

FROM

THE CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA SECRETARIAT
COMMITTEE,

TO

THE SECRETARY TO THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA,
HOME DEPARTMENT.

Dated New Delhi, the 10th March, 1936.

SIR,

In accordance with the Home Department Resolution No. F-154-35, dated the 3rd October 1935, we have the honour, on completion of our enquiries, to submit our Report upon the different points referred to us.

CHAPTER I.—INTRODUCTORY.

2. *Terms of reference.*—The terms of the reference to our Committee were as follows:—

(1) to examine—

- (a) the system under which officers are at present obtained for the superior posts (Secretary, Joint, Deputy and Under Secretaries) in the Government of India Secretariat.
- (b) the method of office procedure, and
- (c) so far as may be necessary in connection with (a) and (b) above, the organisation of the clerical staff; and

(2) to recommend such changes as are required to secure the more efficient and expeditious despatch of public business, particularly under the constitution which will be established under the new Government of India Act.

A somewhat similar enquiry in 1919, presided over by Sir H. Llewellyn Smith, preceded the enactment of the Government of India Act of 1919, and speaking generally may be said to have covered, in the light of the circumstances of that day, the ground indicated in points (1) (b) (c) and (2) above, but with the matters raised in point (1) (a) our predecessors were not asked to deal, presumably because the problems connected with them were not at that time acute, a fact which is not without significance. For the reasons, however, indicated later in Chapter II, it seems to us that it is this question of the recruitment of officers to the Central Secretariat which presents the most serious difficulties, and we have accordingly devoted our attention primarily to its consideration.

3. *Procedure of the Committee and general observations.*—We assembled at Bombay on the 10th November 1935, and made our headquarters at New Delhi. We have, however, paid visits to Bombay, Allahabad, Patna.

Calcutta, Madras and Lahore, and examined in consultation with the Heads and Members of the respective local Governments and their Secretariats both those questions arising out of our enquiry in which the provinces are directly concerned and details of procedure in the provinces which, although not specifically our affair, might possibly throw some light on the work of the Government of India. Representatives of Assam and the Central Provinces Governments were good enough to meet us at Calcutta and Delhi respectively. We have not thought it necessary to trouble the Government of the North-West Frontier Province, while in view of its impending separation we have regarded Burma as outside the scope of our enquiry.

At headquarters we have had the benefit of personal discussion with the Members of the Central Government together with its Secretaries and some of its Joint Secretaries, Deputy and Assistant Secretaries. We have also met the Heads of certain Attached Offices (*e.g.*, the Central Board of Revenue and the Public Service Commission), the Auditor-General and representatives of certain Service Associations (*e.g.*, Indian Civil Service, Audit and Accounts, and Customs). In all we have, as a Committee, had conversation with some 110 individuals. We have further personally visited some departments of the Secretariat.

As did our predecessors, we have conducted our proceedings on the informal basis of personal discussion, although various valuable written memoranda have been supplied to us and much information given in writing in answer to our requisitions.

As also did our predecessors, we have been afforded everywhere and from all ranks the most willing and ready assistance which we wish most gratefully to acknowledge.

Lastly, and again equally with our predecessors, we trust that none of our remarks will be taken to imply a failure to recognise the high standard of work attained by the many able officers of the Secretariat.

4. Having regard to the extent to which the scope of our enquiries overlaps that of the Llewellyn-Smith Committee, we have thought it useful in some ways to take up our review at the point at which it was then left. The picture drawn by our predecessors in para. 6 of their report of the conditions in which work in the Secretariat of the Government of India is carried on is broadly true of the present day, and we do not attempt once more to draw it. The difficulties of geography, climate and race remain, and are likely to remain, unchanged, entailing similar consequences in respect of the procedure and methods followed, but in certain directions there have been most noticeable developments, and these it is desirable to emphasise at the outset.

5. *Volume of work in the Government of India.*—In a country of the size and diversity of India, the work of the Central Government, whether under the existing system, Provincial Autonomy or Federation, must always remain onerous and complex. It was noted by the Secretariat Committee of 1919 (para. 5B) that to the extent of about nine-tenths of their work, the Government of India were engaged in dealing with cases coming to them from outside, and to the extent of rather more than a half with work coming up from the provinces. The subsequent relaxations of financial and administrative control as between the Central and provinces, following on the Act of 1919, must have greatly reduced the number of provincial references, and while the cases coming before this

