

REPORT  
OF  
THE COMMITTEE ON  
ARCHIVAL LEGISLATION

December 1960



NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI

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REPORT  
ON THE  
RIGHTS OF THE  
PEASANT

December 1960

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## INTRODUCTION

1. The Government of India appointed on 19 August, 1959 the Committee of the following members to advise the Government regarding the desirability or otherwise of making a law applicable to the archives in India, to enquire into the working of National and State Archives and to suggest means for improving their administration (*vide* Ministry of Education Resolution No. F. 6-13/59-A-10, dated 19th August 1959):

Dr. Tara Chand, Member, Rajya Sabha	Chairman	
Dr. Raghbir Singh, Member, Rajya Sabha	Member	
Dr. Bisheshwar Prasad, Professor of History, University of Delhi	Member	
Shri Mohibbul Hasan, Reader in History, Muslim University, Aligarh	Member	
Dr. P. M. Joshi, Director of Archives, Government of Bombay	Member	
Shri Fateh Singh, Representative, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India	Member	( <i>ex-officio</i> )
Shri R. S. Sarkar, Representative, Ministry of Law, Government of India	Member	( <i>ex-officio</i> )
Shri Nizamuddin Ahmed, Representative, Ministry of Education, Government of India	Member	( <i>ex-officio</i> )
Shri K. D. Bhargava, Director of Archives, Government of India	Member-Secretary	( <i>ex-officio</i> )

On 30 September 1959, Dr. S. Gopal, Director, Historical Division, Ministry of External Affairs, was appointed as an additional member of the Committee. Shri Nizamuddin Ahmed's place on the Committee was taken by Shri K. R. Ramachandran, Deputy Secretary, Ministry of Education, on 25 November 1959 and on the transfer of Shri K. D. Bhargava from the National Archives of India, Shri S. Roy, Officiating Director of Archives,

Government of India, was appointed Member-Secretary on 12 August 1960.

**Terms of Reference** 2. Under the terms of reference as given in the Resolution we were—

- (1) to examine (a) the condition of public records and the rules and instructions relating to the preservation, administration and maintenance thereof and public access thereto; (b) Dr. Raghbir Singh's "The Historical Records (of national importance) Bill, 1957" and the opinions received thereon; and (c) the Destruction of Records Act of 1917 and the Antiquities (Export Control) Act, 1947, and other Acts bearing on archival problems; and
- (2) to submit our recommendations on the following :
  - (i) how far in the interest of the proper preservation and administration of public records, it is desirable for the Government of India to exercise supervision over the State records or any part thereof, including the records of the former Princely States which are with various State Governments as a result of merger;
  - (ii) in order to exercise such supervision to consider what steps should be taken to declare the State records or parts thereof to be of national importance;
  - (iii) whether the executive authority in respect of the records which may be declared to be of national importance should be exercised directly by the Government of India or left with the State Governments;
  - (iv) the feasibility of transferring "ancient and historical records other than those declared by Parliament to be of national importance" from the State List to the Concurrent List of the 7th Schedule of the Constitution of India;
  - (v) whether it is desirable to have a statutory enactment for the management and disposal of the records of the Central Government and such other public bodies which have an all-India character;
  - (vi) to consider the desirability of a plan for establishing zonal repositories for such records as may be declared of national importance and/or the records of the Government of India's agencies in each zone;
  - (vii) what further measure, if any, can be taken for effectively preventing the destruction or disposal of manuscripts and records in private custody which are considered to be of national importance.

3. We held our first meeting on 29 August 1959 at the National Archives of India. At this meeting we discussed our terms of reference and the *modus operandi* for the Committee's work. We also prepared a detailed questionnaire for collecting the requisite information from State Governments in regard to their archives and chalked out our programme of visits to the States for holding discussions with States' representatives and eminent scholars interested in the preservation and use of archives. During the period of the Committee's term we met frequently to examine different aspects of administration of archives in India. Our last meeting was held on 26 November 1960 when we finally considered and approved the Report.

4. The tasks outlined in our terms of reference involved a **Scope of Enquiry** nationwide survey of records of every category, public as well as private, and a study and assessment of the problems affecting them in terms of their housing, administration, management and use. The magnitude of the labour involved becomes evident if we map out the scope of public records alone. Indian law offers no precise definition of 'public records', but it defines the very closely related term 'public documents' as comprehending "(1) all documents forming the acts or the records of the acts of (a) the Sovereign authority (b) official bodies and tribunals and (c) public officers, legislative, executive and judicial, and (2) all public records kept of private documents."<sup>1</sup> Though not quite suitable for 'records', the definition covers almost the same range of materials as that covered by Sir Hilary Jenkinson's classical and more scientific definition of 'public records', which, in his view, mean all documents, in whatever form, drawn up for the purpose of, or used in the conduct of affairs of any kind of which they themselves formed a part, and subsequently preserved by the public bodies responsible for the transactions in question or their successors in their own custody for their own reference. But in whatever way we may define the term the fact remains that it embraces a formidable range and variety of documents including the archival emanations not only from the Union, the State and local governments and the authorities and bodies subordinate to them, but also from the Central and State legislatures, the Supreme Court, the High Courts and Judicial bodies subordinate to the latter, and from all institutions, organisations, and undertakings set up, financed and/or administered by the Government of the Union or the Governments of the States.

<sup>1</sup>Indian Evidence Act, Section 74. 'Public officers' is defined in the Indian Code of Civil Procedure, Act V of 1908, Section 17.

5. If we, moreover, bear in mind that the Central Government alone have more than 500 record-creating agencies<sup>2</sup> it would immediately become clear that the review we were required to undertake, were it limited exclusively to the Union records, could not be completed within the scheduled time. But the terms of our reference relate not only to public records, but to all records of non-public character scattered all over the country, ranging from the accumulations in families to those in institutions, religious establishments, business firms, societies, political parties and a host of private and semi-public organisations which it will be difficult to enumerate.

6. The sheer bulk and variety of this formidable mass of records has ruled out our venturing on any detailed or extensive survey programme like the one undertaken, for instance, by the Royal Commission on Records in the United Kingdom in 1910, which, although the terms of its reference were restricted only to public records, took over a decade to complete its work. We have, therefore, of necessity restricted our survey to certain broad features of the principal problems affecting the different categories of records outlined above, devoting our most careful thought to the public archives pertaining to the Union as well as the States. The priority given to public records was necessitated not so much by the fact that information on them was comparatively easy to obtain as by the fact that they concerned the body politic most intimately, that their preservation formed the first duty of any civilized government and that this duty was not being adequately discharged in the country. Even so, we have been obliged to treat as outside our scope the records of the local governments, such, for instance, as those pertaining to Municipal, Local and District Boards. Not that we consider these records to be of no value, but that the short time at our disposal has debarred us from devoting to them the attention they most certainly deserved.

