CHAPTER IV

REGISTRAR

History of the Office.

There was no ministerial head in overall charge of the office of
the Commissioner of Assam. Col. Hopkinson appointed an uncovenanted assistant
1 to Commissioner on Rs. 300. This post was absorbed in the Chief Commissioner's
office Establishment on the constitution of Chief Commissionership of Assam
2 in 1874.

On the creation of Chief Commissionership in 1874, Col. Keating did
not propose to have any highly paid Superintendent in his office establish-
3 ment. But the Head Assistant in the General Department was the highest paid
4 ministerial officer in the Assam Secretariat. A Superintendent in charge of
overall discipline and control of the Assam Civil Secretariat was appointed
5 on 2 August 1880. Mohamed Peer Buksh was appointed as the Superintendent of
6 Assam Secretariat (P.W.D.) on 1 May 1886.

1. Letter No. 1683 dated 31st August 1872 (Volume No. 47 July September letter
   issued).
2. Letter No. 180 dated 4th June 1874 from H. Luttman-Johnson to Home Secretary,
   India. File No. 620 g of 1874.
3. Letter No. 69 dated 14th April 1874 from H. Luttman-Johnson to Home
   Secretary, India.
4. Letter No. 180 dated 4th June 1874 from H. Luttman-Johnson to Home Secretary,
   India. File No. 620 g of 1874.
5. Assam Civil List 1885 October issue Page 37 and Page 51.
6. Assam Civil List 1890.
Pralash Chandra Deb became the Superintendent of Assam Secretariat (Civil) on the retirement of the first Superintendent, S. Harrison on 1 April 1891. On the retirement of Mahum ed Peer Bakhsh, Charles Augustus James was appointed as Superintendent Assam Secretariat (P.W.D.). Sarat Chandra Deb succeeded Pralash Chandra Deb as the Superintendent of Assam Civil Secretariat in 1897. Charu Chandra Goswami officiated as Superintendent for some time in 1898 and in 1902 when Sarat Chandra Dhar was on leave in the retirement of Sarat Chandra Dhar in 1904, Charu Chandra Goswami, Assistant Political and Judicial Branch of the Assam Secretariat was appointed as Superintendent of the Assam Secretariat.

The importance of supervision and control of the ministerial and menial establishment was felt with the expansion of the Secretariat. The need for supervisory appointments, higher than that of the Head Assistants or Superintendents, became pressing with the formation of the Province of Eastern Bengal and Assam in 1905. Simply upgrading the post of Superintendent proved inadequate and Charu Chandra Goswami, the first Registrar in the gazetted scale of Rs. 400-20-600 was appointed with the sanction and approval of the Government of India on 15.5.1905. This was soon followed by two others, W. I. Shepherd and G. F. Smith. Thus by August 1906, there were three Registrars, one for each of the three major departments, in the place of the one general Superintendent for the whole of the Secretariat. The number was brought down to one when Assam reverted in 1912 to a Chief Commissioner.

7. Assam Civil List 1894.
8. Assam Civil List 1897.
9. Assam Civil List 1898, 1902.
FUNCTION OF THE REGISTRAR.

The Registrar constituted the link between the top and the base— the "Government" and the "Establishment". He along with the Assistant comprised the intermediary tier linking the top and the Assistants, the "Establishment". He however, was not merely a Superior kind of Assistant. His was a superior function, more varied in responsibility in many aspects.

The Registrar of the Assam Secretariat performed some of the duties of the Assistant Secretary. His duties as Registrar were office management and distribution of files. These were the duties of Registrars of all other Secretariats. But in Assam, he was required to do a certain amount of routine case work which in other provinces the Assistant Secretaries were required to do.

So there was more work for the Registrar in Assam, than he could legitimately be called upon to do. It was also necessary to relieve the Under Secretary from the routine work. Owing to paucity of officers it was necessary to entrust to one officer the duties of two officers. From time to time the Registrars performed the duties of Under Secretaries as well.

