The Techno-Managerial and Politico-Managerial Classes in a Milk Cooperative of India

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The burgeoning milk cooperatives of India—which are now regarded by experts on rural development as one of the major success stories, and whose assistance is being sought by other developing countries through the World Bank—indicate the presence of a complex but complementary relationship, with limited frictions, between their techno-managerial class and the politico-managerial class. Both these classes, apart from the technocratic and political nature of their work, are also involved in managerial activity where problems of jurisdiction and ultimate preponderance in crucial decisions can make or mar the success of any organization. Both these classes in their actual operational involvement, despite occasional and sometimes persistent lapses in certain fields, have shown a remarkable sense of accommodation, need for concession, and foresight in terms of what will ultimately benefit the average milk producer in the district. While there is much greater evidence of such an operational relationship within the milk cooperatives of Gujarat, where cooperative dairying, based on grass roots involvement, began, there is also a growing body of evidence that a cooperative approach is slowly gaining ground elsewhere despite great odds.

Within such cooperative organizations these two classes, whom we shall refer to as "technocrats" and "politicians" for the sake of convenience, jointly become involved in a wide range of activities. Together they build, operate, expand, and replicate complex organizations involving a large number of people and resources.

In this paper we shall concentrate on the problem of interdependence, jurisdiction, concession, preponderance, and friction within the relationships between the technocrats and politicians. For this purpose we shall examine the relationship between the two classes within India's premier milk cooperative, namely AMUL.1

The paper is divided into the following parts: (i) the background of the dairy cooperative movement; (ii) the interdependency of technologists and politicians; and, (iii) political stresses and strains. We shall now examine each of these parts in some detail.
Background of Dairy Cooperative Movement

AMUL milk cooperative, in a real sense of the term, is an offshoot of the Indian national movement. In its establishment, and later on in its organization and development, major national political figures such as Sardar Patel and Morarji Desai, and, at the district level, Tribhuvandas Patel (TK) were deeply involved. The groundwork for a cooperative organization, which was meant to protect the average milk producer at the village level from the ruthless milk traders, was laid by nationalist leaders, and even when the technologists subsequently joined them, the philosophy, and direction of the organization continued to be that which was given by the original leaders. Its technologists, while building, operating, and replicating similar organizations elsewhere in India, never lost sight of the social concerns of the nationalists for protecting the rural poor. They worked with the politicians of the post-independence era, who were several cuts below the nationalist leaders in their integrity and social concerns, and they brought to bear the fruits of their ability to build and run complex organizations, to introduce the modern technology of dairying and the science of cattle improvement, and above all to launch effective marketing approaches—all these, in order to be able to secure the maximum return for the average milk producer. Without them and their organizational effort the average milk producer at the village level was defenceless. In addition, for both the technologists and politicians the building and operating of large scale milk cooperatives was a great learning experience.

Initially, the major advantage of these developers was that they chose to build a milk cooperative in a district such as Kaira which had one of the largest milk resource potentials in the country. But to bring the milk producers of the district within one cooperative organization, of which neither they nor the organizers had any prior experience, was indeed a remarkable achievement. Towards this the presence of an agriculturist caste in the district, namely, the Patidars—which was known to be innovative by nature and receptive to new ideas—proved to be of inestimable value. While the technocrats and politicians were struggling with the refinement of the form which the new organization should take, the Patidar milk producers of the village, with their willingness to try out anything new and different, went ahead with minimum direction and reported back their priceless operating experience in running the new organization. After that the founders of AMUL had much less difficulty in extending the network of their organization to other parts of the district.

Historically speaking, the milk producers of the district had for a long time made use of the surplus milk to make ghee (purified butter). It was then sold to the ghee traders in the town of Mahemdabad, who in turn sold it to traders in cities such as Bombay and Ahmedabad. The major share of money went to the traders in Mahemdabad and the town thus became the ghee marketing centre of the region.

Technology hit the milk trade of the distinct in the later half of the nineteenth century when a businessman from the village Nar brought in an im-