7. While dealing with public records of selected categories, we have directed our attention specially to the following points: The existing arrangement in respect of the different categories of records, current, semi-current or non-current lying with the creating bodies themselves; the prevailing practices relating to their control, servicing, disposal either by destruction or retirement to a public repository; the current procedures relating to the control, servicing, and public access to the records retired to public repositories; opportunities for, and the actual extent of, co-operation between the record repositories on the one hand, and the record-creating bodies on the other, under the existing arrangement; and

<sup>2</sup> The number is a very rough one. The exact figure is difficult to calculate in view of the fact that the number of subordinate offices including field offices has been rapidly increasing since Independence and is variable.

the extent to which the present system allows a co-ordinated control of public records at all stages of their life-span from their creation to final disposal.

8. We have interpreted our terms of reference so as to exclude the consideration of technical methods of preserving, renovating or duplicating records. We have, on the other hand, paid more attention to processes connected with their protection, management, and arrangement and the administrative problems involved in those processes. In suggesting possible solutions to the problems which we encountered, we have taken into account the varying circumstances existing in different record-creating bodies, and have endeavoured to ensure, as far as possible, that the changes recommended are administratively practicable. We have also carefully examined how far these changes could be carried out within the framework of the existing law or practice and how far it was necessary to make any radical alteration in them. We have given in this connexion most serious consideration to the various *modus operandi* enumerated in paras 2(i)–(vi) of our terms of reference.

9. Our efforts to collect the requisite information on public records were impeded by the fact that we could, owing to the shortage of time at our disposal, physically inspect only a very limited number of public muniment rooms. So far as the Union records were concerned we could inspect the record-rooms of no more than 13 Ministries, and we had to exclude from the scope of physical inspection the records of not only the rest of the Central Ministries, but all their attached and subordinate offices, whose number even if one left out of account the small local units like Post & Telegraph offices, Custom houses, Income-tax offices, Railway stations and workshops and the like, would easily exceed 500. We had equally to exclude from our inspection the records of the Supreme Court, the two houses of the Legislature, of the Planning Commission, of the Comptroller and Auditor General and all other Statutory Bodies constituted under Central auspices, let alone nationalised industries, undertakings and corporations.

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information  
on Records**

10. We sought to rectify this shortcoming by issuing to the Central Ministries a questionnaire soliciting information on their own holdings as well as those of the bodies subordinate to them. Although 11 out of 21 Ministries and only 253 subordinate agencies have replied to the questionnaire and although the answers furnished are defective in many respects, they yet afford us a rough idea as to the existing state of affairs in respect of

Union records in general. The very wide gaps in our information we were able to fill, though only to a limited extent, with the help of the returns received by the National Archives of India from the different record-creating bodies of the Union in response to an enquiry instituted by it between 1948 and 1952. We also had an opportunity of discussing some of the basic problems relating to the subject with the representatives of some of the Ministries like those of Home and External Affairs, Defence, Law and Finance.

11. In the States, our inspection was of necessity limited to the central repositories, which generally catered for the Secretariat records alone, and we had to exclude from our programme the holdings of authorities, offices, institutes outside the Secretariat, local as well as central. Three States which we had to leave out of our programme of inspection were Kerala, Jammu and Kashmir and Gujarat. Of these, Gujarat had not come into existence when the inspection was being carried out, and it has yet to have a central repository. But the very detailed answers we received from all the States in response to a questionnaire (see Appendix I) circulated by us have enabled us to fill many of the gaps in our information so far as the governmental records were concerned. We also endeavoured to supplement this information by personal discussions with the official representatives of the various State Governments. Particularly helpful in this connection were the talks we were enabled to have with the Law Secretaries of the different States, who furnished us with their views on the legal implications of any records administration programme that could be undertaken.

12. As regards private records we sought to elicit information through the questionnaire referred to in the preceding paragraph, as also by instituting enquiries *in situ* from the different repositories which collect such records, from official representatives of State Governments, and non-official scholars and public men interested in the subject.

13. In the course of our enquiries we had to visit 12 different States, our itinerary covering about 10,000 miles (see Appendix II). We have held 17 full meetings in New Delhi, and a number of Sub-Committee meetings and informal consultations. We have examined written returns from 11 Ministries and 253 subordinate agencies of the Union and 15 repositories outside the Union and recorded opinions of 13 Universities and 11 members of Indian Historical Records Commission representing the view point of users of records. We have also received oral evidence from 136 individuals including both official representatives in the States and

the Union and non-officials representing Universities, learned institutions, and the like or otherwise representing the users' interests. In general, we have not asked for any written evidence, but with a view to forming precise notion about the view-points of those having actual experience in administering the Union archives we made an exception in the cases of Dr. T. Raychaudhuri, a former Deputy Director of the National Archives of India, Shri R. C. Gupta, Assistant Director of Archives (Preservation), Shri A. I. Tirmizi, Assistant Director of Archives (Oriental Records), and Shri S. Roy, Deputy Director of Archives, all of whom were asked to submit written evidence. Of special help to us were the various notes on aspects of archival problems prepared by the National Archives of India in response to our demand as also the data collected on archival practices in foreign countries by Dr. Raghbir Singh.

14. We will like to express our thanks to all those who have **Acknowledgements** assisted us in the course of our enquiries. We are grateful in particular to the Chief Ministers and Education Ministers of the various States we visited, whom we were privileged to consult on the archival problems affecting their respective jurisdiction and who most generously made themselves available for discussion with us. Our thanks are also due to the officers of the National Archives of India whose help was available to us at every step, and to the Central and State Government officers, who have answered our questions and have given us their co-operation. We also wish to place on record our obligation to the two Member-Secretaries. The first, Shri K. D. Bhargava, was responsible for all the preliminary arrangements and for our visits to the States. When he was transferred, Shri S. Roy was appointed. He had to take over at a very short notice but he discharged his duties, especially in connection with the preparation of the report, with great assiduity and ability.

## II

# THE STATE OF PUBLIC RECORDS AND THE PROBLEMS RELATING TO THEM

## A. LAWS AFFECTING PUBLIC RECORDS

15. In paragraph 4 above we have indicated in a general manner the sense in which we are using the term public records for the purposes of this report. The existing arrangements in respect of these records, whether they pertain to the Union or to the States, are mostly the result of executive action or long standing usage and practice. Very rarely can they be attributed to any statutory obligation on the part of the public authorities concerned with them. It is no doubt true that the survival of the greater bulk of one entire category of public records, *viz.*, judicial and revenue, are due to the obligation imposed on the then supreme executive by Regulations XVIII and XXI of 1793, of "preserving complete the records" respectively "of the civil and criminal judicatures" and of collectorates and other revenue authorities, and to the total ban placed by the same Regulations on the removal, dispersal or disposal of the records except with the approval of the competent authority. But these enactments affected a relatively small part of the totality of public records in the country, and left entirely out of their scope, not only the archives of the highest tribunal in British India, but those of the Supreme as well as the Provincial Councils and all administrative bodies subordinate to them. Moreover, both the Regulations were repealed by Act XII of 1873 and since then the Indian Statute Book has practically ceased to have a law which places an obligation on any public authority in respect of its records.