G.F. Smith carried on the Under Secretary's work in addition to his own duties as Registrar in 1915 on an honorarium of Rs. 90 admissible under Article 72 of Civil Service Regulation. Registrar Mahendra Kumar Gupte was permitted under Article 168 of the Civil Service Regulation to draw Rs. 700.00

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per month while officiating as Under Secretary in addition to his own
17
duties as Registrar. He dealt with appointment and Judicial
Form. In consideration of these additional responsibilities he was given
an additional special pay of Rs.150 per month with effect from 25 October
18
1926.

The Registrar was responsible for the general supervision and co-ordin-
ation of the work of the assistants in the Secretariat. He dealt with the
establishment matters such as appointment, promotion, leave, service book,
character Roll etc. of the assistants. He checked their attendance register.
He was also responsible for the appointment of menials and to deal with all
applications for leave etc. He supervised and controlled secretariat's
work. He controlled and maintained the accounts of stationary and building
advances. He sanctioned contingent expenditure and controlled the contingency
Register. He dealt with Books and Magazines and read all vernacular news
papers and Magazines and arranged for translation. He was ultimately respon-
sible for the distribution of files amongst the assistants. He received
and distributed all registered articles. He disposed of routine matters of
19
departments and particularly of Lunatic cases of Medical Department.

Registrar had very responsible duties to perform. He supervised in
genera l, the work of all departments and checked the weekly return of files
20
disposed of. In a big secretariat office it was essential in the interest
of discipline and speeding up of work that there should be an officer who

17. Administration Notification No.4015 A dated 17th April 1919. Finance
B. May 1919 No. 56.
...148...

regularly want round and made sure that the work of the department was going on smoothly. Again there were some Branches, such as Issue Branch, the Record Branch and the Establishment Branch in which they were assisted. They were under the immediate charge of the Registrar. To take an example, in the Record Branch, he ordered periodical destruction of old records as provided under Rules.

The Registrar was directly responsible for the work in these Branches. He was entirely in charge of appointment and discipline of the menial establishment. He dealt with all matters connected with management and discipline of the Secretariat office and he was responsible to the Secretarises for its control and efficient working. It was his duty to see that the disposal of work in every department, branch and section was up-to-date, and that the rules and procedures laid down in the Secretariat Manual were duly observed. For this purpose he was required to examine personally the work of the various departments and to visit them constantly in order to ascertain that correct methods were observed that cases were not unduly delayed, that registers were being properly kept up, that files were kept by the assistants in their proper racks and that the work in general was properly and effectively done.

The Registrar opened the correspondences and marked them to the different departments or officers. In particular the Registrar's duties are

22. Ibid Rule 200 (iii).
23. Ibid 200 Chapter V.
24. Ibid.
included the following: (i) to pass cases dealing with matters relating to the recruitment, appointment, promotions, leave and transfer of the ministerial and menial establishments of the Secretariat according to the prescribed rules, (ii) to maintain the Character Rolls of the staff, see that they were put up to the Under Secretary and Deputy Secretary on 1 April in each year, (iv) to deal with matters of routine nature.

The Registrar was in charge of Record Department. Cases for the destruction of records under the rules were put up to him for orders. He sanctioned all contingent expenditure in the Secretariat. He was in charge of Secretariat stationery and forms. He was responsible for the proper upkeep of the Secretariat Buildings and was also in charge of Secretariat Library.

None of these duties could be done by the Under Secretaries or any one else. Thus the first item in this charter of duties included in specific terms, personal examination of files and work, constant rounds of the Departments and offices to ensure that the procedure and routine were observed and time schedule was maintained, and even to see that files were kept in proper order and places in the racks of the Assistant.

It will be evident from the duties of the Registrar outlined as v., that they transcended the scope of the Head Assistant because the latter was concerned with his respective department with 10 to 15 Assistants only, the former had his jurisdiction over all the Departments, granting of leave.

