

Senior Administrators' Selection in India

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Being one of the most advanced governments of the world with a very large bureaucracy, the Government of India still does not have a permanent civil service of its own particularly at the upper and middle levels. Attempts to create a permanent civil service were made since the enforcement of the 1919 Government of India Act until after the independence of India in 1947 as evidenced by the staffing schemes implemented thereafter. Appointments in the higher level are controlled by the Cadre Authority, the Senior Selection Board, the Central Establishment Board, the Establishment Officer and the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet. But no matter how stiff the competition becomes at the top of the administrative ladder, the issue of class interest in addition to merit is another thing to consider.

Introduction

The Indian federal system has several deliberately designed administrative features which distinctly set it apart from others of its kind, prominent among them being the mode of selection of personnel in the headquarters organization of its federal government. The federal government or the Government of India is rated as one among the dozen or so most advanced governments of the world (Appleby 1953:8). It does not have a permanent civil service of its own to man the senior and middle policy-making positions at the secretariat drawing as it does those personnel from a pool of officers common to both the central and state level of government or belonging to its field services.

Structure of the Civil Service

The Central (i.e., Federal) Government of India is a big government having in its payroll 3.87 million¹ persons with 2.6 per cent being engaged in jobs entailing supervisory and policy-making responsibilities. This number is grouped into two separate categories of services: (1) all-India services; and, (2) central services.² The all-India services³ are recruited by the Central Government. The Central Government also enjoys the power of determining conditions of service including that of awarding major punishment such as dismissal but their members are all assigned to the various state governments. For most other matters, a member of the all-India service works directly under the control of the state government to which he has been assigned soon after his selection by the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC), the recruiting agency set up under the Constitution of India. There are at present three all-India services: namely, Indian Administrative Service (IAS), Indian Police Service

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(IPS) and the Indian Forest Service (IFS).⁴ The IAS is the most important since its members occupy policy-making and other senior executive positions under both the Central Government and the states. Soon after the selection of officers into the IAS, one of them is appointed to one of the twenty six states constituting the Union of India. Thereupon, the state exercises day-to-day control over him while working under it. The functionary is meant to work primarily under this state government though he comes to the Central Government periodically on deputation. (To this purpose, the strength of the IAS is so fixed as to include a specific central reserve quota, a provision which, it is significant to note, does not exist in the case of any other service in India.)

The Central Services -- 33⁵ in number -- are recruited by the Union Public Service Commission and 20 of them are controlled by the corresponding functional ministry of the Central Government. The Indian Revenue Service, for instance, is controlled by the Ministry of Finance; the Indian Audit and Accounts Service, by the Controller and Auditor Central of India. Because of the nature of its role, the Central Secretariat Service cuts across the departmental lines and thus, does not belong exclusively to any particular ministry.

Review of Attempts Towards a Permanent Service

The Government of India, one must note, does not have a service of its own.⁶ All the services -- whether all-India or central -- belong either to the state governments or to the functional organizations or ministries even if the latter are under the Central Government. For purposes of headquarters level appointments, a technical distinction must be drawn between the departments and the Government of India.

The 1919 Government of India Act

The question whether the Government of India should have a service or a permanent cadre of its own at its headquarters has been under debate since the enforcement of the 1919 Government of India Act. This was the Constitution enacted by Britain for governance of India. It came into force in 1921. It had the effect of introducing for the first time, a kind of federalism in the structuring of the governmental system in the country. Prior to the implementation of this Act, a segment of provincial administration was placed under the control of elected ministers, and the line separating the work of the Central Government and the provincial governments was, in effect, a horizontal one. Policy-making lay with the Central Government and implementation with the provinces. The Central Government, hitherto, was primarily and substantially a referral agency with no such original work of its own; it was a Government of the Governments in India rather than a Government of India, as the Maxwell Committee on Organization and Procedure put it (Maxwell 1937:19-12). Such an organic interrelatedness made it extremely desirable that officers possessing work experience in the provincial governments and having practical knowledge of subjects should come to the center which dealt precisely with these subjects. This homogeneity provided both the need and the justification of a system under which

officers are deputized for limited terms to the Center. On completion of their terms, they would revert to the provinces with a better appreciation of the purposes which their duties were intended to fulfill. This was the logic behind the Central Government not having a separate officer cadre of its own.

