

# **SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH IN INDIA**

**A REPORT SUBMITTED TO THE ICSSR**

**by**

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## INTRODUCTION

We visited India, at the invitation of the Indian Council for Social Science Research, for a period of three weeks in November and early December 1970.\* The time was short and the resulting view of the Indian social science scene was necessarily impressionistic. But we had the advantage of ample documentation on a number of aspects of our topic prior to our visit, as well as a wide range of personal contacts extending over a period of years with individual Indian social scientists. We also acquired some confidence in our judgement about the significance of particular topics because we found, as we went along, that the same issues were raised again and again in different places and by different people, whose sole connecting link was their professional concern with the social sciences. We would not pretend, however, that the views which they expressed on these issues were uniform, or identical with our own. The recommendations made in this report are exclusively our own responsibility.

Our visit turned out to have been well timed: it occurred at a moment when the Council had been in operation long enough to make an impact on its environment, but before its policies and administrative conventions had been fully moulded. We are, indeed, struck by the speed with which the Council had created a widespread awareness of itself among the social science community—helped in particular by its well produced Newsletter and by the intellectual activities centred on the wide-ranging series of research reviews which it has commissioned. One incidental result of this was that we were, in most of our discus-

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\* The dates of our visit to India were as follows:—

Shonfield 12 November to 3 December; Cherns 11-25 November 1970.

sions with Indian academics, able to start from a shared understanding of the Council's role.

We visited, either singly or together, university departments and social science research institutes in the following places:— New Delhi, Jaipur, Ahmedabad, Bombay, Hyderabad, Patna, Calcutta, Bangalore and Madras. We had the advantage during most of these visits of the presence of Dr. Zafir Imam, a senior member of the Council's staff, whose knowledge and feeling for problems of research policy made him an invaluable guide. We had a great deal of help from individual members of the Council itself, and not least from the Chairman, Dr. Gadgil, who managed somehow, in spite of the great pressure of his work as Vice Chairman of the Planning Commission, to find time for relaxed and extended discussion with us about the future of social science research in India. We benefited especially from that attention of another member of the Council, Professor Durganand Sinha, who joined us midway through our tour of Indian academic establishments and accompanied Professor Cherns on his separate visit to Bangalore and Madras.

We owe a particular debt of gratitude to Mr. J.P. Naik, Member-Secretary of the ICSSR, for the contribution that he made to the development of the ideas that have gone into this report. It has to be admitted that his own tireless manner of attacking problems, whether intellectual or administrative, set a standard which we as visitors were not always able, in spite of our determined spirit of emulation, to match with complete success. His frank approach to the discussion of the problems faced by the Council seemed to us to be a model of the difficult art of getting relevant advice out of strangers.

We were accompanied on our visit by Mrs Zuzanna Shonfield. She did a great deal of the organising of the raw material of our report during our visit, and continued with preliminary drafting

and sub-editing of texts afterwards. We are grateful to her for her help. Finally, our thanks are due to the Commonwealth Foundation and the British Council, who were responsible for the finance and the travel arrangements of our visit.

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## I

### THE STATE OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES IN INDIA

1. The present performance of the social sciences in India is very uneven, both as between institutions and as between disciplines. Such disparities are common in other countries; they are particularly great in India.

2. There is a number of outstanding research institutions of worldwide reputation whose directors and senior staff are in great demand for conferences, seminars, etc. all over the world. These institutes conform to no particular pattern; they have been formed for different reasons at different times and their histories are as different. They share one thing in common. They have been able to attract and hold outstanding individuals because they have offered a place where worthwhile research could be conducted, often under difficulties, but generally without interference and interruption, and where enough good colleagues were available to create the conditions for a fruitful exchange of ideas. They have attracted younger people, keen to gain research experience and to work under first-rate men and women. They offer the nearest approach to a career in research that India offers. It does not appear to matter from the point of view of their success whether they are attached to universities or not. The system of university financing possesses certain flexibilities unmatched in Britain. The Indian UGC is able to support independent institutes which perform a teaching function. With this kind of backing they are spared some of the anxiety and cost in time of ensuring their own financial survival. These institutes play an important part in imparting to students the special skills, which are essential for certain kinds of research. Their disappearance or diminution would be a tragedy not only for India.

3. At the other extreme is a number of university departments disposing of very scant resources. We have encountered departments whose academic staff consists of one or two individuals teaching their subject to students whose main attachment is to some other department. These are hard cases and one would hope transient, though their capacities for persistence are sometimes surprising. From the point of view of research resource they offer no basis on which the Council can build.

4. There are, by contrast, excellent university departments with staff of high academic attainment and reputation. Here the problem is that, save in a few cases, their heavy teaching loads have diminished their research potential. The balance is thus tilted more heavily in favour of the research institute than is altogether healthy. Nevertheless this is the base upon which the Council has to build; we refer later to the problems which this creates for the Council.

### **Training and Careers in Research**

5. In general the facilities for research training are inadequate. In most institutes formal training in research methods is a diversion from their main preoccupations and can reasonably be undertaken only for the research staff of the institute. Thus the best available resources for training in research are not fully exploited. Although some universities provide courses in research method, usually geared to the needs of Ph.D. students, we found that most offer little such training, least of all for people whose main interest is in inter-disciplinary research. University structures the world over experience a continual conflict between the demands of academic disciplines for departmental autonomy and specialisation on the one hand and the needs for flexibility and interdisciplinary cross-fertilisation on the other. In India it appears that the triumph of the former is almost complete.

6. This question of research training is one which the Council will have to confront very seriously. We heard from at least one institute the claim that their principal deficiency was not

money but men—that they could acquire funds for research, but either refused them or refrained from seeking them because good research workers would not be available.

7. This matter is bound up with another problem which was frequently mentioned to us—the lack of careers in research. A professional training in research and research method plainly has most attraction for someone who looks forward to a substantial career in research. It is less attractive to one who realises that he must sooner rather than later seek other employment and who, if oriented towards the academic profession, perceives that his progress in this is likely to be advanced more by scholarly specialisation of a theoretical character than by expertness in applied research in the social sciences.

### **Interdisciplinary Research**

8. In all countries the component disciplines in the social sciences vary in sophistication and development. Economics has advanced furthest in the use of mathematics and in the precision of its conceptual formulation. Psychology has advanced furthest in experimental and research methodology. But in India these disparities between the disciplines seem to be greater than in many western countries. Indian economists have made notable contributions to their discipline; but comparable achievement is less in evidence elsewhere. Sociology for example is a relatively neglected subject; and the result is that there are few sociologists capable of working on equal terms with economists in multidisciplinary teams.

9. The fact is that the practitioner of one discipline working in a team under the leadership of a director trained in another discipline has a frustrating life, especially in a small institution. He is rarely able to work on a problem of his own defining; if for example the director of the research is an economist, this may lead to the formulation of the research problem in such a way as to reduce the contribution of the sociologist to

the process of data collection, and, more profoundly, bias any sample survey by assumptions drawn exclusively from an economic model of the question to be investigated. Unless the sociologist can contribute to the conceptualisation of the research, it will lack attraction for him. But a true conceptual contribution is likely to be made only by a sociologist of some experience and authority. He needs to have extensive knowledge of the processes of both economic and social development in order to earn him credibility in the eyes of his collaborators. This need conflicts with the habits of research institutions, which tend to move with caution into the interdisciplinary area, starting with the appointment of junior assistants. The results are predictably disappointing.

