

CHAPTER III.—ORGANISATION OF THE SECRETARIAT.

28. We proceed now to examine various matters connected with the organisation of the Secretariat.

29. *Business of Departments.*—The Llewellyn Smith Committee devoted considerable attention to the allocation of business among the different departments of the Government of India and made a series of recommendations in that connection, of which the most noticeable result was the addition of one Member to the Executive Government with the separate portfolio of Industries. Taking matters as they now stand, we doubt if the distribution of business calls for further detailed comment, since the various subjects seem, on the whole, to be grouped systematically and conveniently. The only suggestion for material change which was brought to our notice was for the creation of a Department of Ways and Communications, embracing all functions relating to transport and Posts and Telegraphs, which are at present divided between the Railway and Industries and Labour Departments. This idea also commended itself to our predecessors, and it has been accepted in principle by the Government of India (*vide* a resolution in the Council of State, dated 18th of March 1935).

It would appear from debates in the Legislative Assembly last year that a remodelling of the Commerce Department was unofficially advocated, but no very definite scheme was outlined or has since been elaborated.

On the face of it, the control of agricultural and veterinary research institutions at Pusa and Muktesar would seem to fall more appropriately within the purview of the Imperial Council of Agricultural Research than of the Department of Education, Health and Lands, but the point was fully discussed in 1931-32, and we accept the conclusion then arrived at that change was inexpedient.

Otherwise, minor suggestions have been made to us for the transfer of Commercial Education from the Commerce Department to the Department of Education, Health and Lands, and of Copyright from the Department of Industries and Labour to that of Education, Health and Lands, the latter reversing a recommendation, which was accepted at the time of the Llewellyn Smith Committee. Neither subject is of major importance, nor does any special issue of principle seem to be involved.

But a convincing reason for avoiding any considerable disturbance now of the existing system is that with the advent of Federation the question will have to be reviewed from a different angle. Section 9 of the Act of 1935 fixes the maximum strength of the future Federal Ministry at ten, although we understand that no particular conclusion is to be inferred therefrom as to what may be an appropriate figure, but it is likely that the future number of Ministers will be greater than that of the present Members, thus necessitating a rearrangement of portfolios. The statutory obligation to appoint a Law Member will also cease to be operative. The political considerations of the time will presumably be the determining factor, and these it is impossible at this stage to define. But clearly, until they are known, it will be convenient to avoid intermediate changes.

30. *Organisation of Departments.*—Within a department our predecessors envisaged (paragraph 71) an ideal organisation in the nature of a pyramid of which (above the office proper, as defined in paragraph 63), the base was an adequate number of Assistant Secretaries, submitting cases through Deputy Secretaries

40 one Secretary at the top. Under Secretaries (except in the Indian Department—paragraph 77) were to disappear, and the device of Additional and Joint Secretaries (except in cases of temporary emergency) was definitely condemned as tending to weaken the control of the Secretary and to impair the unity of the department (paragraph 10).

31. *Joint Secretaries.*—It will be seen from the details given in Appendix X that this ideal has not been realised, and in fact the Government of India (*vide* their resolution of the 1st September 1920) held at the time that all departments could not be treated alike. Every department except Defence and Finance (and in the latter the post of Additional Secretary is only recently in abeyance) has now a Joint Secretary. The pressure and growth of business have rendered it impossible to pass all files to the Member-in-Charge through one Secretary; also the demands of the Legislature have required the presence of two representatives in addition to the Member from every department except Education, Health and Lands and Defence. As already remarked (paragraph 6), this latter factor will cease to be operative under Federation, when officials will no longer sit in the Legislature, but it is probable that they will have still to be in constant attendance on their Ministers and it is difficult now to forecast the precise result. We doubt if it would be possible generally to revert to the old system of one department, one Secretary, though an increase in the number of Ministers would tend in that direction. However, even as matters stand, the Secretary is definitely regarded as of higher status than the Joint Secretary, and the responsible head of the departmental Secretariat. Incidentally, too, he draws higher pay. This position seems to us to be correct, and we would not attempt to assimilate the status of the two officers.