With the introduction of dyarchy under the 1919 Government of India Act, the line of demarcation between the Center and the provinces became a vertical one, the latter having become autonomous in the "nation building" sphere of administration. But this constitutional change did not modify the mode of staffing of the Central Government's headquarters organization, and the old arrangement continued with minor adjustments. A new level of Assistant Secretaries was, for instance, created, which was a move in the direction of securing an element of permanence in the officer grades.

The 1935 Government of India Act

The passage of the 1935 Government of India Act which conferred autonomy on provinces and visualized a federation for the country, reopened the question of senior selections in the central secretariat; and the decision taken was in favor of continuing the existing practice. The Maxwell Committee on Organization and Procedure (Maxwell 1937) discussed the issue in great detail but recommended continuance of the tenure staffing of the central secretariat. The Maxwell Committee was set up by the colonial ruler as an administrative committee to suggest a re-designing of the country's public administration to match the newly announced constitutional reform. The Maxwell Committee was headed by Sir Reginald M. Maxwell. The work of the Committee is a milestone in the evolution of staffing pattern in the Government of India.

According to the Committee, a permanent civil service of the Central Government would verily be one without any direct contact with the life of India, which would be an abysmally inadequate preparation for the kind of work performed at the Center. The background of many of the subjects with which the central secretariat remains concerned cannot be understood unless officers dealing with them possess direct working experience in the provinces, for it is at this level that effects of the policies made in the central secretariat are felt. A rotating civil service thus provides a valuable link between the Central and provincial governments. No less meaningful to the state government personnel is the insight into the outlook, method and even difficulties of the Central Government which a system of periodic inter-change provides (Maxwell 1937).

Despite the inauguration of the federation in 1937 when the Act of 1935 came into operation, the traditional method of staffing of the headquarters organization of the Government of India, thus, continued.

But with the expanding functions of the Central Government under the new Constitution, it discovered itself under mounting stress. In a country of the size and diversity of India, the work of the Central Government must remain large, varied and complex. This is regardless of whether the country is under the unitary system, provincial autonomy or federation. Besides, the constitutional reform unleashed by the Act of 1935 affected every department of the Government while the elaboration of administrative changes consequent on that Act and the future contingency of federation entailed new and novel responsibilities. The internal national movement under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi, also added materially to the labors of the government, particularly at the Home Department.

The Central Government was also under stress because the specialized needs particularly of the economic departments such as Finance and Commerce in the wake of the Ottawa Agreement on Imperial Preference and the setting up of the Reserve Bank of India (1935), could not be adequately met by officers obtained on a tenure basis and from a non-specialized service alone. The Ottawa Agreement, which regulated trade and commerce among the members of the British Empire, involved India more deeply in international trade and commerce. Accordingly in 1937, a Finance-Commerce Cadre was constituted which, though recruited mainly from the Indian Civil Service (ICS), had officers from other eligible central services such as the Indian Audit and Accounts Service, Customs Service, Income-Tax Service and Military Accounts Service. The Pool had a strength of 47.

The outbreak of the Second World War in 1939 in which India not only participated but also became an important Allies' center for military operations in the East expanded suddenly and considerably the range and scale of governmental activities. This increase in the range and scale of government activities led to an expansion of the secretariat and necessitated the appointment of a large number of additional personnel. The result was that the Center found itself indenting for a much larger number of officers from the provinces and at the same time showed a strong disposition not to revert them on the completion of their terms. Originally, the Pool was designed only for the Finance and Commerce Departments but during the War (1939-45), its members began to be appointed to other Departments as well. The "Pool" device eased the staffing problem in the secretariat but the independence of the country in 1947 seriously upset the balance as a result of the resignation of a very large number of British and Muslim officers. The resulting shortage of officers was examined by the Secretariat Reorganization Committee (1948) which suggested that while the Central Government should not pressure the provinces for additional manpower, it should at the same time retain those officers already working under it. In short, the Committee sought freezing, even though temporary, of the working of the tenure system in the case of those officers already posted at the headquarters.

One may thus note that originally, the corporate level staffing depended entirely on the regular rotation of members of the ICS between the provinces and the Center. It was only in the early forties that the door was opened, though grudgingly, to some

central services through the Commerce-Industry Pool. Also, its application was waived in the case of some officers already in the secretariat.