10. These difficulties are aggravated because they are often part of a vicious circle. The question for the Council is where in the circle is the best point to break in. For example, a qualification in economics, because this discipline has advanced to the point where its practical uses are obvious, attracts employer's. Students seeking employment see economics as a good route. More students and more good students enter the discipline, which therefore grows both in size and in prestige and penetrates even further into the world of employment. The comparatively recent establishment of the Government of India's Economic Service exemplifies this process. By contrast, a training in sociology is seen as irrelevant by most employers and few ambitious students are attracted into the discipline.

11. The relationship between careers in research and training in research is part of another vicious circle. If a training in research does not offer a prospect of reasonably secure employment, because of a lack of research posts, the graduate will seek immediate employment in preference to further training. The tendency would then be for those unable to secure employment to engage in postgraduate training in research methods. The cadre of training researchers will thus contain few whose subsequent performance will justify the establishment

of permanent research posts. The best of the researchers tend, in any case, to be directed into academic teaching.

## **Communication**

12. Where informal channels have been developed communication among academics, between universities and institutes, and between them and the Council is good. Formal channels are less effective. Communications tend to get stuck in the higher hierarchical levels, and few Indian institutions appear to operate without an elaborate hierarchy. The problems of communication must be expected to grow with the decentralisation of many government activities and the associated phenomena of regionalism and linguistic nationalism. These factors must influence decisions on the future organisation of the Council and its activities.

## **Using Research Results**

13. It appears to be rare for people doing research in universities to maintain a sustained interest in the application of the results of their work in action. The common attitude of researchers is to leave matters to the normal academic channels of diffusion; the general expectation is that any impact on the world of action will be remote and long-term. But many academics have undertaken problem-oriented research, often at the instance of, and sometimes supported by administrative organisations. The motives in these cases have been both the advancement of knowledge and the contribution towards the solution or amelioration of a practical problem. Yet once the research was done and the report completed, we found that the academics often had little knowledge of what use, if any, was made of the results. Where they did know, the story was none too encouraging. There seems little readiness among academics to recognise that they have a responsibility for ensuring the utilisation of their research and little interest in the intricate social processes whereby research affects action.

14. These diffusion processes need planning. Not the least part of the problem lies in comparability. The administrator is often left without guidance as to whether the results of research elsewhere would be applicable to the population he is dealing with. Not only do research workers tend to use sampling frames of their own devising, they are also prone to opt for definitions of terms which suit their own studies but differ from those used in other researches. One example that comes to mind was impressed upon us by an administrator concerned with scheduled tribes. The different definitions adopted by researchers in different states made it impossible for him to apply conclusions derived from data laboriously collected in one area to problems arising outside the geographical confines of the place where the original research was done.

## II

### STRATEGIES FOR DEVELOPING RESEARCH

15. The ICSSR's effort in the social sciences is distributed broadly under the following headings :—

1. The extension and improvement of India's research capability in the social sciences by (a) the provision of extra research facilities, specially regional facilities; (b) the raising of standards of scientific performance among active social scientists.
2. The promotion of research activities deemed to be especially relevant to Indian problems in the various social sciences.
3. The provision of financial support for individual research projects of good quality which are not adequately funded from other sources.
4. The diffusion of research results which are relevant either to the formulation of public policy or to business decisions in the private sector.

16. During the first period of its existence the ICSSR has been active on all of these fronts; it has seized whatever occasions have offered to make itself useful. This was a natural and proper part of the business of establishing a widespread awareness of its existence among the people and organisations who could either contribute to or make effective use of its services. It is no surprise to learn that during the initial phase of the work of a research council of this type even the modest resources available to it have been more than sufficient to meet the demand. But it is our impression that this phase will soon be over, and that if the Council continues to

be equally active in all of the major fields in which it has functions to perform, it will find that its resources are severely overloaded. These resources, it is worth saying, are not only financial; they are also made up of the skill, time and effort supplied by the community of Indian social scientists.

17. Probably the heaviest demands during the period immediately ahead will be made under the first heading above. It is essential, however, that the Council continue to devote a large proportion of its energies to the task on which it has embarked with considerable verve during the initial stage of its existence—the identification of fields of research requiring special attention (2. above) by means of a collective effort of investigation mounted by the community of Indian social scientists. The Research Reviews promoted by the ICSSR are a major exercise of considerable potential value, not least because of the network of communications that is being established among widely scattered groups of social scientists working in the same or allied fields, in the course of the all-India survey of social science research. It is extremely important that this network should be kept in good repair and actively used by the ICSSR in the development of its own research policies.

18. Our conversations with a number of the Council's potential clients made it plain that they see the balance of the different functions to be performed by the ICSSR in very different ways. Some of them, in the research institutes, look for united general purpose grants on a substantial scale to ensure the maintenance of their existing research capacity. They hope to be assured of such finance over a period of some years and to use it in part to cover the cost of their overheads. They see the ICSSR, in other words, as doing for the research institutes outside the university system what the University Grants Commission does for those inside it.

19. At the other extreme, there are the individual

researchers often working on their own in a university department, with little help from anyone inside it or outside it, who hope for some funds to improve the quality of the work that they are doing or simply for some assistance which will allow them to bring it to an early conclusion. Typically these people want finance for research assistants, for travel, for additional library services and perhaps for some computer services. The sums required by any individual are not generally very large; but if the ICSSR is successful in its object of stimulating a considerable number of junior academics, hitherto untried in research work and employed in university departments without a strong research tradition, the total will soon add up to a significant amount.

20. Finally, there are the university departments and institutes which look to the Council to support particular elements in ongoing research programmes, for which they find it difficult to obtain funds either from the UGC or through research contracts with outside sponsors.

### **Individual Project :**

21. Support for the small scale and often isolated research project is plainly something to which the Council must attach particular importance. It is an essential part of its task of discovering unrecognised research potential and thus increasing the country's research capacity in the social sciences.

22. Project support is indeed the most familiar model for research sponsorship, and there is a disposition by sponsors everywhere to pretend that it suits all purposes. A research organisation, department or institute conceives a project for which it requires temporary staff, materials, equipment and funds for travelling. It seeks funds from a granting body which judges the merits of the research, the appropriateness of the methods proposed, and need for assistance requested. The grant

terminates at a fixed time, at which point the project is supposed to be complete. All is apparently straightforward; the granting agency is able to turn over its funds avoiding commitment of resources to any continuing research or any one institution concerned is able to carry out its research project and that is that.

23. In practice, this places upon the institution a considerable set of problems. First there is often delay in obtaining appropriately trained assistants. Staff may have to be shuffled from one project to another. Towards the end of the grant period there is anxiety about continuity: if the research assistant is an able person it is a pity to waste the skills that he has acquired through familiarisation with the research problem and with the methods of working of the particular institution. The attention of researchers is diverted from the project to the problem of obtaining a new grant to continue the line of work. Yet in spite of all these difficulties individual project support remains the most acceptable way of helping an institution to carry out a specifically defined piece of research or of helping it to initiate a new line of activity.

