounting-type of measuring the state of the employees' knowledge, skills, and attitudes as a result of the manner by which they have been managed. The decisive point of measurement rests on the supervisory system. Supervisors/managers must be made to account for the personnel assigned to them.

The value of the subordinates/employees in terms of their levels of commitment, motivation and performance is a function of supervision: whether employees have been used effectively, misused, or abused, is determined by the kind of supervision and personnel management applied by the supervisors and managers. This will generate information as to whether employees' competence, morale, and goal orientation have increased, decreased, or remained at status quo as a result of the way by which they were managed.

Recurrent personnel problems revolve around the related issues of pay, tenure and performance. The economic dislocations and crises brought about by the country's foreign debts, decreasing economic capacity, inflation, growing unemployment and underemployment have negatively affected the lives of government employees. The issues of inadequate salaries, slow career progression, and the threats of dismissals have hampered personal productivity and motivation. The government pay system cannot keep up with their basic needs, and the clamor for salary increases and additional compensations like allowances and fringe benefits have not been properly and adequately addressed by the government. Meantime, the call and attractiveness of graft and corruption is always present as a fruitful alternative to the poverty-line salaries and poverty-level standard of living of public employees.

The initial reorganization efforts and the announced reforms along the areas of pay, tenure, and employees organizations raised high hopes and expectations among the civil servants. Public employees, long suffering from the exploitative policies of the Marcos regime on wages, were jubilant about the announced Aquino plans of ameliorating the plight of public servants.

Actual government actions on pay improvements showed arbitrary upward adjustments of salaries in favor of top elective officials (President and Vice-President, members of Congress, Cabinet members, and other political appointees), career executive service officers (CESO), and the pending adjustments of pay to military service.

The multitude of rank and file employees in the government, like the underpaid and exploited teachers, have even gone to the streets to articulate their grievances. Yet, their demands for increases in pay fell on deaf, official ears. The salary increases for top government officials added insult to injury.

These actions taken by the Aquino government underscored the elite bias and arbitrariness of pay decisions. To the poor employees, they are discriminatory appropriation of tax money to people who are not in dire need of the gigantic increases, and therefore, shows the callousness of the government on the plight of the larger proportion of its employees.

The pending grant of similar salary increases to the military after the August 28 *coup d'etat* is setting another response pattern which may be dangerous. Disgusted rank and file employees and lesser officials may falsely believe that to get what they want from the government, they must use violence, since nothing can be gained from peaceful, legal means.

To prevent disconcerting actions on the part of dissatisfied employees, the government must:

- 2) *Rectify the widened disparities in the pay scales between and among the various levels of public employees intra- government layers and immediately grant the rest of the employees more responsive living wages which can meet their basic needs.*

The rationalization study on government pay scales presently undertaken by the Economic Development Foundation must be hastened to enable government to redress the unfair and unjust disparities in government pay. The moral program of government championed by President Aquino to produce honest, competent, and motivated civil service cannot be internalized by poverty-stricken, hungry, and frustrated corps of public employees.

The said state of living conditions endured by public employees as a result of unanswered demands for living wages has been compounded by the indistinct security of tenure forced upon them by the government drive for performance. It is a fact that despite the better conditions of work and pay in the private sector, most people opt for government employment because of the security of tenure it offers. The value of tenure to civil servants becomes more meaningful as they grow older, and becomes very high when they are approaching retirement.

To base tenure on performance will aggravate the personnel problem, unless the CSC can offer more reliable and validated performance measurements. If performance-based tenure is the policy, then the CSC should:

- 3) *Devise and implement multi-level, multi-measure performance evaluations which are simple and valid.*

The present Performance Appraisal System (PAS) would be inadequate for determining performance levels which will determine tenure and career progression. The decisive weight such performance evaluations will carry on personnel actions heightens the need for objective and validated merit measurements.

The performance measurement scheme should include superior, peer, and subordinate level evaluations which can produce more valid assessments since

such multi-level measurements can check raters' bias. Assessment centers, understudy methods, and challenging job assignments could complement multi-level assessment. Both qualitative and quantitative techniques can be combined to reflect various aspects of personnel qualification, behavior, and potential.