Central Government are still mainly initiated outside it, and in their practical bearing touch many aspects of provincial life, they tend more and more to be concerned with Departments and subjects under the direct administration of the Government of India. However, even allowing for a diminution in the direction indicated, work has increased remarkably since 1919. The political changes of 1919 inevitably resulted in a quickening of activity in such matters as Agriculture and Research: Labour legislation, the affairs of Indians overseas, and the enquiries of the League of Nations and the International Labour Organisation have become prominent; revisions of tariffs in pursuance of the policy of discriminating protection to industries, intervention in specific industries (*e.g.*, tea, lac, rubber and coffee) and the development of commercial intelligence have received increasing attention: new subjects have come to the front in connection with publicity, broadcasting, civil aviation, the Indian Stores Department and the Public Service Commission, while internal politics have added materially to the labours of the Home Department. The administration of income-tax and the control of the major ports have also been centralised. The discussion of political reforms, following on the Simon Commission and culminating in the Government of India Act of 1935, has affected every Department, while the elaboration of administrative changes consequent on that Act and the future contingency of Federation have produced and will continue to produce, innumerable problems.

In fact nothing could illustrate this point more strikingly than the enumeration (*vide* Appendix II) of the different Attached Offices which have come into being since 1919 in order either to cope with entirely new developments or to enable increasing attention to be given to older subjects which have assumed increasing importance. It will be seen that they total no fewer than nine.

The reactions of these developments are obvious, and the facts are strikingly borne out by a comparison of the superior secretariat staff of the Government of India in 1900, 1919 and at the present time, which shows the following results:—

| Year. | Departments. | Number of | | | | | |
|----------|--------------|--------------|---|--------------------|---------------------|--------------------|------------------------|
| | | (b) Members. | Secretaries and Additional Secretaries. | Joint Secretaries. | Deputy Secretaries. | Under Secretaries. | Assistant Secretaries. |
| 1900 | 7 | 6 | 7 | 1 | 9 | 9 | 12 |
| 1919 (a) | 9 | 7 | 11 | | 9 | 8 | 12 |
| 1935 | 9 | 7 | 0 (c) (d) | 7 (d) | 12 (d) | 7 (d) | 15 (c) (d) |

(a) Paragraph 69 of the Report of the Llewellyn Smith Committee.

(b) The Foreign and Political Department is in the direct charge of H. E. the Viceroy: the Departments of Education, Health and Lands and the Imperial Council of Agricultural Research are in charge of the same Member.

(c) The Reforms Office which is on a temporary basis is not included; neither are the Secretary and Assistant Secretary to the Legislative Assembly Department which is on a special footing.

(d) The Railway Department, the Imperial Council of Agricultural Research, the Central Board of Revenue, and the Military Finance Department, are not included. In those four Departments, there are at present 4, 4, 13, 6 and 7 officers with the status of Secretary, Joint, Deputy, Under and Assistant Secretary respectively.

One post of Secretary, 5 posts of Joint Secretary, 3 posts of Deputy Secretary, 2 posts of Under Secretary and 1 post of Assistant Secretary are at present temporary.

Taking the statement of what may be called the departments proper the noticeable points are the additions to the number of Joint, Deputy and Assistant Secretaries and the decrease in the number of Under Secretaries. If what may be regarded (without offence) as the secondary departments are included, the figures are even more striking. It is true that various posts are temporary, but unless created specifically for a particular job (e.g., the Reforms Office) temporary appointments have a tendency to crystallise into permanencies.

Under Federation there is little or no hope of a reduction in the demand for officers. There will almost certainly be more Ministers than the existing Members (*vide* section 9 of the Act of 1935), and although there may be adjustments between Secretaries and Joint Secretaries, the net result will probably be some increase in staff. Again new offices will come into being e.g., those of Counsellors, Financial Adviser, the Federal Railway Authority, the Federal Court and the Governor-General's Secretariat, all requiring staffs of their own.

While too such temporary offices as Reforms have been excluded, it is to be remembered that temporary requirements of one kind and another frequently recur.

Equally noticeable are the figures for the permanent clerical cadres of the Secretariat and Attached Offices.

Secretariat.

| | *1919. | 1935. | Percentage increase. |
|---------------------------|--------|-----------|----------------------|
| Superintendents | 48 | 56 | 16.66 |
| Assistants | 211 | 292 | 38.39 |
| Clerks | 321 | 297† | 49.53 |
| Stenographers | 38 | 183 (b) } | |
| | | 61 | 69.17 |

Attached offices.

| | 1919. | 1935. | Percentage increase. |
|---------------------------|----------------|-----------------|----------------------|
| Superintendents | 10 | 42 | 320 |
| Assistants | 71 + 215 (c) } | 212 | |
| Clerks | 38 | 313 + 172 (b) } | 115.10 |
| Stenographers | 7 | 50 | |

* Paragraph 50 of the report of the Llewellyn Smith Committee.