### **Records Destruction Act, 1917**

16. Apparent exceptions are provided by several Central enactments which make it binding on certain public offices to keep and take care of documents lodged with them<sup>3</sup>. But even these statutes touch only a small fraction of the mass of records categorised as public, and say next to nothing about the manner or method in which they are to be administered or disposed of. The situation is kept practically unchanged by the Destruction of Records Act of 1917, which extends almost to all categories of public records. Besides empowering the High Courts and the Chief Revenue authorities in the States as well as the State Governments to dispose by destruction of any records deemed to be

<sup>3</sup>e.g., Registration of Societies Act (XX) of 1860, the Indian Registration Act (XVII) of 1908, The Provident Insurance Societies Act (V) of 1912, Indian Life Insurance Act (VI) of 1912 (both replaced by Act V of 1935), Indian Companies Act (VI) of 1912, The Indian Companies Act (VII) of 1913, (replaced by Companies Act I of 1956), The Official Trustees Act (VII) of 1913, Companies Act, 1856, The Administrator General's Act (II) of 1913.

of ephemeral value lying in their respective possession or custody, the Act also invests the Central Government with power of disposal in respect of any records which are statutorily outside the jurisdiction of the authorities mentioned above. The Statute does not affect in any way the power which, before its enactment, both the Central and the State Governments wielded and were exercising in respect of their own records by virtue of their executive authority. The Act furnishes only a statutory basis of this power so far as it relates to the disposal of Central or State Government records but does not oblige the authorities concerned to discharge any functions in this respect.

17. So far as the public obligation<sup>4</sup> in respect of public records is concerned the Indian Statute Book thus presents us with a complete blank. How far the records themselves have fared in the circumstances, what lacunae exist in the prevailing arrangement in this respect, and how they can be removed will be our duty to examine next.

### B. THE RECORDS OF THE UNION

18. To take first the records of the Union, only a very small portion of these records, consisting of the non-current (and, as in quite a few cases, semi-current) records of some 20 agencies of the Central Government have actually been placed in the National Archives of India. Yet these retired records already cover as many as 16 linear miles of shelf-space. The rest, which embraces, among others, the archival holdings of no less than 20 Ministries (relating, as a rule, to comparatively recent dates) and the accumulations of 500 or more subordinate record creating bodies are lying with the owning agencies themselves. The Departmental accumulations sometimes go back to a very early date. The records still in the custody of the Ministries of Works, Housing and Supply, Labour & Employment, Irrigation & Power, Steel, Mines and Fuel (Department of Mines and Fuel) and Defence, for example, range from 1873, 1871, 1869, 1867 and 1859 respectively. The records of the Geological Survey start from 1861, those of the Director-General, Posts & Telegraphs, from 1854 and those of the Reserve Bank from the early 19th Century. There may be others whose holdings can point to a still earlier date of start, and we

**Location  
and Physi-  
cal Condi-  
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<sup>4</sup> This obligation seems inferable from the value attached to public documents by the Indian Law of Evidence. Under this law all public documents are admissible in evidence without their having to be proved by the usual tests. But the mere fact that a document has been in a public office does not make it for the purpose of the law a 'public' document and that it must be proved that it was prepared by a public servant in discharge of his official duty. The last requirement would seem to make it almost obligatory that all public records should be kept either in the offices of their origin or in those of their legitimate successors. (Taylor: *Evidence* S. S. 1591-95: also the decisions in *Mahtabdin v. Kasar* 107 I.C.618; *Nittyanand (v) Abdur Raheem* 7.C.76). There is, however, no statutory provision corresponding to this requirement.

need not cite further examples. But those cited will suffice to indicate not only the variety but the very wide chronological range of the materials still retained by the creating agencies and to draw our attention to the unsystematic and haphazard manner in which the problem of their disposal is being tackled.

19. An enquiry instituted between 1948-52 under the aegis of the Indian Historical Records Commission into the condition of the unretired records brought to light a state of affairs grave enough to cause alarm as to the possibility of their future survival. Of the 232 agencies who furnished answers to this enquiry only 31 seemed to have separate rooms allotted for keeping their records, but none had a muniment room in the proper sense of the term. 158 kept their records in office rooms, 12 in the basements, and many in their godowns. 185 Departments had some kind of shelving arrangement, while the rest kept their records in packing boxes, closed cupboards or simply stacked on floor. As many as 55 Departments reported that their record-rooms were damp while only 92 claimed them to be damp-free. But as none appears to have kept any record of variation in the humidity in their record-rooms it is difficult to pay any credence to these claims. Only 77 Departments had a system of regular dusting, and 67 got their records cleaned at irregular intervals. As for the rest, they had no system of dusting whatever. Only 77 Departments had some kind of fire-fighting arrangements, while the rest had scarcely provided any safeguards against fire-hazards. As regards insectal or fungal attacks most of the Departments had provided no measures whatever for warding them off. Only 123 agencies had arrangement for keeping their files with protective covers, while only 72 thought it necessary that the bundles of files should be kept between wooden boards. In most of the Departments liasses (bundles) were made by just tying groups of files with strings. None of them had practically any arrangement for getting repaired their brittle records. None had any trained staff to look after the records, nor a full-time qualified custodian of a responsible status to administer them<sup>5</sup>.

20. Strictly speaking, this description is true of the period 1948-52. But as confirmed by more recent enquiries it is equally applicable to the conditions prevailing even now. Many things will have to be done if this unhappy state of affairs is to be eliminated, but the immediate requirement of these long-neglected departmental accumulations is retirement to a satisfactory repository which would afford them maximum protection.

<sup>5</sup>Statistical analysis of the replies to the questionnaire received in the National Archives of India regarding the archival assets etc., of the different administrative departments of the Government of India (1948-1952). For an earlier version of this analysis see *Proceedings of Indian Historical Records Commission*, XXVIII, Pt. I, 1951, pp. 38-46.

21. This primary need, as far as we can see, has not been met, in the great majority of cases owing to the rapid increase in the bulk of these records, which have already reached staggering dimensions. An enquiry recently conducted by this Committee reveals that the holdings of the Central Ministries alone cover more than 2,10,000 linear feet of space (about 40 miles). Similar figures for the subordinate creating agencies are not available; but the returns received in respect of 253 such agencies (or about half the number now existing) show the total accumulations as already covering 3,60,000 linear feet (approximately 68 miles). If we double the figure to take into account the accumulations in the remaining agencies, we shall require, even on a modest view, about 176 linear miles of shelving or a repository eleven times the size of the National Archives building (which has room for only 16 miles of shelves) to house the materials in the possession of the Central Departments alone. These estimates do not take into account the records to be retired annually by originating offices. The total annual rate of accruals in these offices, at a rough calculation recently made shows, is about 41,000 linear feet (or 8 miles), which means that the Government will need each year a new repository almost half the size as the present National Archives Building for the housing of its annual accruals. But as the Central Departments are multiplying each year leading inevitably to the growth of Central records almost in geometrical progression, any hope of the Centre ever being able to provide for the upkeep of all its records is likely to prove illusory. The papers compassing these formidable accumulations cannot all be equally useful either as a frame of reference to their originators or as instruments for research to their users. The grain should be separated from the chaff, important materials from the useless, in order not only to solve the problem of acute shortage of space, but to avert the danger we face of being literally buried under the ever-growing mass of 'original' authorities. It is also important to stress that the greater the volume of documents that are retained, the more intricate and more expensive in year to come will become the task of keeping them in good order. We are, therefore, forced to conclude that our first requirement is to find an effective method not only of selecting records for preservation but of controlling the growth of documents that are not required.