The final portion of this agenda will not be a reform proposal but a commentary on the constitutional rights of public employees to form self-organizations. Under the constitutional provision regarding the Civil Service Commission, "the right to self-organization shall not be denied to government employees."¹⁷ The deliberations in the proceedings of the Constitutional Commission, however, did not recognize the government employees' right to strike nor to collectively bargain.

Members of the Committee on Civil Service were biased against granting public employees the right of collective bargaining and the right to strike. They argued that government employees are performing proprietary functions, and any disruption in service due to strike is inimical to public service.

The 1987 Constitution, in Article XIII on Social Justice and Human Rights provided for the rights of all workers to self-organizations, collective bargaining, and peaceful concerted activities, including the right to strike in accordance with law. They shall also be entitled to security of tenure, humane conditions of work and a living wage. They can participate in policy and decision-making processes affecting their rights and benefits as may be provided by law.

Again, deliberations and debates which ensued in the constitutional meetings made the distinction that government employees of the civil service are "not exactly workers in relation to employers; that a labor-employer relation does not exist between the employees in the civil service and the government."¹⁸

Executive Order No. 180 which provides the guidelines for the exercise of the right to organize was totally silent on what the employee organizations can do, except to organize and register. There were no mention of collective bargaining nor right to strike. Section 13 of the Executive Order states that "terms and conditions of employment or improvements thereof, except those that are fixed by law, be the subject of negotiations between duly reorganized employees' organizations and appropriate government authorities."¹⁹

Section 16 of the Executive Order provided for a Public Sector Labor-Management Council which shall act on unsettled disputes. Its composition consists of the Chairman of the CSC and the Secretaries of the Departments of Labor, Finance, Justice, and Budget and Management. It forgot to provide for

labor representatives to represent labor. It is thus a management council which shall be the final arbiter of disputes after all available remedies under existing laws and procedures have been exhausted.

The employee organizations therefore, are conceptualized as employee associations which may serve as forums to discuss "professional and self-development, act as watchdogs against graft and corruption, the public's allies for detecting and exposing it."²⁰

The provisions of the Constitution and Executive Order No. 180 do not clarify exactly what the employee organizations are for, what they can do, and what kind of labor-management relations can be established between the employee organizations and the government.

As a starter to what employee organizations can do, they can think about the following:

1) *Act as a counterforce to politics.* They can guard the implementation of the merit system and fight political manipulations which are detrimental to their welfare;

2) *Act as a strong lobby or as pressure groups* to gain environmental support (they can work on their representatives and on the senators for legislative support) for increases in budgetary allocations to fund increases in pay, more fringe benefits, higher retirement pensions, etc.;

3) *They can blow the whistle on corrupt officials* and expose anomalies going on in their agencies;

4) *They must participate in decision-making* on personnel policies and programs to improve personnel management and supervision; and

5) *They can police their ranks,* maintain positive work values, and behave professionally toward better people-oriented services.

To summarize, the proposed agenda of reforms and strategies of implementation to strengthen the values of merit and political neutrality in the civil service and to improve public personnel administration, carries the new features of:

1) Establishment of a new, contemporary merit system which will admit the strict requirement of merit in the patronage system. This merit system shall define strictly the boundaries of the career and non-career services and clearly set down qualifications and rules for recruitment into the services. The Civil

Service Commission shall also take the lead in setting up a presidential recruitment system for political appointees which shall be based on merit. Qualities of dedication, ability and competence, character and integrity, positive behavioral traits, and honesty must be considered along with party loyalties and campaign debts.

To further strengthen the career service, the positions of the Undersecretary and Assistant Secretary which are reserved for career officials before martial law shall be restored to them, and shall be strictly closed to political appointees. To cultivate the climate of cooperation between the new political appointees and the career executives, a program of orientation and familiarization should be provided for the political executives. This will hasten the teamwork necessary to start the new government machinery so that continuity and stability of public services will not be impaired nor temporarily stopped.