26. Ibid Rule (ii. vii)
involving arrangement for the performance of the work of the vacant desk, providing relief to a hand overwhelmed with sudden rush of work, clearance of accumulation of arrears by temporary-redistribution of work, interdepartmental transfers and so on. These were far beyond the competence of the Head Assistant. They required an officer with wider range of powers and higher status for effective control. The Registrar in this respect was pivot on which the Secretariat depended.

This work could not be entrusted to the Under Secretary who was more usefully engaged in the more important work of decision making and policy formulation, the main function of the Secretariat. To use them for the routine work would result in the curtailment of the output for which the Secretariat was meant.

The volume of work that fell on the Under Secretaries upwards was so heavy that they could not attend to general work. The Registrar could not be called a sort of dignified Head Assistant. He was in charge of the whole of the Secretariat staff.

So far as departmental supervision was concerned Head Assistants themselves did some supervision in their respective sections. But there was other form of supervision which must remain with a Central Officer. The grant of leave and arrangements for the absentee's work, providing temporary help when a particular assistant had pressure of work and heavy arrears, suggestions regarding interdepartmental transfers were all duties that require the attention of a Central Officer like the Registrar of the Secretariat. In short he was responsible for the general organization
and good discipline in the Secretariat as a whole. Discipline could be enforced by the Head Assistant in his section, but the supervision of the Registrar ensured better discipline, and was very desirable in a big office like the Secretariat.

There was no doubt that the Head Assistant could supervise the Assistants in so far as slackness was concerned, but delay in cases might be due to various reasons, one of which might be that a certain file required for reference might not be available. In such a case the Registrar personally ascertained whether the required file could be released. In every case of delay, it was the Registrar to whom all assistants looked and to whom the explanation of assistants was submitted by the Head Assistant with his remarks if any.

The control and discipline would have suffered if the Head Assistants had to do the supervision work done by the Registrar, because the Head Assistants were fully occupied with legitimate duties as prescribed in the Assam Secretariat Manual.

The amalgamation of Public Works Department Secretariat and the Civil Secretariat staff in 1933 should have resulted in the abolition of one of the two posts of Registrars. The supervision control and discipline of 167 assistants of an amalgamated Secretariat would not have been a very heavy burden for a Registrar. But distance was an obstacle.

The P.W.D. Secretariat was situated nearly half a mile away from the old Assam Secretariat. Unless the Public Works Department Assistants were near to him, it would have been impossible for the Registrar of Assam Secretariat to supervise and control the work of an amalgamated Secretariat. The two Secretariats remained separate for all practical purposes.

The post of Registrar in 1920 was neither a Provincial nor a Subordinate Service post. It was "Miscellaneous Post"! It was in 1932 that both the Civil and P.W.D. Registrars were declared as belonging to the Provincial Service.

The Registrar was paid additional salary for additional duties. He got additional pay while looking after the duties of an Under Secretary. The Registrar's duties were confined to the Secretariat only. He had nothing to do with "outside" offices. The Registrar received an honorarium when he inspected the office of the Director of Public Health, the office of the Director of Industries in 1921. The inspection of Departmental offices was no part of the Registrar's duties. The honorarium was paid for the work.

30. Appointment B. May 1922 No. 188-204.
31. Appointment and Political Dept's Notification No. 907-AP dated 1.7.32.
32. Finance B. March 1927 No. 800-801.
33. Finance B. April 1922 No. 332-337 and Audit and Political B. September 1927 No. 381-384.
34. Finance B. March 1927 No. 800-801.
performed by the Registrar outside the course of his ordinary duties.
When the Registrar carried on the Under Secretary’s work in addition to
his own duties as Registrar in 1915 an honorarium of Rs. 90 admissible
under Article 72 of Civil Service Regulation was sanctioned. Registrar
Mahendra Kumar Gupta was permitted under Article 168 of the Civil Service
Regulation to draw Rs. 700 per month while officiating as Under Secretary
in addition to his own duties as Registrar. He dealt with appointment
and Judicial. In consideration of additional responsibilities he was given
an additional special pay of Rs. 150 per month with effect from 25 October
1926.
On the reconstitution of Assam Secretariat, the Government of India
sanctioned a scale of Rs. 400-20-600 for the Registrar. The pay of the
Registrar was discussed from time to time. It was originally proposed in
1921 to give him a pay of Rs. 350-450. Finance Department objected to this
and the pay was eventually fixed at Rs. 300-10-350. After considerable
discussion, the pay was raised to Rs. 300-20-400.