22. The present enormous growth in the bulk of records is no doubt due to the remarkable expansion that has recently taken place in the field of government business, but this may also be attributable to the present procedure of documentation and disposal.

23. The bearing of the documentation procedures on the problem of bulk will become at once evident if we direct our attention to the procedures which had been in use in different times

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in the Central Secretariat. All central holdings ante-dating 1859 consist of two broad classes of records : (1) letters to and from the Court of Directors and (2) papers created by or disposed of by the Supreme Council at Fort William. The latter constitute the proceedings ("Consultations") of the Council, the papers relating to each meeting being grouped together and numbered and arranged serially according to the order in which they were dealt with. The system did not permit intrusion among the proceedings of any paper which did not require consideration by the Council, or of any informal noting, or discussion and therefore exercised an effective check on possible over-production of records. Moreover, under the system each individual document was recorded separately. It could thus be treated as a single unit for the purposes of appraisal and the disposal of a document did not affect other documents dealing with the same topic.

### Canning's System

24. Topical grouping of documents was first introduced under Canning, but to prevent files becoming unwieldy in size it was also arranged that every file was to close by the end of the month in which it had been started. To check the mixing up of important papers with unimportant, the files were classified into three categories : those dealing with policy questions (designated A); those dealing with important cases other than policy questions (B); routine papers which did not require even to be formally recorded and could be weeded out automatically as soon as they had served their purpose. Each category of papers formed a distinct series, in which the files were separately numbered. The category to which a paper should belong was decided in advance, *i.e.* when the file was opened or in the making, thus simplifying to the maximum the task of the appraiser. No file was, moreover, to house the informal official notings or discussions on any subject, a rule which helped to keep under control the bulk of the records created. Even when after a decade or so these notings were allowed a right of entry into the records, steps were taken to ensure that the files were not cluttered with the writings of those who had no hand in the shaping of policies. But one reform of Canning which has proved embarrassing is that of enjoining the printing of all 'A' category files. The system, which still continues, has been responsible for the elimination of practically all original files of 'A' category dating from 1859 and for the continued retention of four or even more sets of the same files in print, while under the older arrangement only one set was required to be kept, *viz.* that containing original papers. It is, however, necessary to bear in mind some of the advantages of the system. It prevented intrusion of routine papers among records properly so-called, made possible automatic separation of

important records (A Proceedings) from the un-important (B), each of which from their very start constituted a distinct natural series, and thus rendered immensely easy the task of identifying and weeding out un-important papers. That very few trivial papers of the Canning period have survived is an eloquent testimony to the efficacy of the system.

25. In course of time Canning's system underwent a number of modifications. One of these was the discontinuance of monthly closing of files and keeping them open till the completion of the transaction to which they owed their origin. The procedure necessitated keeping unrecorded a large number of files for an unlimited period, often for years, thus making their identification, whether for purposes of disposal, or for reference, extremely difficult. It was easy for a file under such conditions to develope beyond its original subject, to attract papers which had not much relevance to it, and to grow, in consequence, not only unwieldy in size but amorphous in character. One undesirable consequence of this development was to complicate immensely the task of appraising a file for disposal. The disposal of files is usually carried out in accordance with departmentally compiled schedules indicating the specific topics, the files relating to which may be eliminated after they have ceased to be required in current administration. Such a procedure can work only as long as a file strictly keeps within the bounds fixed by the topics enumerated in the schedules. But it ceases to be of any use whenever a file transcends such limits. Such files, because of their amorphous character, defy being placed in any of the categories marked for destruction. While a reasonably small-sized file dealing with a single specific theme generally refuses entry to all irrelevant and unimportant papers, a composite and unwieldy file tends to collect papers of all kinds, with the result that it presents an almost insoluble problem at the time of review. As the unimportant papers accommodated in such files cannot physically be detached from those of real value buried under them, they have often to be retained for no other reason than their physical association with the latter.

26. These and other defects in the system were sought to be remedied by the adoption in 1923 of a more rational procedure of subject-filing, which required files to be opened in accordance with a list of pre-determined subject-headings, beyond the limits set by which, they were not expected to stray. This is the system at present in vogue, and is described in Chapter VII of the *Manual of Office Procedure*, brought out by the Cabinet Secretariat. It enjoins that each Section in a Ministry or a Department should maintain an approved list of main subjects ('standard heads') bearing consecutive serial numbers. As far as possible each

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'standard head' is to be allotted the same numerical symbol year after year. Additions are made to the list as and when a new subject arises (Section 85.1). It is obvious that the subjects included in the list should be identical with those with which the Section concerned is required normally to deal, and should thus represent different aspects of the main field of activity entrusted to the Section. Probably, it is also the intention of the *Manual* that the arrangement of the prescribed broad-subjects in a numerical sequence should follow a pre-conceived order of classification, though this intention does not appear to have been expressed in so many words. The procedure, if strictly followed, would render easy identification, by group, of all files under the same broad head and bearing, in consequence, the same numerical symbol. But in actual practice this is not always followed, and the files dealing with the same broad heads are often found distributed among several numerical symbols, not necessarily consecutive.

27. Under each standard head (main subject) the *Manual* permits the opening of as many individual files as may be required, each dealing with one or other aspect of the main subject concerned, and bearing a separate serial number (allotted to it, following the order of its opening) and also an alphabetical symbol, being the distinguishing mark of the originating Section. The procedure thus provides only for one level of break-down, *viz.*, the break-down of the main subjects into the actual themes which the individual files should deal with. It does not allow room for any intermediate levels of break-down between the prescribed broad subjects and the actual file themes under them, and as the latter are not predetermined and are not always well-defined from the start, they sometimes tend considerably to widen in their scope, leading to the creation of unwieldy files, so amorphous in character as to attract any paper, important or trivial, that may possess some' connection, however remote, with their original subject matter. Amorphous files, as we

<sup>6</sup>In Germany three levels of break-down are provided for in all bigger Offices *viz.*, Main Subject, Class, Sub-class, the theme of the individual file unit. British Foreign Office provides for an additional level represented by a geographical division.