In practice, the various Branches are definitely divided between the Secretary and Joint Secretary, though presumably the Secretary ordinarily deals with the most important work. We were told that in exceptional cases both officers might see, and that as all cases are returned to the office through the Secretary, he could (in theory) keep himself acquainted with everything which was going on, but we think it most undesirable that there should be any system of double noting (in one department there seems to be a tendency in that direction), and the separate responsibilities should be recognised and enforced.

Equally, below the Secretary and Joint Secretary there should ordinarily be the intervention of one officer only, whether Deputy, Under or Assistant Secretary. The interposition of two is an unnecessary delay to business. For the most part this is the present procedure, but any infringement of it should be checked. If, of course, a case is such as the Deputy Secretary could dispose of finally, there is no objection to its submission to him by an Under or Assistant Secretary, and in the Defence Department, in order to facilitate such disposal, all cases go through the Deputy, but ordinarily this would seem to be undesirable.

32. *Deputy Secretaries.*—We were informed, however, that where there was a Secretary, Joint Secretary and Deputy Secretary, the position of the last named was apt to approximate to that of an Under Secretary. This seems wrong in principle. For the pay of a Deputy Secretary two Under Secretaries could be secured, and if the knowledge of a senior officer (who, *inter alia*, can dispose of more cases personally and submit certain cases direct to the Member) is not needed, then one of junior status would be an economy.

33. *Under Secretaries*.—It will be observed further that Assistant Secretaries have not replaced Under Secretaries, who are still to be found in the Departments of Home, Finance, Industries and Labour, Foreign and Political and Defence. We do not think this is to be regretted. An Under Secretary comes to the post with a different prior experience, and the appointment affords a most valuable training for the higher secretariat duties. It was more than once emphasised before us that the absence of this preliminary grounding is a serious handicap to any officer called in to the Secretariat direct in a later capacity. A similar reduction in the number of Indian Civil Service Under Secretaries is noticeable in the provinces* where they now total eleven only.

The Llewellyn Smith Committee (paragraph 76) urged very strongly that every Member of Council who desires it should be provided with the services of an official Private Secretary drawn from the Indian Civil Service. They contemplated the selection of an officer of from four to five years' standing who would ordinarily serve in this capacity for two years. This recommendation was accepted at the time, but effect was not then given to it largely, we understand, on financial grounds. Recently one such appointment has been made of an officer of seven years' standing.

We agree with the reasons given by our predecessors justifying this course (which we do not repeat), though the appointment is obviously at the option of the individual Member concerned, and some, we gather, do not at present wish for it. But it is probable that future Ministers under Federation may feel the need of such assistance and, if so, it should be given. A standing of four to five years seems to us, however, to be on the junior side, while as regards tenure a term of two years is perhaps unduly short. A maximum of three years seems preferable.

34. *Assistant Secretaries*.—It will be noticed that the Secretariat Committee of 1919 laid considerable stress upon the appointments of Assistant Secretaries. They hoped thereby to do away with the undoubted disadvantages which result from the present system under which "almost all the responsible officers of a department are mere birds of passage, and practically the whole of the permanent traditions of the department are the exclusive possession of the office establishment" (paragraph 72). They contemplated that these posts would be filled partly by direct appointment from outside and partly by the promotion (by merit) from the office, preferably of men still comparatively young (paragraphs 36, 47 and 48).

In fact, the officers appointed for these posts have usually (apart from the Finance Department, which draws upon the Audit and Accounts Service) been taken from the ministerial staff. It was stated that selection is observed (the elaborate procedure in selecting advocated by the Llewellyn Smith Committee was never adopted), but it was admitted that it is difficult and provocative of discontent among the staff to ignore the claims of the senior men, if reasonably competent. We would, however, stress the absolute necessity of selecting capable and energetic men,

* Madras	2
Bombay	2
Bengal	2
United Provinces	Nil.
Punjab	1
Bihar and Orissa	2
Central Provinces	1
Assam	1

if these posts are in any way to fulfil the expectation in which they were advocated.