24. The Council's method of subjecting the small scale and often inadequately formulated research proposals to the rigorous and imaginative surveillance of expert "consultants" appointed by it should mean that the pool of able researchers who have been trained on the job will expand. The deliberate policy adopted by the Council of choosing a senior academic from an institution with a developed research capacity to act as "consultant" to the less experienced social scientists, often located in a much less favourable academic environment, is an attractive device for building outwards from the centres of strength. It is to be interpreted as part of the long term design of spreading the effective research capacity in the social sciences, which is at present highly concentrated in a few places, more evenly over the country. It is, however, worth

drawing attention to the fact that all the available experience shows that intellectual tutelage of this kind is, when it works, extremely costly in terms of manhours of highly skilled people—who are scarce everywhere but especially so in India. The men and women who tend to be the first choice on any list of “consultants” for complicated or novel pieces of research, are also those whose services are heavily in demand, both for the conduct of research work under their own direction and for help in the Council’s task of promoting important new areas of research activity. We have come across signs that some of the most favoured “consultants” are already beginning to feel themselves over-burdened by ICSSR work.

25. It would seem to us to be useful therefore, even at this early stage, for the Council to arrive at some approximate view on how much of its resources, and of the capacity of India’s most able social scientists, should be devoted to this tutelary role. Potentially the demand is very great indeed. A realistic assessment of the burden that can be carried would, we suspect, lead to a reconsideration of the existing procedures for vetting research proposals involving the transfer of greater responsibility to the Council’s scientific staff.\* If this course were chosen, an early decision would have to be made about recruiting people of the required academic calibre.

### **Research Programmes :**

26. Where there is an established programme of ongoing research in the social sciences and the Council is seen as a means of supporting some particular component of it, the ICSSR faces a different kind of problem. Our impression from the discussions which we had at a number of academic institutions is that the Council’s contribution in such cases tends to be envisaged as a marginal one. This view has been reinforced by the Council’s ruling that any university department or

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\*See Section VII, p.49.

research institute shall be eligible for support for no more than two research projects at any one time. The strategy of choosing the projects which will produce the most advantageous results financially is then dominated by considerations of administrative convenience internal to the university department or institute concerned, with very little reference to any research policy that may have been developed by the ICSSR. The conclusion that we draw is inevitably that a special effort will have to be made by the Council to ensure that the main thrust of the work undertaken by such institutions is in line with the broad direction of research that the ICSSR wishes to support.

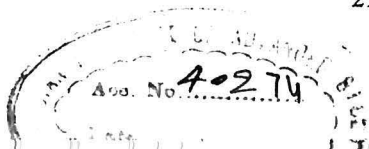
27. That requires an act of commitment on the part of the research sponsor of a rather deeper kind than it makes to the ordinary research project. The more successful institutes and university departments are, on their side, keenly aware of the limiting nature of individual project support. To make a real dent on research problems, whether they are concerned with a single discipline or are of an interdisciplinary character, application-oriented or theoretical, requires more continuity and more patient development than can be undertaken with a small team working over a three or four year period. A somewhat longer perspective is needed—at least five, and up to seven years. That is not to say that the objectives of the research cannot be defined or that their formulation need be loose. But perspectives change with time, and rigorous adherence to a plan formulated at the outset would be self-defeating. The institution could of course be asked to split up the proposed programme it has in mind into a series of projects, but this is an artificial and limiting process. The courageous step is to reinforce the promise of such an institution by offering support over a longer period (say 5-7 years) for a *programme* of research, defined in such a way that the institution is able to vary its approach of attack on the problems in the light of its own experience and considered judgment. Support for such a programme, which can be expensive and implies the provision of comparatively senior posts as well as junior ones, should

only be contemplated for institutions which have proved themselves and established their right to a good deal of autonomy in the design and conduct of research. The device of programme support should, clearly, not be used as a means of starting a new research facility from scratch.

### **Infrastructure :**

28. It is a commonplace that the time and effort of senior research workers are often diverted into comparatively unproductive aspects of research by the lack of adequate facilities. Such facilities include people as well as material—statisticians, computer programmers, coders, card punchers, even typists, as well as computer facilities, card punching machinery, typewriters and photocopying machines. All these are essential adjuncts of a well-run and efficient research centre, but their provision is hard to justify as part of a single project or even a programme. On a limited budget the Council could afford to equip very few institutions in this way. Some may indeed be able to obtain these basic facilities through other funding agencies—the UGC, state governments, foundations. In these cases the role of the Council might be best directed towards establishing and publishing the appropriate criteria and standards—criteria for determining the suitability of an institution for receiving such assistance, and standards for the various components of infrastructure requirement. These standards, if they are realistic rather than visionary, can be quoted by the UGC, state governments, and so on, in justifying budgetary provisions; the criteria will serve notice to institutions of the quality of research needed to justify a bid to become established as a fully equipped research centre.

29. We envisage only a few centres of this kind, at any rate during the period immediately ahead, and that they would be established with regard both to regional considerations and to the need for concentrated effort on particular problem areas or on the advancements of particular intellectual disciplines.



Some of these institutions would be the natural nuclei for the regional centres for research co-ordination and information that are being considered by the Council. There are in our view good reasons for building on existing institutions, of which there are a few of outstanding quality, rather than dispersing resources by creating new ones.

30. The Council will have to decide how far it is able to perform the role of a kind of junior UGC towards the independent research institutes. The answer will plainly depend in large part on the size of its prospective budget during the years ahead. But it will also depend on how many of the other demands that will be made on the ICSSR the Council will try to satisfy. This brings the Council back to the strategic problem of deciding the balance of its long term budget. The independent research institutes, which must in our view be regarded as the most important single resource available for the development of a high performance in Indian social science, could easily swallow up a very large sum merely to sustain their existing research capacity.

31. It is worth while going to some trouble to distinguish these different types of research support because it should enable the Council to budget for them separately. It is essential for the Council to have at its disposal some means of evaluating the outcome of its activities. That can hardly be done unless the aims of different kinds of research effort are clearly identified. Otherwise the appropriate set of evaluative criteria cannot be applied; and without this the basis for a coherent and balanced research policy will be missing.

### III

#### RELATIONS WITH GOVERNMENT

32. Some concern was expressed to us by a number of academics that the ICSSR might become, whether deliberately or not, an instrument for establishing a single unified control over Indian social science research. It is worth saying that the thought was not prompted by actions that had been taken by the Council to date, but rather by a feeling that this might be the direction in which it would be impelled to move. The concentration of patronage at any single point naturally tends to arouse suspicions of this kind. It is all the more necessary that the Council should explain to the social science community the philosophy which will guide the exercise of its functions, as a growing proportion of the funding of social science research activity comes into its hands.

33. Such suspicions and such needs for explanation have arisen in other countries, for example in the United Kingdom, when a research council for the social sciences was first established. It is therefore worth asserting that the social sciences are a field of intellectual activity where it is especially important to maintain a plurality of independent initiatives and a variety of research sponsors. Too little is known about the ultimate potentialities of these disciplines, their techniques and theoretical structures are too undeveloped and uncertain, to make it possible to rely on some unified consensual judgement about the right and the wrong lines of research at any given moment of time—even if that judgement is backed by the views of the most reputable social scientists in any single country. There are nearly always other views, outside as well as inside the country, which ought to have a chance to be taken seriously. Research management in the social sciences should start from the recognition

that judgement about what is worth while doing almost invariably contains an element of personal taste and opinion. It is necessary to insure against the damage that can be caused by the unrecognised dominance of some fashionable opinion in the minds of experts. The warning uttered by Sir John Clapham's Committee on the development of social sciences in Britain a quarter of a century ago against the "danger of a premature crystallisation of spurious orthodoxies"\* is just as pertinent to-day.