Independence and After

The Recruitment to the ICS was completely suspended after 1944 but the demand for experienced manpower in the Central Government was growing continually particularly since the advent of Independence in 1947. It was only in January 1949 that 121 candidates from the open market were recruited to the Indian Administrative Service (IAS), the successor to the ICS. As said earlier, the ICS cadre suffered a serious depletion in 1947 as a result of the departure of most British and Muslim officers. The provinces were themselves under tremendous strain and in no position to supply officers to the Center contemplated under the tenure discipline. These new realities forced the Government of India to prepare in December 1950, the Indian Administrative Service (Central Cadre) Scheme.

The Indian Administrative Service (Central Cadre) Scheme reiterated the operation of the tenure system of staffing in the Center and even more importantly, broadened the sources of supply. It expounded the many advantages in a system premised on regular inter-level exchange of experience. But its originality lay in another recommendation. The door to the central secretariat was opened to other services in addition to the ICS/IAS. This feature made it unique. Thus, the Commerce-Industry Pool was an experiment of rather limited applicability. Despite the broadening of sources of intake, however, the central secretariat still suffered from a shortage of experienced officers of the required quality in their respective cadres. This was primarily because of the large expansion of the central secretariat as shown in the following table:

Table 1. Staffing Strength of the Secretariat

Positions	Y E A R		
	1939	1945	1948
Secretaries	9	19	19
Additional Secretary	-	6	5
Joint Secretaries	8	26	35
Deputy Secretaries	12	51	84
Undersecretaries	16	103	191
Total	45	205	334

The deficit was to be met by a new plan of quasi-permanent deputation to the Center visualized by the scheme and under it the selected personnel were to serve at the Center for the rest of their career. This was purported to ensure specialization in particular departments, and besides, had also the effect of reducing the number of officers to be rotated. The plan, however, was not pursued but the idea underlying it was not dead. In 1957, the creation of the Central Administrative Pool was announced

with the ostensible aim of building up "a reserve of officers with special training and experience for the purpose of economic administration and for maintaining continuity of knowledge and experience in the field of general administration" (Estimates Committee 1966:71). With the inception of planning in 1951, the management of economic affairs of the nation claimed an increasing attention from the Government, which realized that this field needed "an understanding of economic affairs as well as a capacity for and experience of administration, i.e., of handling men and affairs with the tools and techniques of the Governmental machinery."⁷

The Central Administrative Pool sought to stall the operation of the tenure system even though it was to be applicable only to a segment of administration dealing with economic affairs. Because the proposed scheme entailed change in inter-level rotation of officers, consultation with the state governments became necessary. Many state governments expressed their opposition to the scheme. Equally stringent was the criticism made by the various non-IAS services. Generally speaking, the Pool was perceived as an effort to create a new hierarchy of the privileged, and undermine the equality of opportunity which the tenure system stipulated. It was also viewed as a device to restrict the non-IAS officers' opportunity of coming to the secretariat and contributing to the policy-making processes in the Government. Confronted with such wide ranging criticism, the scheme was abandoned in its original form, and revised as "Central Economic Pool." This, too, was finally dropped in the face of continued criticism.

The "Pool" device, one may note, was visualized as a source of staffing arrangements for economic posts in the Central Government but within the bureaucracy itself, it was viewed as an infamous attempt to create another privileged class of favorites in the administrative cadres. A few senior civil servants had become quite powerful in view of their continued stay in the secretariat, especially in the prestigious economic ministries. This could not have happened if the principle of exchange of personnel had been allowed uninterrupted operation. These civil servants then sought institutionalization and legitimization of their stay through the "Pool." Eventually, however, the tenure system was reinstated, at least in theory.

Sources of Supply of Senior Personnel

It is normal for members of various services to occupy the posts in their respective departments or cadres. But the senior positions are ex-cadre ones and these are not reserved for any particular service or services. The posts of undersecretaries and above in the central secretariat number over 2,500. The breakdown in 1986 is shown in Table 2. They fall in the ex-cadre category, and may be recruited from the Indian Administrative Service, other all-India services, the central services, and the Central Secretariat Service.⁸

Table 2. The Composition of the Central Secretariat Service (CSS) Officers in the Central Secretariat (1986)

<i>Level</i>	<i>Number of Posts</i>	<i>Percentage of total number of posts</i>
Secretaries	100	3.9
Additional Secretaries	115	4.5
Joint Secretaries	408	15.9
Directors	398	15.5
Deputy Secretaries	531	20.7
Undersecretaries	1011	39.5
Total	2563	100

Mention must be made here of the Central Secretariat Service (CSS), created in July 1950 as a feeder service to occupy the junior and middle level positions in the secretariat. Unlike members of other organized services, the officers of the Central Secretariat Service, as the nomenclature suggests, remain permanently in the secretariat, subject only to inter-departmental transfers. The members of this service today, hold all posts of Section Officers and most of those of undersecretaries, but their occupancy rate falls steeply as one moves up to this level. The number of Central Secretariat Service officers at the various levels of the Central Secretariat is reflected in Table 3.