† 2nd Division Clerks.

(b) 3rd Division Clerks.

(c) This represents the staff of assistants and clerks in the office of the Director-General, Posts and Telegraphs. Figures showing their numbers separately are not available.

In other words, the total clerical establishment in the Secretariat has increased from 616 to 889 or by 44·32 per cent. and in the Attached Offices from 341 to 789 or by 131·38 per cent. since 1919.

6. *The proceedings of the Central Legislature.*—The extent to which the proceedings of the Council of State and Legislative Assembly now loom in the life of the Government of India is well known. The resulting preoccupation of the time of the Secretariat is manifest, and we were informed that while these bodies are in session the disposal of current business is seriously retarded.

With the introduction of Provincial Autonomy there should follow an appreciable reduction of business under the head of resolutions and questions dealing with matters of provincial concern, and a much needed relief to the Secretariat will thereby be afforded. On the other hand, in the enlarged legislative bodies which will come into being with Federation, business will presumably tend to be prolonged, and even while Secretaries and Joint Secretaries will acquire greater freedom when they cease to be members, they will, on occasion, have to be in constant attendance. Again, under the new conditions their services may be requisitioned to a greater extent than now in connection with publicity. Immediately, however, the pressure of Council work should lessen.

7. *Character of work in the Government of India.*—But apart from the actual volume of work, there has been a significant alteration in its general character. Prior to 1921 the Government of India, working through the Provincial Governments, supervised and directed the whole field of administration. It prescribed the main outlines of policy and scrutinised its application, subject, of course, to the directions of the Secretary of State. The Reforms of 1919 inaugurated a definite provincial responsibility in certain extensive fields. The important subjects of Education, Medical Administration, Public Health, Local self-government, Roads and Buildings, Agriculture, Civil Veterinary Department, Co-operative Societies, Industries, Excise, Registration and Religious and Charitable Endowments* were transferred to the control of Ministers. Even in the Reserved Departments, following on considerable financial and administrative delegations, the tendency has been for the Government of India to intervene more rarely. The division of responsibility thus became vertical rather than horizontal, and while, as already noticed, the functions of the Government of India vitally affect the interests of the provinces, they are more particularly their own concern. Relations with the provinces are coming to be concentrated more and more in the spheres of law and order, labour and finance except in so far as the endeavour is made to co-ordinate provincial activities in matters of all-India interest though of individual provincial responsibility. The need for such co-ordination has already been felt. A Central Advisory Board of Education and a Bureau of Industrial Intelligence and Research have recently been established, and Co-operative and Industries Conferences have been revived. It is to be noted that under Provincial Autonomy the need of such co-ordination is likely to be more marked, and we were informed that proposals for the creation of Advisory Boards for Public Health and Co-operation would shortly be considered.

8. *Reactions of Provincial Autonomy on the work of the Government of India.*—The all important change to be brought about in the near

* In two provinces Forests also.

future by the Act of 1935 is the introduction of Provincial Autonomy in place of the dyarchical system of the Act of 1919, and we have, therefore, examined in some detail the reactions of this innovation on the work of the Central Government.

At first sight it would appear that the advent of Provincial Autonomy must mean a substantial curtailment of the work now devolving upon the Government of India, and it was with some initial surprise that we heard the unanimous testimony of the Secretaries to that Government that they did not anticipate any such degree of relief. We accordingly went through with these officers each item in the present distribution* of business, and were forced eventually to the conclusion, unexpected as that might be, that in general their surmise was likely to be accurate. The work of the Defence, Foreign and Political, Railway and Ecclesiastical Departments is obviously not affected by the inauguration of Provincial Autonomy, except that in the Political Department it will be increased now that all States are in direct relation with the Government of India (the intervention in some instances of a local Government having been eliminated) and difficult and possibly protracted negotiations in connection with Federation are to be anticipated. In connection with these Departments, therefore, we do not propose to enter into further detail, but in Appendix III we have enumerated† in respect of each Department (other than Home) the subjects which will obviously not be touched by Provincial Autonomy, and as regards the rest have added explanations‡ of our view that even in their case the same result is in the main probable. The position in the Home Department is described in a short note§ leading to the same conclusion. If this anticipation is correct, it follows that no great measure of relief to the Government of India is to be expected on this account.

* Rules of Business No. 1.

† Part A.

‡ Part B.

§ Part C.