34. It would, therefore, not be wise for a research council in the social sciences to attempt to exercise guidance by setting itself up as a kind of licensing authority for research projects financed by others as well as itself. Government agencies and private foundations who wish to commission research should be left free to do so; our experience in Britain has been that these bodies are in any case eager to obtain such advice as a research council can supply, in view of its unusual range of contacts and its knowledge of the work going forward in its field. This is one of the many ways in which a research council exercises "leverage" on the general direction of the national research effort, without attempting to dominate it.

35. The Indian Federal Government, through its various departments and agencies, provides substantial sums of money for economic and social research, as do, in the aggregate, the state governments. Although it would be undesirable for rigid lines of demarcation to be drawn between types of research and topics suitable for direct government funding and those suitable for indirect (Council) funding, and in any case the Council should always reserve the right to finance any individual project which it regards as important and practicable, some working agreement is needed so that a searcher with an idea can be guided to the most appropriate source of funds. The required *informal* working relationship between the Council and central and state government departments, and also with the foundations,

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\*Report of the Committee on the Provision for Social and Economic Research. (Cmd. 6868, 1945).

on a basis of mutual understanding and trust, cannot be brought about by fiat; it has to be worked for hard and steadily. The benefits in terms of the quality of the research product and of its intelligent application to practical purposes are well worth the effort. The professional staff of the Council, whose reinforcement forms the substance of one of our major recommendations, will bear the main burden of this responsibility.

36. It seems to us important not only that the Council should avoid the role of a government agency exercising surveillance over all social science activity, but should also be seen to be avoiding it. The community of social scientists should be in no doubt that the function of the ICSSR is to represent them. The Council should also be the channel through which the government communicates its needs and desires to them; but when the Council itself makes a decision, it should be clearly understood that it derives from the views of the social scientists who act as the guardians of academic aims and standards in their disciplines.

37. For this reason it is desirable that while the Council should take the closest interest in the work and requirements of government departments, both at federal and at state levels, and constantly inform itself of the problems that present themselves to public policy-makers, it should maintain a certain separateness, a little distance, from government departments and agencies. This is the pattern which has been adopted in Britain, and our experience of it has convinced us of the value of marking the difference between the functions of those who are responsible for government and those who are members of research councils. To take one illustration, there is sometimes a conflict of interest between researchers and officials about the use of confidential or classified information. Government departments have a tendency to over-insure against the risk of what they deem to be an inappropriate use of the information which they have gathered. Social scientists, on the other side, press the case for the release of the maximum amount of infor-

mation, on the ground that the resulting research will, in the long run, make for improvements in public policy far greater than the possible short term losses that might be caused by some indiscretion. Each side naturally expresses its own professional bias. But it is healthier for the case of the social scientist, which is after all a fairly novel and unfamiliar one, to be presented to government as openly as possible, with the authority of a considered opinion by a representative research council behind it. We say that it is healthier because we think that the progress of social science research depends in large measure on the successful advancement of such claims to more information, and we believe that the issue is better argued out between two sides vigorously expressing their viewpoints and not afraid to admit that they diverge from one another.

38. This is just one illustration of the kind of problem which has made us doubt whether the decision to include in the Council as voting members a number of senior civil servants effectively serves the image of the Council as the representative body of the social science community. Clearly there is a need for the representation of the views of organisations which are important users of research. Their views must be constantly taken into account by the Council. But this can be done, as happens in the British SSRC, by arranging for the presence and the active participation in debate of government officials without giving them voting rights on matters of Council policy. Even though we have been informed the Council has never in practice taken a vote, the ultimate right to vote is a significant fact about the character of an institution.

#### IV

### RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE UNIVERSITY GRANTS COMMISSION

39. Relations with the UGC will need to be closer than they are at present. Our experience is that without special efforts the policies of independent bodies like the UGC and the ICSSR tend to drift apart. The presence of the Chairman of the UGC on the Council, though welcome, is by itself insufficient. Close contacts at working level are essential: these must primarily rest on informal relationships among the professional staffs. A system of interlocking memberships of committees helps, as does the device adopted by the SSRC in Britain of inviting representatives of the UGC to serve as "assessors", i.e. non-voting participants in the Council and Committees of the SSRC.

40. At present, because the Council is not in the business of giving students scholarships for postgraduate research training it has no direct way of influencing the flow of competent research workers. By its sensible decision to allow research assistants engaged under research grants from the Council to register for higher degrees, the Council supports research training through the back door, but this policy cannot do duty for the much needed systematic approach to the problem. There are arguments on both sides of the question whether the Council or the UGC should be responsible for this task. If we favour the Council for this purpose, it is because:

- (a) the Council will not be under constant pressure to generalise its scheme to subjects outside its purview; the UGC would find it more difficult to discriminate between social science and humanities;

- (b) the Council will be keeping the needs of the disciplines under constant review and is in a better position to respond to changing requirements for trained manpower;
- (c) the Council is better able to influence the shape of research training in directions favouring the building up of cadres of researchers competent to tackle problems foreseen by the Council.

41. Against this, the Council may be reluctant to assume any considerable administrative commitment. If it accepts responsibilities in the field of training, it is strongly recommended to exercise its functions of guidance on the *courses* of training, and not through the selection of candidates. The latter should be the business of academic institutions. It is far more economical and effective for the Council to scrutinise the training offered by a university department or institute and to allocate to it a number of scholarships, leaving it to select the scholars for the course, than to attempt to allocate scholarships centrally to individual candidates. We make some specific suggestions about the organisation of research training in Section VI, p. 37.

42. There are other border areas between the ICSSR and the UGC. For example, the Council cannot overlook the fact that the research capability which it is charged to develop rests ultimately on the character and quality of university teaching in the social sciences. There is also the problem of the adequacy of current textbooks for undergraduate and post-graduate teaching. In nearly all fields the textbooks in use in India rely heavily on Western examples and Western case studies. Sometimes, no doubt, suitable Indian material does not exist. But it is our impression that where the material does exist, it is often not available in usable form for this purpose. Furthermore, the international programmes which have made available cheap reprints of Western textbooks have tended to inhibit the production of texts based on indigenous

material. While we would emphatically not recommend the Council to enter the textbook publishing business, it could legitimately sponsor the collection of social science material drawn from Indian experience and its preparation in forms suitable for undergraduate and post graduate instruction. The expense would be slight and could well be almost entirely self-liquidating; the diversion of some people from research to the development of the disciplines would be a price to be paid, but in the not too long run a price well worth paying.



## V

### RELATIONS WITH THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY OF SOCIAL SCIENTISTS

43. The task of ensuring effective communication among social scientists is clearly not something which stops short of India's frontiers. The maintenance and improvement of international communication, and where possible of active collaboration on research problems of common concern, are equally important objectives. The social science disciplines are currently so explosive in their development that it requires a major effort on the part of a research council in this field to ensure that researchers keep up with the constantly changing techniques, with the new additions to data, and the shift in the conceptual frameworks that are employed in the study of the problems of society. It is essential too that the methods developed for the investigation of India's special problems should be subjected constantly to discussion with able social scientists abroad. It is after all a common experience nowadays, in the developed as well as in the developing countries, to find that our apparently secure knowledge of even primary social phenomena is grossly inadequate to provide the factual guidance required by those who are responsible for making public policies. If better solutions are to be offered in the future and offered in time, the international resources of social science research will have to be more vigorously exploited.