Table 3. Total Number of Central Secretariat Service (CSS) Officers in the Central Secretariat

<i>Level</i>	<i>Number of CSS Officers</i>	<i>Total Number of Personnel in 1986</i>
Secretaries	Nil	100
Additional Secretaries	1	115
Joint Secretaries	9	408
Directors	81	398
Deputy Secretaries	185	531
Undersecretaries	718	1011
Total	994	2563

It may thus be seen that the CSS is not viewed as a very important source of supply for the senior levels in the Government. In 1986, the CSS had a total membership of 1152.

Though higher civil servants are recruited through a common competitive examination, the upward mobility of other services is very much reduced. The cut-off point for each service is determined by an interplay of market forces rather than by any recognized principle of rationality. A large majority of the members of the IAS are clustered in the higher income-band, and promotion up to the level of joint secretary

to the Government of India is practically automatic. In sharp contrast to this, other services discovered themselves most emphatically in an inferior position, which is borne out in Table 4 from information collected from various government agencies.

Table 4. Position of Other Service Officers

<i>Service (Non-Technical)</i>	<i>Largest Percentage of Officers</i>	<i>Pay Scale</i>
Indian Audit & Accounts Service	38.9	Rs.2200-4000
Indian Revenue Service (Income Tax)	39	Rs.3000-5000
Indian Revenue Service (Customs & Central Excise)	60	Rs.3000-5000
Indian Postal Service	50.3	Rs.3000-5000
Indian Railway Traffic Service	40.9	Rs.3000-5000

Nor does the pattern undergo any change in the case of specialist services like those of engineers, doctors, etc. Though, as is common knowledge, bright students these days opt for physical and life sciences in colleges and universities and besides, the country's economic progress also hinges critically on them. That a bulk of the specialists are in the pay-scale of Rs.3000-5000 in a pay-structure is disclosed in Table 5.

Table 5. Pay Scale of Specialists

<i>Service (Technical)</i>	<i>Largest Percentage of Officers</i>	<i>Pay Scale</i>
Central Engineering Service	48.0	Rs.3000-5000
Indian Telecommunication Service	58.6	Rs.3000-5000
Military Engineering Service	44.8	Rs.2200-4000
Central Health Service	46.6	Rs.3000-5000
Indian Railway Medical Service	42.9	Rs.2200-4000
Geological Survey of India	51.7	Rs.3000-5000

Table 6 shows the composition of the Indian Civil Service. Before one can offer an interpretation of Table 6, it is necessary to warn that the figures mentioned in it include the number of officers holding "equivalent posts" which generally means that

the person concerned gets the pay-scale of the post of which his is made equivalent but he is not directly involved in the policy-making responsibilities. The head of a research institution, for instance, is sometimes made equivalent to secretary to the Government of India but he has apparently nothing to do directly with matters relating to policy-making which is the work performed in the secretariat. In Indian administration, it is somewhat common to confer such "equivalent" status on members of the specialist or uni-functional services.

To conclude this section of the discussion, the service-wise composition of the headquarters organization of the Government of India is given in the Table 6.

With the near monopoly of only one service, namely the Indian Civil Service and its successor, the IAS, the higher level positions in the Central Secretariat are today manned by many others indicating a trend, however feeble, towards a broadening of the service background in its composition. However, a lion's share in higher jobs goes to the IAS and what's more, this service occupies, without any apparent opposition, the commanding heights in the country's public administration. Out of 100 secretaries, fifty are from IAS, the remaining ones being from other services. Members of many other services concentrate in certain areas of administration where their specialized skills may be in demand. In their postings, they are thus seen in clusters. The IAS, on the other hand are spread over practically the entire administrative space. Secondly, the IAS is less in number at the lower level -- say of undersecretary -- and its number goes on progressively increasing as one moves up the secretariat ladder. On the other hand, other services tend to thin out towards the top of the hierarchy. This confirms the policy-making character of the IAS. Thirdly, the Central Secretariat Service, as already observed, is basically a service to man posts of undersecretaries and to an extent, deputy secretaries, thus being clearly supporting in nature. Different services, one may thus note, move towards the top but at different speed, and the rules of the game being what they are, many reach the age of retirement much before reaching the top.