Section 97 of the *Manual* requires that when a new file is opened it should be provided with an index slip indicating its *title*, which is to be shown on the slip as divided into three parts: (1) Head, by which is meant "the important word that is placed first in the title"; (2) Sub-head or sub-heads, by which are meant those words in the title which are "more indicative of the precise subject of the file than the 'head' "; and (3) 'content' which is 'to show at a glance.....the exact subject of the paper'. The Section, therefore, indicates how the title of a file should be articulated *after* it has been classified under the appropriate standard head, and its actual position among other files opened under the same head has been determined. It has little to do either with the actual classification of a file or with the fixing of its place among other files dealing with the same broad heads. When a file deals with a very broad subject the mere articulation of its title on an index slip, however, accurately done, will not succeed in exercising any control on its size.

have already seen, are difficult to identify or classify for the purposes of appraisal, and they often force the originating offices to retain a mass of trivial papers for no better reasons than their having been physically integrated with papers of real value. This tendency is discouraged in the following section of the *Manual*:

"There should be a separate file for each distinct subject. If the subject of a file is too wide or too general, there will be a tendency to place in it receipts dealing with different aspects of the matter which apart from making the file unwieldy will impede business." (Sec. 86).

In actual practice, however, this advice is often neglected, resulting in steady accumulation of composite files".

28. The situation has been further aggravated by the practice, which seems, rather common, of housing in the same file papers of real importance with matters of mere routine needed in the intermediate stage of the preparation of a case, which could otherwise have been weeded out as soon as they had served their purpose. This is again discouraged by Section 90 of the *Manual*, which is quite often disregarded in actual practice. But more objectionable from the point of the reviewer is the rather widespread habit of dealing in the same file with policy matters relating to a subject along with cases relating to their particular application, which is in apparent violation of Rule 86 in the *Manual*<sup>1</sup>. While the policy documents are always worth retention, the case documents usually are not. But when the two categories get mixed up there is hardly any means by which useless case papers can be weeded out without endangering in the process the life of the very important policy documents. The total outcome of all these is that public offices continue to be encumbered with a rapidly growing mass of trivial papers which cannot be weeded out because they are physically mixed up with documents of real value. The problem is one which needs careful examination and it requires to be decided whether it would not be advisable to

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procedures:  
Difficulties  
involved.**

<sup>1</sup>It is necessary for us, in this connection, to call attention to Section 109 (1) of the *Manual* which authorises 'amendment..... of the title of a file, where necessitated by the development of subject matter of the case since its start'. This, to our mind, appears rather ambiguous and may, unless suitably re-worded, encourage unauthorised expansion of the original subject matter of a file leading to further complications.

"Of the following instruction embodied in Section 86: "If the issues raised in a receipt or the notes or the orders passed thereon go beyond the original subject, relevant extract should be taken and dealt with separately in new files." This certainly implies that if an individual case gives rise to a question of policy that question should be dealt with in a separate file, and not in the file originating it. We, however, believe that this should be more clearly drafted so as to convey accurately the above meaning.

so adapt the present practice of filing papers as to make possible automatic separation of important papers from unimportant and their easy identification for the purposes of disposal<sup>10</sup>.

29. Under the present practice, marking out of important papers from the unimportant is attempted not at the time they are created or placed in files, but at the time the files housing them are closed. The *Manual* enjoins a review of all files immediately on their closing with a view to differentiating those worth permanent retention from those which are not. The criteria prescribed for retention are of a very broad nature. The files which embody important discussions, orders or rulings and which may be frequently required for reference are to be marked 'A' and to be preserved permanently. Those which are important but may not be required for frequent reference are to be marked 'B' and also to be kept permanently. Those "of secondary importance" whose life need not usually be extended beyond 10 years are to be marked 'C'. The files of the last category are to be kept only for a limited period, though their life may be further extended if on the expiry of the prescribed retention period they are found still to be useful. The line of demarcation between A & B as defined in the *Manual* (Section 106) is not, however, very clear, and since both categories are meant to be preserved the distinction, from the point of view of the reviewer, is not of much practical significance. It is, moreover, doubtful if the above categorisations of files as A, B and C necessarily ensures stripping the records in question of all their ephemeral components. Such stripping is possible only under an arrangement which makes obligatory separate recording, from policy materials, of routine and case documents while the file is still in the process of formation. Within the frame-work of the existing practice, under which a file can attract both important and trivial papers, such stripping is difficult to effect once a file has been closed.

30. The *Manual*, as we have seen, indicates only the broad criteria which should be followed in assessing the papers at the time of their closing, but does not, for obvious reasons, specify the types to which a record should conform in order to be identified, as either A or B or C for the purposes of review. These

<sup>10</sup>It will be interesting to quote here the opinion of Dr. T. R. Schellenberg, the leading American authority on filing procedures. "Records on important procedural programmes or organisations are.....often submerged in file units relating chiefly to other matters of little importance. This intermingling of important with unimportant makes records less useful to the government administrator for his current work and greatly complicates the work of the archivist at a later stage in his attempts to preserve the basic documentation of organisation and function. Separate file units should, therefore, be established for records that relate to important policies, opinions, decisions, and the like. Policy matters should be in a word be separated from the operational, the general from the specific, important from the routine". (*Modern Archives*, p. 58).

details are, quite reasonably, left to be worked out by the individual Department in view of their varying circumstances<sup>11</sup>. In practice, therefore, the Departments try to carry out the review of their files in accordance with schedules compiled by themselves of the categories requiring to be retained or weeded out. These categories are generally established by certain broad subject headings, which do not always correspond with the actual file classification system of the Department. One Departmental schedule, for instance, specifies the following as categories needing preservation : "orders sanctioning permanent establishment", orders and sanctions of permanent nature; "resolutions and circulars of government". It is very obvious that there can hardly be any actual file class answering any of the above descriptions. Such orders or resolutions are never filed singly to enable their isolation from connected papers for the purposes of preservation. Mention may also be made in this connection of categories specified in the Departmental schedules of preservable historical documents. These include among others : "Holograph and autograph letters and originals of the notes of the former members of Viceroy's Executive Council, the President, the Prime Minister, the Commander-in-Chief and other eminent personages on important matters." Here again the schedule fails to take note of the fact that the unit for the purposes of appraisal is a file and not an individual document. Since none of the autograph writings mentioned above are filed separately it is difficult, if not altogether impossible, to locate them at the time of review. All these help to make the task of appraisal one of extreme complexity.

31. The trouble, however, does not end with the completion of the initial review described above. All files have to be subjected to a second review as soon as they reach the retention limit fixed for them at the earlier review. So far as 'C' files are concerned they may be retained "for a further period" in case they appear still to be of use (Section 114.1), which means that they will need yet another review on the expiry of the period fixed. This practically obliges each Department to subject all their potentially useful 'C' papers to what may be described as a system of perpetual reviewing. Even 'A' & 'B' files do not escape this process of reviewing, for the *Manual* very clearly says (Section 114.2) "Files classified as A & B should be reviewed every ten years and their classification revised if necessary". This implies that a file originally marked as 'A' may be later categorised either as 'B' or 'C', and a file originally identified as 'B' may be re-classed either as 'C' or 'A'. The reviewing process under such a practice is bound to become an extremely complicated affair.