44. In view of this need we feel it worth drawing attention to doubts that have lately arisen both among Indian scholars and among foreign scholars concerned with Indian affairs about the future of India's international relationships in social science research. We understand the background of events

which have given rise to Indian anxieties about the possible use of foreign sponsored social science research for illegitimate political purposes. It is recognised that some clear administrative device is needed in order to allay the public's concern on this score. But it is important that the ICSSR, which is bound to be involved in giving advice to those responsible for this aspect of national security, should make a special effort to avoid the creation of an atmosphere in which potential sponsors of research, whether indigenous or foreign, feel that they are going to be subjected to the intellectual fiat of one supreme academic authority in determining the content of social science investigations. This would surely have the effect of reducing the volume of research done in collaboration by Indian and foreign scholars, at precisely the moment when the establishment of the ICSSR should be providing the stimulus for its expansion.

45. It would be useful if the Council were to formulate and publicise, at an early stage, its policy in relation to the international community of social scientists. The original statement on the establishment of the ICSSR by Mr. Y. B. Chavan, then Home Minister, referred with approval to its anticipated effect "of reducing the dependence of Indian research institutions and scholars on foreign financial assistance for their worthwhile projects in this field." (Times of India, 15 May 1969). While there can plainly be no objection to the aim of providing more indigenous finance for Indian social science research, it would seem to be a pity to use this money as a replacement for work financed by existing sponsors, rather than as a means of supporting a net addition to the total volume of work going forward.

46. There are in fact two different aspects of the problem presented by the activities of foreign academic or sponsoring organisations, concerned with social science research in India, which are not always properly distinguished. The first is the relatively straightforward issue of avoiding the misuse of funds

for political or intelligence purposes. The other arises out of the desire to avoid a waste of resources through inefficient or ill-designed research schemes. In the first case, the ICSSR should intervene only if a judgement is called for on the content of some proposed piece of research, which raises doubts in the minds of Government officials. It seems to us that in such cases a straightforward judgement on the academic significance of the called for from the professional social scientists on the Council, who will be able to view the research proposal in the wider context of current research methods and interests. Their judgement would have a sophistication which would not necessarily be present in the minds of administrators, who might, for example, be unduly impressed by the apparent political sensitivity of some topic which had come to be regarded as part of the small change of academic social science. On the other hand, if the point at issue were the possible misuse of the research *activity* for political or intelligence purpose, then it would be better for the appropriate agency of government, acting on its own, to decide whether to ban the proposed exercise. The ICSSR should not itself be involved in such cases, since the expert assessment must necessarily come from officials who are better informed and qualified to judge than it is itself. It is important that the two issues, of the academic credentials of a piece of research and of the danger of misbehavior by persons engaged in a research exercise, be kept strictly separate from one another, and that the ICSSR should be known to be concerned with the one and not with the other. This is consistent with the policy to which we referred earlier of maintaining arm's length relationship between a research council and the regular agencies of government.

47. As regards the second aspect of the problem, the possible waste of resources in ill-designed research sponsored from abroad, the ICSSR could play a useful though limited role. If it is to avoid the danger of becoming an intellectual licensing authority, it must clearly not dictate to other sponsors

an order of priorities in Indian social science research. On the other hand there is an obvious need for a representative body of Indian social scientists to make their voice heard when decisions are being considered about the use of foreign exchange provided from abroad on some proposed piece of research. It would indeed be natural for the ICSSR to be consulted on these matters before the terms of any contract covering research collaboration between Indian and non-Indian social scientists are fixed. What should be avoided, however, is a detailed intervention or any suggestion of dictation of the content of research. It is worth reiterating the point that the main benefit to be derived from such exercises is not to provide India with some additional financial aid, but to foster international collaboration in Indian research. And to be effective the atmosphere in which this collaboration takes place must be as free as possible from official government intervention.

48. We recognise that this is a delicate topic and we approach it with some diffidence. That we do so at all indicates the importance that we attach to avoiding any unnecessary misunderstanding between social scientists inside India and their colleagues outside. Their relations have hitherto been unusually good; the continuing exchange of ideas between Indian and foreign social scientists has had all the characteristics of a dialogue between equals, and our proposals are designed to ensure that the dialogue will grow in scope and in intensity in the future. To this end we think it worth suggesting one possible device for strengthening the links between India and the international community of social scientists.

49. We have noted the problems that arise between social scientists of different countries, sometimes as a result of misunderstandings about each other's methods or purposes and occasionally through the downright misuse of the processes of social science. The ICSSR might consider setting up a standing panel of social scientists whose primary task would be to

develop a code of guidance for handling questions of this kind. These questions should be recognised for what they are—an important aspect of international intellectual relations and one of considerable delicacy. The proposed panel would naturally include some representatives of the international social science community. Indeed it would be useful to give formal status to the exercise by inviting the International Social Science Council to join with the ICSSR in setting up the panel and to propose the names of some eminent non-Indian social scientists to be members of it.

50. The panel's broad task would be the promotion of research contacts and collaboratives between Indian scholars and the worldwide community of social scientists. It would conduct a periodic survey of these academic relations and would report on the progress made in particular fields of research, on identifiable research gaps, and on under-used research potential. Such an arrangement would be a natural complement to the effort that has been made by the ICSSR since its inception to carry out a systematic review of research activity inside India and to use this review as a means of formulating a policy for the development of the country's research resources. It is worth adding that the experience gained in this endeavour might have a larger significance, since it could provide a model for other countries which would wish to mobilise the resources of international social science in the service of their development but are inhibited by anxieties of a political character, as well as sheer lack of information, from doing so.



## VI

### POLICIES FOR RESEARCH AND TRAINING

51. A problem of fundamental orientation faces the ICSSR in its second phase—how to divide its support between research aimed at the development of the social sciences themselves and problem-oriented research with applications outside the academic community. It may be argued that Indian social science disciplines are not fitted at the present stage of development to undertake the problem-orientated surveys needed to help solve the most urgent social, political and administrative difficulties; that the practical answers of which the social scientists are capable today are for the most part either trite or unreliable; that in any case government and industry readily find fund for applied research and starve the more fundamental investigations; and that the present emphasis should therefore remain on “research for research’s sake”, in order to improve the general standard of formulation and techniques. On the other side, supporters of a greater emphasis on applied research point to the fact that since higher prestige does in any case attach to “pure” research, to support it by ICSSR funds would be to risk drawing away desperately needed resources of talent from the field of applied research.

52. Some of these arguments rest on a misunderstanding of the way in which social sciences develop and are applied. They cannot be developed by pure thought or in a vacuum; they function very largely by means of a continual two-way interchange from practice to theory and back to practice.

53. The ICSSR must clearly not replace the user in sponsoring research of a directly useable kind. Where there is an identifiable user and the results are not capable of general

application, there is every reason for preferring that the sponsorship should come directly from him and so involve him in the work as possible. The same applies to the case, where the particular research results will have wide general applicability but there is no reason to suppose that the user will withhold them from publication. But there are other types of situation, for example where there are several different potential users involved and they find it difficult to get together, or where the ICSSR's cachet is likely to be a major factor in obtaining acceptance of the validity of the research; in such circumstances the Council should be prepared to act as the primary sponsor. One major provision must, however, be made. The researcher should always be required to demonstrate that the potential user has been involved to the point where he is prepared to cooperate fully in providing access to data and permission to publish. He should also be ready to serve on any advisory body that may be set up for the projects, to monitor the research as it proceeds and to act as a feedback to encourage action by the user. Unless these conditions are met there is no reason to prefer problem-oriented research to research that is primarily concerned with the development of the discipline. Indeed the former is likely to be more fruitlessly arid than the latter.