Institutional Framework for Selection

As the middle and senior management positions in the headquarters organization of the Government of India are open to all services, both all-India and Central, there are bound to be clashes of interests between them as well as between the members of the same service apart from the questions relating to the determination of inter-seniority and similar matters. The competition becomes more intense as the administrative pyramid becomes narrower as one moves up the top. All these call for a streamlined administrative machinery for selection.

Many agencies are involved in the higher level appointments under the Government of India. These are the cadre controlling authority, the Senior Selection Board/Central Establishment Board, the Establishment Officer and finally, the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet. The role of each of them is discussed in what follows.

Table 6. Service - Wise Break-up of Higher Civil Servants in the Central Government in 1987.

Service	Secretaries and equivalent	Additional Secretaries and equivalent	Joint Secretaries and equivalent	Directors and equivalent	Deputy Secretaries and equivalent	Under Secretaries and equivalent	Total	Percentage
IAS	50 (10)	55 (15)	261 (117)	130 (52)	165 (73)	65 (17)	726 (284)	28.9
IPS	4 (3)	-	11 (4)	25 (18)	10 (9)	4 (4)	54 (38)	2.2
Indian Foreign Service	4	4	27 (1)	14	30	75	154 (1)	6.2
Indian Legal Service/Central Company Law Service	4 (2)	1	14 (2)	19 (1)	16	17	71 (5)	2.8
Indian Audit and Accounts Service	4	6 (14)	19 (11)	28 (10)	22 (11)	7	86 (46)	3.4
Indian Railway Service of Engineers and other related Railway Services	3	-	3 (1)	2	-	-	8 (1)	0.3
Indian Railway Traffic Service	2 (1)	1	6 (2)	7 (5)	-	-	16 (8)	0.6
Indian Postal Service	1	4	7	10 (4)	7 (6)	2	31 (10)	1.2
Indian Railway Accounts Service	1	1	6	6 (1)	-	-	14 (1)	0.5
Indian Civil Accounts Service	1	3 (1)	9 (3)	9 (2)	6 (4)	4	32 (10)	1.3
Indian Revenue Service (Customs & Central Excise)	-	9	2 (2)	14 (3)	29 (4)	28	82 (9)	3.3
Indian Economic Service/ Indian Statistical Service	-	8	8 (3)	19 (8)	27 (10)	27 (2)	89 (23)	3.6
Central Power Engineering Service/Central Water Engineering Service	1 (1)	6	-	3	3	1 (4)	14 (5)	0.5
Indian Revenue Service (Income Tax)	-	3 (3)	5 (5)	6 (2)	9 (4)	14	37 (14)	1.5
Central Secretariat Service	-	1	9 (3)	81 (13)	185 (34)	718(158)	994 (208)	39.6
Others	25 (10)	9 (3)	14 (9)	11 (3)	20 (11)	25 (4)	104 (40)	4.1
Total	100 (27)	111 (36)	401 (163)	384(122)	529(166)	987(189)	2512 (703)	
Percentage	3.98	4.42	15.96	15.29	21.06	39.29	100	

The figures in brackets represent the number of officers working in posts of equivalent level and they are included in the figures preceding the brackets.

The Cadre Authority

The cadre controlling authority maintains the service records of the members of its service and signifies also the availability of the officer for purposes of deputation to the secretariat. This work is attended to by a cell in the Authority which is made responsible for personnel matters like postings, transfers, etc., of members of the service falling under its control. Possession of professional qualification is not regarded as essential for posting in the cell and as such, its personnel possess the same general qualifications which are manifested by their colleagues occupying similar ranks in other parts of the ministry. As a result, their functioning is rather amateurish, conducted on an ad hoc basis with little attention to long-term planning. This attribute applies even more strongly to the state governments, which control their respective all-India service cadres. The General Administrative Department (GAD) in the state, or the Department of Administrative reforms, the new nomenclature for the part of GAD dealing with civil service, is no better equipped. The cadre authority necessarily conducts correspondence with the Establishment Officer to the Government of India who on his part establishes contact with the authority for an efficient performance of his own tasks.