<sup>11</sup>Section 115(III): "To ensure that files are not pre-maturely destroyed nor kept for longer periods than necessary, every Ministry should issue detailed departmental office orders prescribing periods for which files treating of specified subjects should be preserved."

32. We have also to consider in this connection the magnitude of the labour involved in sorting out the different categories of papers every time they are ripe for re-appraisal. Although files obtain their categorisation at the initial review, they are not, for quite justified reasons, physically separated from each other. Files, in a section as we have seen, are created and arranged in a single numerical sequence, irrespective of the categories in which they may be placed subsequent to their closing. Thus, even after they have been categorised they continue to constitute a single natural series and cannot be physically detached from each other without disturbing their natural order. They have, therefore, to be maintained in one consolidated series and have to be re-sifted piece by piece whenever their reappraisal becomes due. We have seen that 'A' & 'B' files require to be reviewed every ten years. Each year, therefore, the reviewer is required to sort out not only all 'A' & 'B' files 10 years old but all those which may be found to be 20 years old, 30 years old, 40 years old, 50 years old or even older<sup>12</sup>. The complexity involved in the task may be imagined when it is remembered that there is no means to anticipate in advance which files in a bundle may turn out to be 'A' or 'B' or which as 'C'. The reviewer, under the circumstances, has to examine individually the dockets of almost all the papers relating to the years concerned.

33. The task is bound to be even more intricate in the case of 'C' papers which are accorded different retention periods at the time of initial review. According to the *Manual* the retention limits of these files should be fixed as three, five or ten years. In actual practice, the range of variation tends to become much wider. This is particularly the case with Departments outside the Central Secretariat. In the offices under the Comptroller and Auditor General, for instance, the maximum limit of retention prescribed in several cases extends to 35 years. The practice may have originated from the varying circumstances prevailing in the Departments, but we should not forget that such variations impose on the reviewing staff the gigantic task of having annually to appraise an almost unending series of papers of widely differing dates, their actual range varying with the range of the retention limits accorded to them. When, for instance, the retention limits prescribed for a particular record group extend from 3 to 35 years, the appraisable papers which a reviewer is called upon to examine any year will include all

<sup>12</sup>In 1960, for instance, a reviewer is required to examine files of 1950, 1940, 1930, 1920, 1910, 1900, 1890, 1880, 1870, 1860, 1850, 1840, 1830, 1820, 1810, 1800 and so on. In 1961, similarly, his task will be to review all files of 1951, 1941, 1931, 1921, 1911, 1901, 1891, 1881, 1871, 1861, 1851, 1841, 1831, 1821, 1811, 1801 and so on.

files in the given record group whose age may range from 3 to 35 years *i.e.*, an enormous mass of records covering a 32 year period.

34. We are, therefore, forced to the conclusion that the narrower the range of the retention periods that may be fixed for a record group, the smaller is likely to be the number of papers that may mature for review in a particular year and the lighter and simpler is likely to become the task of annual reviewing. If, for instance, a Department would arrange to have only two retention periods for all files created by it, namely 5 and 25 years, it will considerably simplify and reduce the task of annual reviewing. It will in that case have to examine in any year only papers relating to two years, *viz.*, those which are 5 years and 25 years old. Under such a procedure, moreover, all files in a Department which may be required to be kept beyond five years will need only two reviews, one when it reaches its fifth year and the other when it becomes 25 years old. English public offices have simplified the problem of record disposal beyond expectation by adopting an analogous procedure of two-stage review. It needs to be carefully examined whether, in view of the enormous labour which the prevailing processes involve and the complexities they often give rise to, it will not be advisable to try to assimilate these processes to the two-stage review outlined above with such modifications as the particular circumstances of our public offices may justify. How such a procedure will actually work we propose to explain in a subsequent paragraph.

35. We have so far been looking at the problem strictly from the point of view of the administrator, but since most records acquire with passage of time values other than purely administrative—values, for instance, to the historian, the genealogist or researchers in other fields, it is necessary to examine how far the present reviewing practices adequately safeguard the interests of research. It is no doubt true that an administrative department is primarily concerned only with such records as may serve its own administrative purposes. But in view of the growing public interest in records as historical material, governments in almost all civilized countries have been devoting greater and greater attention to the potential research value of all public records under their control. In India, the importance of records as materials for history was first officially recognized in 1862 when, following a recommendation from the Record Committee, Government of India agreed to preserve administratively inactive records in the interest of research. But it was only in 1913 that the need was for the first time felt for framing a set of record-disposal rules emphasising the importance of the use of a

**Desirability  
of two stage  
review**

**Historical  
Criterion in  
Appraisal  
Work**

historical criterion in selecting records for retention. The need for the application of that criterion received further emphasis in the rules proposed by the Indian Historical Records Commission in 1944, which led to a revision of the 1913 rules. The Section (108) in the present *Manual* dealing with the question is based more or less on the above revised rules. That section very rightly stresses that :

"Care should be taken to see that the files containing papers which are important, however, indirectly, as sources of information on any aspect of history, whether political, military, social, economical etc., or which are, or may in future prove to be of biographical or antiquarian interest are not to be destroyed."

36. There cannot be two opinions on the appropriateness of the instructions. But the question to which we have to find an answer is how and by whom the instructions are to be carried out. One possible way is to assess the potential historical value of the files at the time of their initial classification as 'A' 'B' or 'C', *i.e.*, at the time of their closing. But this is not without its difficulties. In the first place, the initial classification being a gigantic task has inevitably to be entrusted to junior officers (Section Officers) in the Department<sup>15</sup>, who having no actual experience of research, have no conceivable means to forecast with certainty what papers the future historian, economist or socio-logical researcher, as the case may be, is likely to consider important. Historical research, moreover, is in no way related to the normal work of a record-creating Department, and it is possibly not fair that the departmental officers concerned should be required to take decisions on a matter which, on any view, is clearly outside their normal experience. Furthermore, the time of closing a file is not the stage at which it is possible for any person, however knowledgeable or qualified, to determine authoritatively which among the papers housed therein are going to acquire historical importance at a future date. The perspective needed for arriving at such a judgment can be obtained only after sufficient time has elapsed.

37. What is possible to assess at the time of the initial review, therefore, is the administrative value of the files undergoing appraisal, and the right persons to conduct this review are those who may have the requisite administrative experience. If at the time of the review the question to be answered by the reviewing

<sup>15</sup> *Manual* (Section 106): 'when the Assistant is satisfied that no further action is required to be taken on a file, he will put it up to the Section Officer for his approval to (sic) the file being recorded under one of the following classes (*i.e.*, A, B or C)'.

officer is put in the form : "is this paper likely to be of historical importance, or to be useful for economic, sociological or genealogical research?", it may not be possible for him to see the basis on which he should provide the answer. If on the other hand, the question is put, indirectly, in the form : "is the Department likely to require this paper any longer for its own *Departmental purposes?*", it becomes immediately intelligible to him in terms of the experience gained by him in the course of his normal work. The two forms of the question will, in our view, practically become synonymous if the meaning of the word 'Departmental purposes' is not kept confined simply to the question specifically dealt with in the file, but is so extended as to include the possibility of the file being needed as a precedent or as a guide to possible action, should a similar set of circumstances arise in future. A correct answer provided to the question, in that case, will ensure that a paper is not destroyed merely because the activities with which it dealt have ceased. We also believe that the initial review if conducted on this basis will, in practice, guarantee the survival of almost all Departmental papers which an historian, may wish to see preserved. The task of initial reviewing, however, cannot in our view be entrusted either to an historian or an archivist as neither of them has the Departmental experience needed for the assessment of paper from the purely administrative point of view.