With effect from 1 April 1920, the Chief Commissioner Sir Nicholas
Dod Beaton-Bell sanctioned the following time scale of pay for the
Registrars of the Civil and P.W.D. Secretariat.

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<tr>
<th>Registrar Civil Secret.</th>
<th>Rs. 500-40-700</th>
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<tr>
<td>Registrar P.W.D. Secret.</td>
<td>Rs. 375-25-500</td>
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35. Finance B. March 1925 No. 279-280.
36. Administration Notification No. 4015 A dated 17th April 1919. Finance
B. May 1919 No. 56.
38. Finance A July 1912 No. 1-3.
41. Finance B. November 1920 No. 202-204 and Finance letter No. 8360 dated
17.9.1920 to the controller Assam from Govt. of Assam.
In 1925, the scales were again revised. It was Rs. 500-30-600 for Registrar Civil Secretariat, Rs. 400-20-600 for Registrar P.W.D. Secretariat.

In 1928, the scale of the Registrar P.W.D. Secretariat was raised to Rs. 500-20-700 mainly on personal grounds. Again in 1930, the pay was revised to Rs. 500-50-800 for Civil Secretariat Registrar and to Rs. 500-40-700 for P.W.D. Secretariat Registrar.

In 1931-32, for reasons of economy, the scales were revised to Rs. 400-20-600 for Civil Secretariat Registrar (as against Rs. 400-20-600 sanctioned in 1912) and Rs. 400-10-500 for P.W.D. Secretariat Registrar (as against Rs. 300-10-350 sanctioned in 1912).

At this time Mahendra Kumar Gupta was Registrar of Assam Secretariat (Civil) C.A.S. Perry was that of P.W.D. Secretariat. The scale of the Registrar P.W.D. Secretariat was raised alone in 1928 mainly on personal grounds. It was raised also in 1930, in order to allow pensionary benefits to C.A.S. Perry.

The scale of pay of the Civil and P.W.D. Registrars before and after revision were:

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<th>Previous</th>
<th>1931-32 revision</th>
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<tr>
<td>Registrar Civil</td>
<td>500-50-800</td>
<td>400-20-600</td>
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<tr>
<td>Registrar P.W.D.</td>
<td>500-40-700</td>
<td>400-10-500</td>
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42. Finance B. March 1925 No. 279-280.
43. Finance B. June 1934 No. 32.
44. Finance B. March 1931 No. 160-168.
45. Finance Audit B. June 1934 No. 33.
46. Finance Audit B. June 1935 No. 55
The percentages reductions in the new scales of pay for both the posts were:

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<th>Civil</th>
<th>P.W.D.</th>
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<tr>
<td>Minimum</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increments</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>75%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Average pay</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>22%</td>
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The above figures show that in revising the scales of posts of Registrars, the general principle of 10 per cent reduction was not followed. In fact no other posts in the province of Assam had undergone such a radical reduction in scale, as that of the Registrars. Further no post of a Gazetted rank under the 1930-1931 scale of pay carried an annual increment of Rs. 10 only as that of the Registrar P.W.D.

The Post of Registrar was one to which a ministerial officer could aspire after rendering several years service in the Secretariat and when he had already spent fifty summers. In the case of Dinesh Chandra was, Registrar P.W.D. he got it after 29 years of service and at the age of about 50. Ubaidur Rahman did not attain the rank of Civil Secretariat Registrar before he was 53 years old, and Surendra Chandra Dat a, his predecessor, also did not get it before he was 45 years. It was, therefore, impossible for any body to serve for 10 years to rise up to the maximum of the 1931-32 scales of Registrar and then reap its full advantage for pension.