2) Creation of a Defense Executive Service (DES) which will define positions in the defense department to determine which shall be filled by career military officers and which by civilian personnel. Appropriate training and preparation for the DES and the subsequent qualification of candidates to the DES can help solve the personnel problem in the defense establishment.

To complement these agenda measures, improvements in public personnel administration and management along the areas of information and conditions of work should be undertaken such as:

1) Setting up of a manpower planning system and its complementary personnel information system to generate the capacity of the civil service to optimize human resource planning and management;

2) Rectification of disparities in salaries between and among governmental organizations. There is at present a wide gap between the salaries of top echelon officials and the rank and file, and between regular line ministries and government corporations and financial institutions;

3) Modification of the PAS into a multi-level, multi-measure performance evaluation system which will be valid and acceptable to the public employees. This is necessary if the civil service will make performance the basis of tenure, career progression, and personnel actions;

4) Activation of employee organizations to act as counterforce to politics, as lobby or pressure groups, watchdogs on graft and corruption, and as police of employee ranks so that the positive values and behavior of a service-oriented corps of employees be maintained in the public service.

This agenda of reforms and strategies for implementation are expected to transform the civil service into one that can propel the nation toward development goals and channel developmental benefits back to the populace by way of responsive and effective public services.

Endnotes

¹Article IX, B. Section 1 (2); Section 2 (1) to (5); and Section 3, *1987 Constitution of the Republic of the Philippines*.

²*1987 Philippine Development Plan*, Part 6. Plan Implementation, 3.5.2, last paragraph.

³UPCPA/PSPA Task Force on Ethics and Accountability. Observation made during the Seminar-Workshop on "The Philippine Bureaucracy under the Aquino Government" held on July 24-25, 1986 at UPCPA, Padre Faura, Manila.

⁴Dr. Emanuel Soriano, "Measures for Strengthening the Bureaucracy, Colloquium on Public Management" sponsored by DAP and UPCPA on August 4, 1986, held at UPCPA, Padre Faura, Manila.

⁵Chairman Ceferina G. Gotladera, "CSC Blueprint for Reforms and Professionalization, Colloquium on Public Management" sponsored by UPCPA, August 4, 1986, UPCPA, Padre Faura, Manila.

⁶Paul Van Riper, *History of the U.S. Civil Service* (New York: Harper and Row, 1958), Chap. 5.

⁷Samuel Haber, *Efficiency and Uplift: Scientific Management in the Progressive Era: 1890-1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964) p. 71. Cited in John Nalbandian and Donald Klinge "The Politics of Public Personnel Administration: Towards Theoretical Understanding," *Public Administration Review* (September-October 1981), p. 546.

⁸*Ibid.*

⁹David. T. Stanley, "What are Unions Doing to Merit Systems?," *Public Administration Review* (January 1970) pp. 264-265.

¹⁰Similar to the merit component of the "new patronage" developed by President Lyndon Johnson but different in techniques. Johnson used his staff, party loyalists, and professional recruiters. This proposal keeps the task within the civil service and outside of political parties.

¹¹Dr. Gabriel U. Iglesias proposed that Undersecretary positions be reserved for career executives in his "Concept Paper on the Level of Career Officials and Number of Undersecretaries," submitted to the Cabinet Sub-Committee on M.O. 79, May 8, 1987.

¹²*Ibid.*

¹³Hugh Hecio, *A Government of Strangers* (The Brookings Institution: Washington, D.C., 1977).

¹⁴Refer to measures 1.2 and 1.4.

¹⁶Thomas D. Morris, "Merit Principles in Military Officer Personnel Administration," *Public Administration Review* (September-October 1974), pp. 445-450.

¹⁶After all necessary qualifications and training.

¹⁷Article IX, B. Section 2, (5), *1987 Constitution of the Republic of the Philippines*.

¹⁸Ambrosio B. Padilla. *Record of the Constitutional Commission: Proceedings and Debates*, Volume I, p. 567.

¹⁹Executive Order No. 180, dated June 1, 1987.

²⁰Blas F. Ople. *Record of the Constitutional Commission: Proceedings and Debates*, Volume I, p. 567.