

MINNOWBROOK CONFERENCE I NPA- SOCIAL EQUITY

NPA did not agree with the orthodox school's emphasis on efficiency and economy, which were also the goals of business administration.

The protagonists of NPA do not hesitate to demonstrate their open partisanship. In their view, the distributive functions and impact of governmental institutions should be public administration's basic concern.

The protagonists of NPA demonstrate their open partisanship. Partisanship does not simply mean political party politics, but taking a clear side in favour of a particular social objective or disadvantaged group.

For example, supporting poor people, women, persons with disabilities, weaker sections, etc.

So, an NPA administrator can openly say:

"My administrative action will give special attention to disadvantaged people."

In the view of protagonists, the distributive function and impact of governmental institutions should be public administration's basic concern.

That is, how the government distributes resources, opportunities and benefits among different sections of society, such as:

- * Free education
- * Scholarships
- * Subsidies
- * Healthcare
- * Employment programmes etc.

In simple words, protagonists (supporters) of NPA are not afraid to openly support particular social values.

It means, NPA does not want administration to remain completely neutral. It openly supports fairness and the interests of disadvantaged people.

Example: Suppose in a district, poor children cannot afford coaching for competitive exams. A traditional "neutral" approach might say:

"Government provides the same facilities for everyone."

But, as per NPA:

“Are poor students actually getting the same opportunity as rich students?”

If not, the administration should provide free coaching, scholarships, study centres, etc.

The important question for NPA is:

“Who is receiving these benefits, and who is being left out?”

As per NPA, the purpose of Public Administration (PA) is to reduce economic, social and psychic suffering and to enhance life opportunities for those inside and outside the public organisation.

The administration should bring about initiatives which would benefit the discriminated, underprivileged, marginalised and poor.

The philosophy is Neo-Benthamite, or seems to be Neo-Benthamite philosophy. “Neo-Benthamite” is connected with the philosophy of Jeremy Bentham.

Jeremy Bentham is famous for the idea of:

“Greatest happiness of the greatest number.”

So, the Neo-Benthamite approach basically means that Public Administration should focus on maximising social welfare and improving people’s overall well-being.

Example:

Suppose a district administration has 10 crore to spend.

It could spend the entire amount on beautification of the city, or it could spend it on drinking water, primary healthcare, sanitation, nutrition, etc.

A Neo-Benthamite/NPA perspective would ask:

“Which use of public money produces greater welfare for society?”

So, NPA proponents—Frederickson has gone a step further and adopted a bold social-equity attitude:

“A public administration which fails to work for changes, which tries to redress the deprivation of minorities, will likely be eventually used to repress those minorities.”

The idea is that public administration should not merely maintain the existing system. It should also respond to social inequalities, discrimination, and the deprivation of weaker or minority groups.

If the administration:

1. Refuses to bring necessary changes in society,
2. Ignores the problems and deprivation of minorities, and
3. Instead of addressing these problems, tries to suppress their demands or grievances,

then the administrative machinery can eventually become an instrument of oppression against those same minorities.

Example:

Suppose a minority community is facing discrimination in education and employment.

- * A responsive administration will recognise the problem and introduce corrective policies.
- * An unresponsive administration may ignore the inequality.
- * If the community protests, the administration may try to suppress the protest instead of solving the underlying problem.

Thus, administration that should have been a tool for social justice becomes a tool for maintaining the status quo and suppressing disadvantaged groups.

“An unresponsive administration that suppresses demands for change rather than addressing deprivation can become an instrument of oppression, particularly against disadvantaged groups.”

This is an aggressive, action-oriented stance, inviting public administration analysis to work for the removal of the wrongs of society and openly taking sides.

With the socially deprived groups.

NPA movement, thus, challenges the PA to make it more proactive to major social change causes. NPA advocated for social equity and sought a supporting clientele.