Senior Selection Board and Central Establishment Board

The Senior Selection Board and the Central Establishment Board are composed of senior secretaries in the Government and advise on appointments falling within their respective jurisdictions. The Senior Selection Board (SSB) is presided over by the Cabinet Secretary and includes the secretary in the Ministry of Personnel and two other secretaries, nominated for one year term by the Prime Minister. It recommends names of eligible civil servants for appointment to the posts of joint secretaries and equivalent. Processing of posts of the level of additional secretary, special secretary, secretary and equivalent, is initiated by the Cabinet Secretary himself and names are sent directly to the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet for its approval. The Central Establishment Board (CEB) presided over by the Personnel Secretary and some other secretaries constituting its membership, prepares lists of eligible candidates for posts of undersecretaries, deputy secretaries and directors. For each of these posts, the Government has prescribed certain qualifications based on length and record of service, work experience, previous secretariat appointment, sometimes even salary currently drawn by officers, etc. It is the responsibility of the Board to prepare panels for various levels of officers who fulfill these criteria. One may also note that for the IAS officers, the only qualification laid down is length of service, thus, making their empanelment for levels up to that of joint secretary nearly automatic. The Establishment Officer to the Government of India is the secretary of the SSB and member secretary of the junior body.

The collegiate-type Board is a result of deliberate policy: it is good to entrust staffing responsibility on more than one individual so that subjectivity is reduced to the minimum. Before 1970, when the SSB was carved out of the Central Establish-

ment Board, the latter performed all the functions. The CEB too, had its genesis in the Establishment Board which was first constituted by the British Government in India in 1939. The Establishment Board used to meet regularly and its recommendations were always accepted. This may not be claimed for the SSB or the CEB. Like any other body in a democracy, these Boards necessarily function within a political milieu and are subject to numerous pressures and influences, their intensity increasing as one moves up the secretariat hierarchy.

Standardization of merit ratings of officers opting for headquarters postings is no less an intricate problem. Nature has so conditioned that different officers observe different standards of appraising the performance of the subordinates. Some states have earned a reputation of strictness in writing the annual confidential reports of their officers. West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, and Kerala are among the states falling in this category. The state governments of the so-called Hindi belt, on the other hand, are viewed as being effusive in the commendation of their civil servants. They use expressions like "outstanding," "excellent," etc., which have been made very elastic and their significance have eroded.

Table 7⁹ presents the number of cases dealt with by these Boards over a period of years. One may note that there is a steady increase in the number and has kept the CEB particularly busy.

Table 7. Number of Cases Dealt with by the Senior Selection Board and the Central Establishment Board

	1979-80	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	April 1984-85
SSB	127	131	138	168	184	117
CEB						
Under Secretaries	211	352	235	288	437	196
Deputy Secretaries	250	232	196	155	362	159
Directors	96	159	133	149	191	110
Total	684	874	702	760	1174	582

The Establishment Officer

The Establishment Officer (EO) to the Government of India, is the secretary of the Central Establishment Board, the member-secretary of the Senior Selection Board and the secretary of the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet. The EO is thus closely associated with appointments under the Government. He is invariably drawn from the Indian Administrative Service and though there is no rigidity in this, he

generally holds the rank of a joint secretary though this is not laid down in any rule or regulation. The two Boards separately finalize the empanelment of eligible candidates for various levels, and once this is over, the EO sets out to meet the demand of the ministries by consulting the approved list and picking out from it the names of suitable officers as when demands are made. It is common to prepare a panel of three or more names for each vacancy of the middle management levels, and the panel along with the service records of officers are sent to the ministry or department concerned, which then picks up the name it wants. Sometimes it may even call for a fresh panel of names from the EO. Informal consultation and exchange of views between the parties concerned almost always sort out the problem of staffing. But in this exercise, an effort is always made to secure an adequate spread of officers in terms of services and regions. The EO maintains the confidential files (along with Executive Records Sheets) of all the members of the IAS (except his own which remains with the Cabinet Secretary). Besides, the EO may send for the confidential files of any civil servant.

The EO's role cannot be separated from the work of the bodies he is required to service, but he does wield a varying measure of informal influence particularly for middle level appointments in the secretariat. This flows from his working directly and somewhat closely under the Personnel Secretary and the Cabinet Secretary. But the power and position of the EO seem to have suffered an erosion with the increasing weight accorded to political determinants of personnel processes like postings, transfers, etc.