54. A danger common to bodies with functions analogous to those of the ICSSR is that they are liable to claim a share of national resources on the implied promise of the utility of the research undertaken, and having made good their claim, disregard their undertaking and support research without regard to its utility. The Council would be well advised to keep a constant watch on the balance between the research which is supported because of its promise for disciplinary advance and that which is supported because of its applications and utility outside the academic world. Different criteria are appropriate, and the allocation of expenditure between the two types of effort should be subjected to periodic review in the light of the Council's agreed policies.

## Concentration or Spread ?

55. Should the Council concentrate its expenditure where first-class work is known to be produced or distribute its support more widely in an attempt to encourage the weaker institutions? The stronger centres are already capable of attracting research funds: their shortages are of good people and supporting facilities. Much of the research sponsored at weak institutions is likely to be wasted; it may not even achieve adequate research training for the participants and so increase the capacity of the institutions to undertake future research. Clearly, the Council can achieve the maximum leverage by providing the stronger institutions with the resources and the motive to help the weaker.

56. The Council is likely to come under strong pressure decentralise its activities. It appears to us that while the Council should maintain centralisation of its policy-making and grant-giving activities, there is a strong case for decentralising information and many other research services. But the Council should avoid building new centres of its own which would quickly acquire enormous appetites for its resources.

57. We recommend that the Council should designate certain outstanding research institutions as regional centres for research training. To these should be attached the Council's information activities, data collections and so on. They would be available to help researchers in their regions with the formulation of research projects, and the grants given by the Council to researchers in the region would, where appropriate, include sums earmarked for payment for services supplied by the regional centre. One way of exploiting the assistance which the stronger research institutions can give the less privileged one would be to designate it to form the core of such a centre. This new body, based on an already functioning institution, could use the additional resources available from the Council to supplement and extend the existing infrastructure of research facilities and make them available to the region of which it is the centre.

58. The regional network could also serve to ensure better comparability of research results derived from studies in different parts of India. Perhaps the worst outcome of the existing poor liaison among researchers is the loss of the cumulative value of their researches which could accrue from a measure of common planning and the adoption of common conventions and categories.

59. It is important to keep the regional concept flexible; a scholar would not necessarily be obliged to utilise the nearest centre, but would go to the one whose research interests were closest to his own. However, for the purpose of providing infrastructure, the Council might find it expedient to define the regional boundaries of each centre.

60. The directors of the proposed regional centres, together with members of the Council, should be constituted as a standing committee of the Council. Among the most important functions of this committee should be the task of exploring the contribution which the new centres can make in every possible way to raising the standards of the other institutions within their respective regions. The primary purpose of these designated institutions should never be forgotten. It is to act as a pole of attraction, centre of diffusion and research servicing point for the region.

61 This will not be achieved over a short period; the aim should be to attain it by degrees. Because the designated centres will become significant instruments of many of the Council's policies, careful thought should be given to the choice of appropriate institutions and locations for them. In addition to the need for convenient geographical position in each of the major regions of the country, the main criteria guiding the choice should include the following. First, each of the centres should be able to provide an adequate base for advanced work in the major social science disciplines; second, they must be capable of satisfying the Council's requirements for advanced research

training; third, they should be selected with an eye to the main fields of application of social science research, and deliberately aimed to fill identified needs for knowledge in education, agriculture, industry, social welfare and so on; fourth, the centres must be able to perform efficiently and promptly the function of supplying information on matters relevant to research in the social sciences. The aim would be to establish within India a network of, say, five or six institutions of a quality capable of rivalling any in the world. It is hard to think of anything which would do as much to advance the social science research capacity of the country, and indeed that of the whole of South Asia.

62. Because of current difficulties, which may last for some time, there is a grave danger that people seriously concerned to do research may give most of the universities up as a bad job and gravitate to research institutes. Few universities provide the time needed for any research involving fieldwork or prolonged periods of activity. Nor is it just a matter of insufficient free time. Student numbers have in many places increased rapidly without corresponding additions to staffs and the unrest among students has made even greater demands on the energies and thoughts of the staff. It is no hyperbole to speak of a crisis in the Indian universities.

63. Faced with this situation the Council is likely for a time to find itself in the position of protecting a small number of enclaves in the academic system where work of excellence can still be systematically pursued. Many of these places will be independent research institutes. Indeed, as has already been indicated, it would be natural if some of these research institutes provided the nuclei around which the designated regional centres were built up. Certainly this would avoid the considerable administrative problems that might arise if the Council tried to establish research enclaves on university campuses. Some of research institutes are of course affiliated to universities and the Council might consider ways in which such relationships could be extended. The important point is to insist that the new

centres are built up from the positions of academic strength which India already possesses, and not given their location merely on grounds of geographical or administrative convenience.

### **Research Training**

64. The most efficient, and in our view also the most cost-effective, way of upgarding the standard of quality of research effort in both universities and research institutes is through the improvement of research training. Providing research training as a by-product of research is wasteful. The council can improve the standard of research training by:—

- i. Providing scholarships for training in research at centres designated by the Council. The scholarships would be awarded not for post-graduate work generally but for specially designed courses associated with ongoing projects which would provide students with practical research experience. The Council could finance the appointment on a five-year basis of a research training development officer who would be assigned to a training centre and whose task would be to assume the extra responsibilities and the function of relating the research training to selected research projects of the institution.
- ii. Providing grants to enable people already engaged in research or the direction of research to undergo courses of three to six months' duration at the designated research centres. These courses should supply training not only in advanced techniques of research, data collection and analysis, but also in the administration and management of research. The grants would have to be on an adequate scale to release busy academics from their departmental duties for the duration of the course. It is arguable that universities unable to spare their academic staff under these favourable conditions would be disinclined or unable to provide them with adequate time and facilities for research of the kind the Council

would wish to sponsor; an element of self selection by the university is thus introduced.

- iii. Inducing central and state governments to release research directors and researchers in their employ to attend the courses outlined under (ii) above.
- iv. Facilitating the setting up of courses of familiarization for government administrators in the functions, methods, substantive outcomes, and techniques of utilization of research. If conducted at the same centres as the formal training programmes, these familiarization courses would have the added advantage of putting the user of research in direct touch with the person who designs and carries out research schemes. Such contract could help materially both in the planning of research projects and in the utilization of their results.

65. It may help to indicate what we would regard as an appropriate scale for such training operations. If for argument's sake five designated training centres were to provide a throughput of some 20-40 students each a year, plus smaller numbers attending shorter courses on research administration and familiarization, the annual cost of, say, 150 scholarships and the secondment of academic staff, together with the expenditure on the administration of courses, should not amount to a very large sum—at a guess not more than about 2 m rupees.

### **Careers in Research**

66. One of the recurring themes brought to our notice is the lack of careers in research. Most people engaged in full time research are Ph.D. students whose aim is a teaching job in a university or a post in administration. They are aware that there are few opportunities to continue in research and we were frequently told that the Council was looked to remedy this. However, in view of the fact that the Council is responsible for only a part of the total Indian effort in social

science research, it is unlikely that the desired improvement will be brought about merely as a by-product of the Council's support of research. Other more positive measures are needed. The postdoctoral fellowship scheme already under consideration by the ICSSR will make a useful beginning. This scheme could be supplemented later on by a professional fellowship scheme which would offer outstanding research workers appointments attached to institutes or universities to enable them to devote an extended period to a personal programme of research.