38. It is, therefore, difficult to resist the conclusion that if the use of the historical criterion is to produce any satisfactory results it should be applied not at the time of the initial reviewing of the Departmental files, but after they have become sufficiently mature to bring about the perspective necessary for assessing their historical significance. At what stage of its life span a file should be regarded as so mature is a question on which there is likely to be divergent opinions. We are, however, inclined to the view that the purpose we have in mind will be roughly met if the stage is fixed at a point when a file is at least 25 years old. 25 years is usually reckoned as the normal length of an entire generation, and in our view a transaction or an event must be at least a generation old to become capable of being studied in its correct perspective. The same considerations ought to be valid also for transactions recorded in public files. The period needed by a file to attain the requisite maturity should thus on no account be reckoned as less than 25 years.

39. This brings us back to the two stage review, already outlined by us, of all files other than those which can be initially detected as ephemeral and can, in consequence, be eliminated

Desiderata  
for  
Reviewing  
Procedure

forthwith<sup>14</sup>. It will be necessary to bear in mind several points if we have to operate successfully the two-stage review mentioned above :

(a) The First (or initial) Review of a file should not be normally deferred to a date far removed from its actual closing. This should, in fact, be conducted before the meaning of the transactions of which the files in question are the tangible evidence has completely faded from memory. In our view, five years should normally be regarded as the maximum interval which may be allowed between the recording of a file and its appraisal from the administrative point of view.

(b) For the same reason, efforts should be made to close all files after a specified period (say, a year). In case the transaction dealt with in a file has not been completed within the specified period all succeeding papers relating to the transaction should be placed and dealt with in a new file opened on the same subject and bearing the same reference number. Only by this means can it be ensured that the First Review of a file is not unduly delayed, and taken up at a stage when the significance of the transaction embodied in it has been completely forgotten.

(c) The files which can be identified at their very start as policy records, meant for permanent preservation, should not normally figure in the First Review. The review should, as far as possible, be restricted only to those records which<sup>15</sup>, although they cannot be identified as of permanent value either at the time of their creation or at the time of their closing, may yet be needed even after they have passed out of current use.

(d) The filing practice of each Department should be so adapted as to ensure that (i) a file's contents are adequately described by its title, (ii) that no file is used to house papers on a subject other than it was originally intended to deal with, (iii) that files dealing with policy decisions are not cluttered with papers relating to the particular application of those decisions, and (iv) that on no account matters of mere routine are allowed entry into a regular file of any category whatever. The desiderata outlined above are already stressed in one form or another in the *Manual of Office Procedure* (vide Sections 85-86, 90, 106). Since, however, they form the foundation on which a practicable

<sup>14</sup>e.g., the files which according to the *Manual* (Section 107) are not to be brought on record and can be destroyed as soon as they are one year old; and routine papers, notes and correspondence intended to elucidate minor matters of details, which according to Section 90 are not to be integrated with the appropriate main file and should be destroyed as soon as they have outlived their use.

<sup>15</sup>The class of papers indicated would roughly correspond to what is now known as 'C' files.

reviewing procedure can be built up, we have found it necessary to lay particular stress on them. If strictly followed, they will make possible the defining of the narrowest possible range within which a file or a group of files can be opened, and will thereby prevent the growth of unwieldy files attracting papers on a wide multiplicity of topics. Moreover, by enabling automatic isolation of important papers from mere routine it will considerably lighten the task of the reviewer, the greater part of whose time is unnecessarily taken up with mere sorting out of papers requiring examination.

(e) While conducting the review, steps should be taken, if possible, for the use of a schedule showing in detail the specific categories of files which are capable of examination by classes and need not be reviewed individually (See *Manual*, Sec. 116. iii). To be of real use such a schedule should strictly correspond to the system of classification to which the files to be reviewed owe their origin, and should on no account include artificial or imaginary classes into which it will be difficult to place a file. The files which elude such a classification will have, of course, to be assessed individually. But the number of such files will be greatly reduced if careful thought is given both to the classification of files while they are in making, and on the preparation of schedules for the purpose of review.

(f) The prevailing practice of destroying the originals of files that have been printed should cease<sup>16</sup>. It is usual to edit out of printed copies any document or writing which although it may have formed integral part of an important transaction, is believed to have outlived its usefulness, in consequence of the transaction having been completed<sup>17</sup>. Such printed files fail to present complete documentation of the transactions they are required to embody. A printed file, moreover, is no substitute for its original and it is the original which should, in our view, be maintained as permanent record of Government.

(g) All files surviving the First Review should be retained till they reach their twenty-fifth year, and the practice of according to them varying retention periods should, for the reasons already explained (paras 32-34 above), discontinue. This would necessitate their being subjected to a Second Review on their attaining maturity. The necessity for such a re-appraisal follows from the fact that while the First Review makes possible early

<sup>16</sup>It is true that the *Manual* does not enjoin the destruction of original records, but neither does it positively prohibit their destruction. There is thus every likelihood of the omission being interpreted to mean that it is only printed copies which are intended to be kept as permanent record. To this omission in office rules is attributable the elimination of nearly all original files dating back to 1859.

<sup>17</sup>*Notes on Office Procedure* (Government of India, Secretariat Training School, Ministry of Home Affairs), Chapter VIII: Editing of files, pp. 123-30.

elimination of all ephemeral papers, which constitute the greater bulk of the annual accumulation of operational files, and the retention of all papers likely to be of historical value, it cannot ensure that all surviving papers are necessarily of historical importance. The latter requirement can be met only if the surviving files are appraised anew after they have reached a certain stage of maturity. We have already explained why we think that no file can be regarded as having attained this stage before reaching its twenty-fifth year (para 38 above). It is only at this stage that the historical criterion, the importance of which has been very rightly emphasised in the *Manual*, can be applied to a paper with reasonable chance of success. But while the First Review, which, as we have seen, can be conducted purely from the administrative point of view, is to be entrusted to the creating Department concerned, the Second Review will require a collaboration between the latter and the National Archives of India. The Archivists are the persons most in contact with research workers, and their knowledge of what the latter wish to consult can be of great use in exercising the historical criterion. Because of the greatly reduced bulk of the surviving papers and the perspective brought about by the passage of time, we have every hope that a collaboration between Archivists and Departmental Officers will make it comparatively easy to apply the historical criterion to the papers at the Second Review. Any paper which is deemed unworthy of retention at this review may safely be eliminated, while those surviving the review may be marked as fit for permanent retention in the National Archives of India.