The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet

The highest body to approve all appointments of the level of deputy secretary and equivalent and above in the Government both within the secretariat or outside it, is the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC). This was first set up in 1950 in pursuance of N. Gopaldaswami Ayyangar's Report on Reorganization of the Machinery of Government (1949). The ACC consists of the Prime Minister, who is its Chairman, Home Minister, and the minister of the department in which the vacancy has occurred, the EO being its secretary. The Committee does not ever meet formally; instead, it disposes of its business by circulation of papers. A case coming to the ACC has already been processed by the appropriate administrative body -- the SSB or CEB or the Cabinet Secretary. Over 1,500 cases of appointment are annually finalized by this apex level body, the daily average being 6 or 7. The workload on the ACC is steadily increasing as is disclosed in Table 8 which shows the case disposal history of the committee.

Table 8. Cases Disposed by the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet

<i>Year</i>	<i>Number of Cases</i>
1979-80	1105
1980-81	1224
1981-82	1360
1982-83	1330
1983-84	1625
April-Dec. 1984-85	1050
Total	7694

Summary

The formally designed framework for senior executive selection sketched above may not provide a complete or adequate clue to how this is actually made. The civil service in India shows a decreasing disposition to allow personnel practices be governed by abstract rules and regulations. The pressure on the secretariat jobs has been steadily increasing and is heaviest in regard to ministries dealing with economic affairs. As such, it is rather common for a sizeable number of higher civil servants to lobby for their placement. With the posts being limited and the pyramid becoming narrower towards the top, many factors such as caste, kinship, region, personal affiliations, etc., in addition to merit become critical input. The plain fact is that the higher one moves up the administrative hierarchy, the more significant becomes the equation with the influential political leaders of the ruling party, and in this chessboard, the minister concerned with the appointment generally holds the final say. Like Alice in Wonderland, civil servants have to run hard to stay at the same place, and harder still to move to positions of their choice. Winners and losers apart, India's mode of headquarters level staffing is so designed as to avoid many of the pitfalls inherent in classical federalism. This seeks to ensure continuous flow of field views and experiences into processes of policy-making and counterflow of corporate level policy perspectives into implementation. Such an arrangement also seeks to foster a measure of emotional cohesion among the members of the higher bureaucracy even though they are posted at different places and work under different political masters.

Endnotes

¹The number of Central Government personnel has been steadily increasing as shown in the following table:

1984	3.87 million
1978	3.47 million
1977	3.39 million
1976	3.34 million
1975	3.27 million
1960	1.2 million

See *Census of Central Government Employees*, annually published by the Ministry of Labor and Rehabilitation, Government of India. It may be noted that the increase in personnel is to be accounted for by an expansion of public functions but an element of political patronage is also present.

*There are some functionaries who are recruited for particular posts and thus, do not belong to any service. They are included into what is called the "General Central Service."

*The Constitution of India provides for the setting up of all-India services. See Article 312 of the Constitution.

*The Central Government has been keen to set up more all-India services and even drew up details for constituting an Indian Service of Engineers and Indian Medical and Health Service. But the state governments have generally resisted the proposals viewing them as encroachment on their functional area. No such service has been set up. See S.R. Maheswari (1971).

*The more important among the central services are: Indian Foreign Service, Indian Audit and Accounts Service, Central Health Service, Indian Postal Service, Indian Revenue Service, Central Legal Service, Indian Information Service, Indian Economic Service, Indian Statistical Service, and Central Secretariat Service. For a more detailed discussion, see S.R. Maheswari (1979).

*The only exception is the Central Secretariat Service, discussed later in the paper.

*Scheme for staffing Senior Administrative Posts of and above the rank of Deputy Secretary under the Government of India, 17 October 1957, para. 9.

*Technically speaking, the members of the state level civil service may also be appointed in the secretariat on a tenure basis. A part of the IAS is recruited through promotion from among the ranks of the state level civil service, those on the verge of promotion may be given the secretariat postings. Those not so placed may also be appointed but in consultation with the Union Public Service Commission. Members of this level of service do not generally evince any interest in the central postings nor are they encouraged by the Central Government to take up assessment under it.

*These tables have been prepared on the basis of data contained in the *Annual Reports of the Department of Personnel*. One must note that in 1985, the Department was given the nomenclature of a Ministry.

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