67 But again it would be useful to look for ways in which the Council can exercise its leverage on other institutions. It could for example exert its influence by taking the initiative in obtaining standard gradings and conditions of employment for research workers in institutions receiving grants from the Council. It could maintain a register of research workers which it would make available to employing institutions, and also notify them periodically of research workers whose current appointment has less than six months to run. This, together with the fellowships, scholarships and advanced training schemes suggested above would help to establish a new career structure for people who wish, and have the capacity, to continue working in research. That in turn would help to create a cadre of experienced research workers in Indian social science.

### **Learned Societies**

68. One of the achievements of the ICSSR to date has been to induce Indian social scientists to communicate more with one another. The condition for the effective pooling of knowledge and research effort is that people at work in a given field should have the most up to date information about the work being done by their colleagues. The timely identification of duplication of research can be as valuable as identifying "research gaps". It would be extremely convenient if the task of keeping social scientists in touch with the work of colleagues in the same discipline could be performed, as it is

in some other countries, by a number of appropriate learned societies. We think that the Council could usefully contribute to the building up of Indian learned societies. Their performance at present varies greatly in quality in the different disciplines. In some instances a comparatively small subsidy to support the production of a learned journal or of abstracts of new research would very likely produce worthwhile results. But this is much less certain in other cases.

69. We would therefore recommend that any financial support given to the professional associations should proceed on an ad hoc basis, beginning with modest amounts, and with some kind of performance tests built into the contract made between the learned society concerned and the ICSSR. There might for example be a trial period during which the society would show whether it was able to build up a substantial paid circulation within the profession which it serves for a publication receiving an ICSSR grant. It would be useful if the Council were to include a consideration of particular devices of this kind in a systematic examination of its long term policy towards the learned societies.

### **Diffusion and Utilization**

70. We have already referred to the obstacles that seem impede the utilization of research results—a problem by no means peculiar to India but exacerbated there by the low respect in which some of the social science discipline are held. The chief problem is the familiar one: too little is known, and what little is known is too often disregarded, about the processes whereby the results of research are absorbed into the decision-making process. The ICSSR has already demonstrated its concern that the results of research should become known more rapidly; its publication grants are aimed at achieving this end.

71. Better diffusion could be achieved by stimulating researchers to write pamphlets embodying the principal features

of their research, but excluding the more technical and methodological aspects, and couched in language directed towards the potential user rather than to an academic audience. The former Department of Scientific and Industrial Research in the United Kingdom used to sponsor such "Industrial Versions" of the research which it supported, and they enjoyed wide circulations in industry. The Council should endeavour to encourage this type of "*haute vulgarisation*" and similar developments in scientific journalism.

72. Diffusion is not enough. Research in general is effectively used only when close relationships over a period of time exist between researchers and administrators. The administrator has to acquire the ability to use the concepts of analysis which underlie the social scientist's approach to problems; the social scientist has to acquire familiarity with the nature of the administrator's problems, in the form and conceptual framework that they present themselves to him. The Council's task therefore is to seize whatever opportunities occur for systematic communication between researchers and administrators of all kinds.

73. One device for accelerating the research-action process is "action research".\* Another is the demonstration project. Both are somewhat outside the normal academic definitions of research. Both involve the researcher in action in a way that places upon him responsibilities beyond those of conducting research. Where the conditions are appropriate, the Council should be prepared to play a part in the stimulation and sponsorship of these types of activity. This would usually be a third part—

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\*The distinguishing feature of "action research" is the exposure of the research and of the researcher to the test of action. Since he cannot act alone the researcher must first convince the administrator of the appropriateness of his analysis, the attractiveness of his goals (or more accurately their joint goals) and the viability of the proposed experimental action. The action phase of the research must then be adequately monitored and evaluated, before further generalization or extension of the action. This implies a tough discipline for researcher and administrator alike who must develop mutual understanding and mutual respect if the programme is to have even a moderate chance of success.

with the user and the researcher as first and second in importance and commitment. Reluctant participation by either of these two is a sure recipe for a negative outcome.

74. In this connection the relationships of the Council with state governments is of especial importance. Not only are some state governments major sponsors of social science research; all are potential users and many of the results of research invite interest and action more within the ambit of state governments than of the central government. Although ICSSR receives its funds from the Federal Government it should avoid being seen by state governments as an exclusive servant of the Centre. It must be recognised, however, the social science research policy is not something which is best determined at state level; every aspect of it transcends state boundaries and state responsibilities. Thus the ICSSR needs to be seen by the states as a resource, a source of help and advice, as the voice of the social science community as a whole—but not as an embodiment of a superior power.

75. Because there is no single identifiable user within the state government organisation, social science research having relevance to almost all departments and agencies, it would be advisable to invite state governments to nominate one of their senior officials to act as liaison officer with the Council. These officials might also be invited to serve as "assessors" to the governing body of the regional centre which serves their state. But all such arrangements, it should be observed, are the formal trappings of a more essential, and elusive, process—the active cultivation of close personal relationships between state administrators on the one hand and the Council's members and officers on the other.



## VII

### STRUCTURE AND FUNCTIONS OF THE ICSSR

76. The Council has begun to make its presence felt in the universities and research institutes through the conferences and other meetings which it has sponsored in the course of the comprehensive surveys of Indian research in the social sciences. If this relationship with the academic world is to develop and expand, it will place on the Council the need to maintain a process of continuous monitoring of work going forward in the social sciences. It would involve regular contacts with staff, junior staff as well as senior, in several hundred university departments and research institutes. Those making this intellectual circuit would plainly have to be knowledgeable in one or more of the social science disciplines, and to be thoroughly familiar with recent developments in their particular area of expertise. Only if the representatives of the Council are people of accepted academic standing will it be possible to engage effectively in the continuous dialogue that is needed with persons engaged in research in the universities and institutes.

77. The conduct of such a dialogue is plainly much too onerous a task to be added to the already considerable responsibilities of the academics who are members of the Council or of its advisory committees. It calls for the full-time employment of a corps of professional social scientists, acting under the supervision of the Chairman of the Council and its Member-Secretary, but operating with a considerable measure of intellectual autonomy. As we envisage the functions of such persons, they would be typically academics of medium seniority—senior lecturer to reader level—though it is important to be clear from the start that the posts themselves would not be

filled exclusively by career academics but would be open to trained social scientists who are active in other spheres, including the government service. The main desideratum is that these people should be able to hold their own as intellectual equals in their exchanges with their main clients in the academic world.

78. We would be inclined to regard the recruitment of such staff as one of the most urgent and difficult tasks of the Council. The problem is how to attract the services of men and women of the required intellectual calibre, and special arrangements may have to be made to accommodate people who are willing to contemplate a temporary period of employment in the job of managing research but wish to go back eventually to academic or other pursuits. What is required is some very flexible terms of appointment, especially tailored to meet the needs of people other than those who are ordinarily recruited into the public service.