There is a noticeable difference in the use that has been made of these officers in different departments. In the Home, Education, Health and Lands, and *Legislative Departments, they have been employed mainly for the purpose of office supervision and in connection with ministerial establishment cases. In the Finance, Commerce and Industries and Labour Departments, their primary duty is to note on cases, and this we think is their correct function. Otherwise an officer of the Registrar class should suffice and would cost less. The whole idea of the Assistant Secretaryship was to create a permanent *officer* class, not a superior *ministerial* grade. We would not debar the promoted ministerial officer, if properly chosen, or lay down that the Assistant Secretary should be dissociated from such matters as control of the office personnel and accounts, but the aim to be borne in mind is to constitute a secretariat type which by reason of its prolonged acquaintance with actual departmental business can not only render assistance in its disposal of a greater value than that which can be expected from a ministerial officer, but also facilitate a greater measure of devolution. With the important matter of office supervision we deal below.

The pay of an Assistant Secretary (Rs. 750—25—900) is adequate to attract a man of a good standard of ability, and it was suggested to us that it would strengthen the Secretariat if a superior type of officer could be recruited explicitly for these posts of Assistant Secretary with the expectation of being appointed to them after a materially shorter training as an assistant than is usual in the case of an officer so promoted at present. The recommendation would apply only where there is not already (as in the Indian Audit and Accounts Department) a suitable outside field of selection. We should have thought that the Customs and Income-Tax Departments might similarly have produced suitable candidates, but they do not seem to have been drawn upon. But otherwise we doubt the desirability of attempting to recruit specially to anything in the nature of a Secretariat Service on a par with the Provincial Civil Services. It is true that in the provinces resort is usefully had to the latter Services, and in Appendix XI we give details of the prevailing practice and indicate the general opinion on the results achieved, since provincial experience in this matter is not without its value in considering the needs of the Government of India, but an officer taken from a Provincial Service brings with him a definitely different earlier experience in executive work and has probably in it to some extent been entrusted with personal responsibilities. We make proposals below which should procure a better type for division I of the Secretariat, and granted this and so long as selection is observed in taking men from the ministerial ranks, and they are not kept too long waiting for promotion, there appears to be no particular advantage in starting a special service. At the same time, we are definitely of opinion that appointments to the posts of Assistant Secretary should not be confined to members of the ministerial service, and we advocate recourse to the wider field indicated above.

35. *Registrars*.—With the increased appointment of Assistant Secretaries, Registrars have disappeared. In 1919, there numbered ten. In the Finance Department, there is a post of Chief Superintendent, *i.e.*, a senior

* The case of the Legislative Department is doubtless special.

superintendent in receipt of a special allowance, who is supposed to discharge the duties of a Registrar. We have already said that, in our opinion, the proper functions of an Assistant Secretary do not cover the duty of detailed office supervision, and the class should not be confused with that of Registrar. The latter was never intended to be more than the principal ministerial officer whose function it was to superintend the establishment, ensuring its smooth working and the prompt disposal of work. We are disposed to think that the importance of this duty has tended to be underestimated, and while we do not advocate a revival of the post of Registrar, we discuss this point further in connection with the general question of office supervision (paragraph 38 *infra*).

36. *The Ministerial Service.*—On the recommendation of the Llewellyn Smith Committee (Chapter III), a system of recruitment of the ministerial staff through a Staff Selection Board was substituted for the previous independent and rather haphazard methods of individual departments, and this continued in force until 1926. Towards the end of that year, the functions of the Staff Selection Board were transferred to the Public Service Commission, and on their recommendation the Government of India convened an interdepartmental conference in 1927 to examine the system of recruitment to the ministerial establishment of the Secretariat and its Attached Offices. The system recommended by the conference was adopted with minor modifications and is still in force. Its salient features are set forth in Appendix XII.

