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I will mention two other trends that irritate me. **The first is the rapidly growing use of external consultants to advise on matters to many of which, in my view, they do not bring any special expertise or experience**. Hardly a week passes that I do not read a public advertisement seeking expressions of interest to examine and report on fundamental departmental matters. As secretary of a department I would be ashamed (or perhaps too proud is more accurate) before my minister to have to seek external help on anything but exceptional matters. I should be ensuring that I have high quality staff around me willing, able and competent to provide such advice. Today the public sector is frequently using personnel consultants and hence seems incapable of selecting its own senior staff - yet we used to have a proud record in respect of personnel practices and procedures. The public sector is now calling on external help to recommend on salary levels, appearing to believe that this task is capable of scientific assessment by means of sophisticated point-measuring schemes.

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**Conclusion**

I should like to conclude on a note that is more personal but is relevent to the subject of this Oration. Since vacating the position of Secretary of  the New South Wales Premier’s Department in June 1988, I have been asked on many occasions which activities gave me the greatest satisfaction during the dozen years in that position. First, I was very fortunate because of the personality of the Premier from 1976 to 1986 Neville Wran - a man with personal charm, of great intellect, of extraordinary ability, a superb politician, one who constantly   demanded excellence. **He trusted me, he had confidence in me and he defended me frequently.** That relationship in itself provided great personal satisfaction.

**Then what stood out was the satisfaction about the quality of the policy advice and management service given to the Premier and cabinet by my department**. Other activities and functions, many exciting, interesting and challenging, came and went as the Premier’s Department served the changing needs of a government whose leader dominated the political process and the state parliament. It is not important in terms of community recognition or public perception, but I have the satisfaction of knowing that the department gave good, sound sensible advice, fighting for our point of view when necessary, but not nagging the Premier and always with the total interest of the government in mind and not an individual portfolio view. Governments invariably get into difficulties in one way or another and the Wran/Unsworth Governments were no exception, but I have the satisfaction of knowing that I was able to minimise their difficulties.