79. It is also clear that the introduction of a core group of professional social scientists with considerable freedom of manoeuvre and influence over the management of the Council's day to day affairs will involve important changes in the head office structure of the ICSSR. An organisation in which the senior staff has considerable intellectual initiative of the kind indicated above requires something different from the conventional managerial chain of command of a government office. Our own experience of the British SSRC indicates the importance of a collegiate style of decision-making at head office. The professional social scientists who have devoted themselves to a period of research administration will not perform effectively in a strictly hierarchical organisation. Indeed it is unlikely that they would find service in such an organisation attractive in the first place. Moreover the efficiency of the Council itself, depending as it does on the constant communication of impressions and ideas about what is happening in a field which is changing extremely fast, requires that the personal views of the professional social

science staff should register directly at the level where administrative decisions are taken.

80. The Council's expanded role in relation to the academic community is likely to place an increasing administrative load on the Member-Secretary, who will be responsible for the effective functioning not only of the enlarged head office but also of the regional centres which it is intended to establish. He will have much less time than during the first phase of the Council's existence to occupy himself with problems of long-range policy. It is precisely these problems which will become urgent as the Council has to exercise choices about the deployment of its limited resources in a number of fields where the demand for social science research can be expected to grow rapidly. He will also have the major task of ensuring that research results are made known and effectively used by government departments and other agencies responsible for public affairs.

81. All this suggests that a gap is likely to emerge in the top management of the Council. The implication is that the Chairman of the Council will have to spend a much larger proportion of his working time than hitherto on the conduct of ICSSR business. There were good reasons, during the first phase of the Council's existence, to opt for the present structure at the top, with a Chairman who is very fully occupied in one of the key posts of Government and a Member-Secretary who spends part of his time working as a senior official in a government department. The active interest of these two men, strategically placed in the apparatus of government, has helped to give the activities of the Council an importance in the sphere of public affairs which it would hardly otherwise have been able to achieve so fast. But in the circumstances which are now emerging there would seem to be strong arguments for a change in the status of the head of the Council, when Dr. Gadgil comes to retire from the Chairmanship. The new appointment should, in our view, cease to be an honorary one, and should be held for a defined term of years, either on a whole-time or part-time basis, by a

professional social scientist. Here again, as with the recruitment of professional academic staff for short-term appointments with the Council, the proposed arrangement will depend on the willingness of some university or research institute to accommodate itself to the temporary absence of someone who is bound to be an important member of the institution concerned.

### **Procedures For Promoting Research**

82. We doubt whether the Council's function of providing leadership in the development of social science research can be performed separately, as it is at present, from the consideration of individual research projects and programmes which come to it for support. Indeed, it seems inevitable that as the Council's research policies develop and become known, an increasing proportion of the research proposals coming forward will be applications designed to respond to identified research gaps in the social sciences. Something will be lost if the handling of such individual applications is systematically hived off from the Council to "consultants" whose advice is intermittently sought. More continuity is required—in part for the simple purpose of providing the Council with some feed-back of information about the degree of success achieved by its promotional activities among the community of social scientists.

83. Our experience suggests that one of the ways in which selected research activities can be most effectively promoted is by responding to a series of individual research applications, commenting on them and prompting others. This may be done either by the Council itself or by sub-committees of the Council endowed with some delegated authority. In the course of such discussions the Council will uncover opportunities for using its resources to good effect, e.g., by bringing together several independent researchers, whose ideas are not yet fully formed, to cooperate in a connected and coherent study. Tactical interventions of this kind require a close knowledge of what is coming forward or contemplated by people who want to embark on research in an area of interest

to the Council. Here again the reinforced professional staff will be able to act as the eyes and ears of the Council.

84. In the discussions which we have had with our Indian colleagues the approach of the British SSRC was sometimes contrasted with what was regarded as the purely promotional role of the American SSRC, which it was suggested was more relevant to current Indian research needs. In fact the Council in Britain is equipped with various means of promoting particular research activities which it thinks are important and some of these means might recommend themselves to the Indian Council. Research units have been set up under the direct control of the SSRC, whose purpose is to accelerate the work done on some particular range of research problems deemed to require a special effort. This might be regarded as a serviceable device in the Indian context, if the need were felt to provide more systematic intellectual backing for the work of some of the Standing Committees of the ICSSR on major social questions.

85. Perhaps more immediately relevant is the British SSRC's use of the "research contract" which it employs to get a particular piece of research done, rather faster than would otherwise be possible, by a selected institution in return for payment. This has been found to be a valuable device, more effective than the round about method of prompting an institution to come forward with a research application of a specified kind in which the Council is known to have an interest. The actual design of the research contract is made the clear responsibility of the Council—and the Council does not have to wait for the moment when a university department or research institution is ready to fit the desired research project into its existing programme of studies.

86. We have some doubt whether research applications can be realistically judged under the present procedures which divulge everything to the "consultant" whose opinion is sought except the key facts about the identity of the researcher and

of the institution in which he proposes to do his research. It seems unlikely that the purpose of promoting effective research can be served by the "anonymity principle" which the Council has so far adopted. It is understandable that there should be anxiety about possible discrimination if "consultants" are told the names of applicants. Yet on the other hand, it is barely conceivable that a reliable judgement can be made about the feasibility of some piece of social research without knowing something both about the capacities of the individual researcher and about the facilities available at the place where the research is to be conducted. This is especially true of any project involving joint effort by a team of researchers located in different places. A great deal more of such teamwork is in any case required, particularly in the field of comparative studies which are so important in a country of the continental size and variegated conditions of India.

87. We are of the opinion that the Council will sooner or later have to face the fact that research judgements inevitably involve these awkward personal considerations, and that it should set about devising a scheme which will not only ensure that even-handed justice between named applicants is done but is also seen to be done.

## VIII

### SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

88. (1) The growing demands on the Council, stimulated in large part by its own activities, will soon overload it. It will need to make economical use of its own resources; it should not seek to replace existing sponsors, and should wherever possible build on existing institutions, employing them as the vehicle for its policies. (Paras. 15, 16, 25, 27, 29-30).

89. (2) The Council should be intimately concerned with problems of public policy, but should be visibly independent; it must not be seen as an agent of Government. (Paras. 36—38).

90. (3) Because there is bound to be an area of overlap between the concerns of the Council and those of the University Grants Commission, the links between the two institutions need to be strengthened. (Paras. 39—41).

91. (4) The good relations which have hitherto existed between Indian scholars and the international community of social scientists should be reinforced; methods of achieving a closer working relationship should be explored in consultation with international bodies. (Paras. 47—50).

92. (5) Regional centres are an indispensable element of the Council's work. We recommend that they be developed in established centres of excellence, notably to be found in existing research institutes. (Paras. 57—61 and 63).

93. (6) The Council should regard research training as part of its task of building up India's research capability in the social sciences. We recommend specialised schemes of research training aimed at developing a cadre of career researchers. (Paras. 64-65).

94. (7) The Council will need to make a deliberate and systematic effort to ensure the absorption of the results of research into public policies. (Paras. 72—75).

95. (8) The structure of the Council, which has served it well during the successful first phase of its development, needs to be changed to meet the tasks ahead. (Paras. 80—81).

96. (9) Modifications of the Council's membership, required for its new structure, need to be complemented by the development of a strong professional staff. Without the latter the main recommendations on the management of research contained in this report cannot be made effective. (Paras. 76—79).

97. (10) As the volume of research proposals put to the Council grows, the existing procedures for processing applications are likely to be found increasingly unsatisfactory. The Council will have to depend more on its own professional judgement in making decisions. (Paras. 82—87).