That there is no lack of candidates is shown by the following figures.

Year.	Number of candidates.		Number of vacancies.		
	I & II Divisions.	III Division.	I Division.	II Division.	III Division.
1933	1,069	420	24	4	54
1934*		398			(a) 143
1935	674	252	(b) 4	(b) 6	(c)

Applicants come from all over India, though we were told that those from Madras, the United Provinces and the Punjab ordinarily prove most successful. Apparently candidates are much of the same type and apparently even for division III about one half are graduates. Indeed it seems to be not uncommon for some candidates to appear for all the main examinations conducted by the Public Service Commission, *i.e.*, Indian Civil Service (Delhi), Indian Audit and Accounts and the Ministerial Service (divisions I, II and III), and in default of anything better to take division III not with the intention of staying in it but pending better prospects. There is no *viva voce* test, which is to be regretted since we were told that the physique of many candidates was poor, but the numbers to be examined preclude it.

* There was no examination for divisions I and II in 1934.

(a) The list will remain in force up to 31st March 1936.

(b) The list will remain in use till 30th September 1937.

(c) The list comes into operation with effect from 1st April 1936.

There was general unanimity that, although it was perhaps too early to express a final view, the present mode of recruitment has secured a better type than previously and that the men so chosen were on the whole shaping well. At the same time, the view was strongly pressed by the Educational Commissioner that the best type available is not being obtained and that for the pay offered in division I more competent men should be procurable. The argument was that the examination described in Appendix XII is of so elementary a type that it does not differentiate sufficiently between the candidates and that a more severe test is needed in order to ensure that the best men come to the top. After looking at some of the papers, we think that they are open to this criticism and that a higher standard should be set. In order to combine this with the avoidance of a multiplicity of examinations, we considered whether it would be possible to link up recruitment for the ministerial service with that for the Indian Audit and Accounts which undoubtedly secures candidates of good calibre, but to this course there are various objections. The numbers appearing for the Indian Audit and Accounts examination are already inconveniently high; anything which might tend to add to them by introducing another element is to be deprecated. Importance is attached to the fact that the examination for the ministerial service is held at different centres, thus facilitating the appearance of candidates from the different provinces; indeed there is already a demand for more centres. It would certainly be resented were the examination for division I to be centralised. The subjects for the examination for the Indian Audit and Accounts Service, again, are of a needlessly high standard for division I.

On the whole, therefore, we do not favour this solution, and the alternative is to stiffen up and extend the scope of the existing test. We recommend that action should be taken on these lines, but the details can best be elaborated in consultation with the educational authorities.

It is an accepted principle that while the difference between divisions I and II is one of degree, that between them and division III is generic. At the same time the syllabus for division III is on the same lines (though the standard required is lower) as that for the other two. The reactions on the examination for the third division of any change in the examination for divisions I and II will require to be examined at the same time.

We were glad to learn that the provision of a leave reserve, as recommended by our predecessors, has resulted in the stoppage of the admission of temporary hands (who tended to establish claims to permanency) other than through the recognised channels, and any such practice should be firmly suppressed.

In this connection the systems of recruitment followed in the different provinces are not without interest. Recruitment generally is both direct and by promotion. Examinations are held in Madras, Bengal, the United Provinces and Bihar and Orissa. Elsewhere selection prevails (in Assam after a test).

In Appendix XIII we compare the rates of pay current in the Government of India and Provincial Secretariats. For superintendents there is a high maximum in the Punjab, but the rate is highest (as might be expected) in the Government of India. Bombay, Bengal, the United Provinces and the Punjab fall more or less in one group, but in Bihar and Orissa, the Central Provinces and Assam the rate of remuneration is distinctly lower.