There was another factor for consideration. Owing to the amalgamation of the two cadres the Civil and P.W.D. Secretariats in 1933, the P.W.D. Registrar's post became the stepping stone for rising up to the Registrar's post in the Assam Secretariat (Civil).

Taking the typical case of a ministerial officer of 50, he was unable to reach the maximum pay in either post. Although the scale was reduced on economic grounds, it should not be the intention of any government to introduce a time-scale of pay spreading its increments in such a way that the maximum would not be attainable by any one in the ordinary process.

Saiyid Sir Muhammad Sadrulla as P.W.D. Member when dealing with the case of C.A.S. Perry made some cogent observations on this question. The Finance Department agreeing with the principle at that time, fixed Registrar's pay on a five-year's time scale basis, and revised their scale accordingly. But the anomaly was repeated again in 1932.

A ten year scale in all circumstances was unsuitable even if a Registrar, P.W.D. Secretariat was appointed as Registrar. As an Assistant, he would not be able to reach the maximum of Rs. 600 during the tenure of his office.

Under the policy of compulsory retirement of the Government servants at the age of 55, no Head Assistant, ordinarily, on promotion to Registrarship could expect to reach the maximum of the 1932 scales. These rates of pay did not take into consideration all the relevant facts and was open to criticism.

49. File No. 1-1/5 of 1930 Note by Sadrulla dated 27.1.1930.
50. Finance Audit B. June 1935 No. 33.
On 15 May 1934, the Assam Government decided to revise the increments in the scale of pay fixed for Civil and P.W.D. Registrars so as to give them a reasonable chance of reaching the maximum before retirement. The new scales were Rs. 300-300-40-600 for the Registrar Assam Secretariat (Civil) and Rs. 400-20-500 for the P.W.D. Registrar, with effect from 1 June 1934.

The disparity between the scales of the two Registrars, Civil and P.W.D., could only be explained by the fact that the Registrar Civil Secretariat had under his charge 118 assistants and the P.W.D. Registrar only 33. Further, the responsibility of the former was greater and the burden of the office was heavier. Conventionally, the appointment of Civil Secretariat Registrarship was considered senior of the two.

The Registrar pay in the Assam Secretariat was 5.5% of the total expenditure on salaries of the establishment. In Bengal, there were two Registrars in charge of political and Finance respectively. The Registrar pay in political Department in Bengal constituted 4.5% percent and that of Finance 3.4% percent to the pay of the whole Establishment. In the Central Province the percentage of this to the total Establishment was 4%.

No fair arguments can be drawn from this percentage. The duties of Registrar in the Assam Secretariat were very heavy. He had to supervise the working of the whole Civil Secretariat and not that of one department.

It is relevant to note that the cost of living in Shillong was certainly greater than it was elsewhere.

52. Appointment at Political B. Sept. 1927 No. 381-384.
Since the Secretariat ministerial services were amalgamated in 1933 whenever a vacancy in the P.W.D. Registrarship occurred, the seniormost Head Assistant in the amalgamated Secretariat was appointed as the Registrar P.W.D. For example after the amalgamation in 1933, the seniormost Head Assistant of the General and Judicial Department was transferred from the Civil Secretariat and was promoted to the post of Registrar P.W.D. Secretariat which had a scale of Rs.400-20-500, while the Registrarship in the Civil Secretariat which was considered to be a senior one, carried a pay scale of Rs.400-30-520-40-600. When it fell vacant, the Registrar of the P.W.D. Secretariat was appointed to officiate as Registrar in the Civil Secretariat. This principle was recognised till the end of the office of Registrar in the post-independent period.

In the selection of Registrars, seniority principle was not always respected. The Governor Sir Michael Keane thought that certain cases required special consideration and should not be governed solely by the principle of seniority. Anath Bandhu Dutta was appointed Registrar in P.W.D. Secretariat superseding two of his immediate seniors in the amalgamated list of the Secretariat staff.

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53. Appointment B. January 1935 No. 293.