(h) If the purpose of the proposed two-stage appraisal is to be fulfilled it will further be necessary to allot the task of deciding what papers are to be retained at both the stages to more senior and experienced staff than is perhaps possible under the existing arrangement. We note that the Weeding Sub-Committee of the Local Records Sub-Committee, which very recently examined the entire disposal question, has recommended the assigning of the task to specially qualified Departmental Record Officers to be appointed for the purpose by each record-creating Department; and we heartily endorse the proposal. We would further recommend that the Officer should be responsible, under the Departmental head concerned, for the general care of all Departmental papers from the time when they are created or received in office till they are disposed of either by destruction or by retirement to the National Archives. It is he who should also be made responsible for deciding, in consultation with the appropriate administrative staff, which papers it was necessary for the Department to retain further 'for its own

Departmental purposes' at the time of the First Review. On him would equally rest the responsibility of collaborating with the National Archives in finally selecting papers for retirement when they become mature for the proposed Second Review. The need for the proposed concentration in the same hands of the onerous tasks of both handling a Department's current and semi-current papers and conducting their review necessarily follows from the fact that arrangements made by a Department for handling its active papers are as much a part of the process of public administration as the selection of documents for preservation. We refrain from making any specific recommendations as to what place he should occupy in the Departmental Office structures; but his status would need to be higher than at present given to Section Officers, and we would urge on all Departments the importance of appointing a capable and trained official to the post.

40. The proposed arrangement should not necessitate a big **Economy** increase in expenditure. The extra cost which it may entail will be much less than the amount which the Departments will be obliged to spend in future years, on staff, accommodation, and preservative materials, if the present rate of archival accumulation is not effectively controlled. That the arrangements we are proposing will effect substantial economy in many ways will be clear from the following facts. It will, in the first place, obviate the necessity felt at present for fixing separate retention periods for each individual file at the time it is closed and will release the staff engaged on this task for more important Departmental work. It will equally obviate the necessity of perpetually reviewing 'A' and 'B' files which are now required to be appraised every 10 years (*Manual*: Section 114, ii). The reason of this is that the initial classification of files which we are advocating, and which forms the basis of the arrangement proposed, provides for the automatic separation, at their very start, of policy (important) files from those relating to mere cases, virtually making redundant their reclassification for the same purpose at the time of recording. Since, moreover, all files, barring those which can easily be identified as policy files, are due for review on the expiry of five years, the greater bulk of the ephemeral papers occurring among them are normally expected to be weeded out at the time of the First Review. The reduced bulk of the surviving papers is bound to lighten considerably the task of appraisal at the time of the Second Review. This will not only simplify reviewing procedures but will effect real economy in the time now being spent on the task of the reviewer. We note that the two stage review we have in view has also been strongly recommended by the Weeding Sub-Committee already referred to. We are definitely of the opinion

that it will be worthwhile to try the procedure suggested in the interest not only of administration and the research scholars but of economy in money, space and time.

**Appraisal  
of Records  
already in  
existence**

41. The reforms suggested will be readily applicable to all Departmental files still in currency or to be opened in future and, with slight adjustment, also to all closed files which owe their existence to a system of subject-classification (*i.e.*, practically all files dating from 1923). The adjustment proposed will consist in the careful revision of all existing destruction and retention schedules, on the basis of the file-classification systems in use, and the use of these revised schedules at the time of the First Review proposed. Care should be taken in the course of the review to see that not more than one printed copy of a file is retained of which the original has survived in complete form and that only two printed copies are retained where originals are non-existent. The same procedure should apply to the records relating to the period 1901-1922 subject to the proviso that no collection included in this class need to be re-appraised which has already been subjected to the weeding operation.

42. The records before 1900 stand on an altogether different footing. They relate to a time when the administrative agencies were much less active in record-production than in the present century, and the proportion of ephemeral papers in them is likely to be comparatively small. Moreover, within this group, the records ante-dating 1859 deserve special treatment in as much as the greater bulk of them constitute the proceedings of the Supreme Council and contain little that may now be regarded as useless. Even a routine paper like a voucher or a bill coming down from this period may, by virtue of its uniqueness, have greater importance than a paper of the same type belonging, for instance, to the twentieth century, of which it is easy to find almost boundless examples. It would, therefore, be safe to accept it as a rule that no record which is of an earlier date than 1860 should on any account be destroyed. With regard to the records beyond 1860 and prior to 1900 the review proposed should be restricted only to those collections which have never been appraised so far, and should always be conducted in collaboration with the National Archives of India. The procedure suggested is not likely to create any complication as the bulk of the records of this description still with the creating bodies cannot be very great<sup>18</sup>. As in the

<sup>18</sup>The greater bulk of the ministerial records relating to the period are already in the National Archives. Some collections included in them, particularly those acquired in a completely unexpurgated state, on the transfer of power, from the Crown Representative's offices and the defunct agencies under them as also from the Ministry of External Affairs, amply deserve to be appraised.

case of post-1900 records only one printed file should be preserved of which the original is available. No document, moreover, is to be destroyed except in consultation with the National Archives of India.

43. The review procedures outlined above take note only of Departmental files or proceedings. It is necessary for our purpose to take into account also those papers which fall outside the category of files. Some outstanding categories of these are given below :

(a) Unregistered papers such as forms, registers, diaries, ledgers, etc. of which a seemingly unending variety is in use in almost every Department and continue to occupy a considerable portion of the space reserved for official papers. The Secretariat *Manual* (Sec. 115) lists some six varieties, but there seem to be many more in use in offices outside the Secretariat. The Accountant General, Central Revenues, alone has no less than 286 varieties of documents of this type.

(b) Personal papers like service records and other kinds of information about persons or families kept in forms, e.g., census and income-tax returns.

(c) Standard types of papers giving information about business concerns, firms and the like (e.g., those with the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Ministry of Finance etc.) or merely statistical information.

Information is lacking on the precise nature or extent of any of these categories, and while it is conceivable that the greater bulk of these can safely be weeded out, the possibility cannot be totally ruled out of their containing some material (however small in volume) which may be of use to the future researcher. We, therefore, consider it desirable that a survey should be undertaken with a view to determining the criteria in accordance with which these records should be periodically disposed of.

44. The necessary complement of the disposal procedure, we have advocated above, is a sound record-management programme that will take care of all preservable records from the time of their birth till their final retirement. The first pre-requisite of such a programme is that the papers in a Department should be brought on record in such a way that they accurately reflect not only the organization and functions of that Department but the complete history of its activities, and also render possible their prompt

Records  
other than  
files

The pro-  
blem of  
Manage-  
ment :  
Records in  
Currency

identification<sup>19</sup>. This requirement can hardly be met under the existing practice of filing which, as we have seen, is based on a list of subject-headings, numbered serially without any predetermined order of classification. While the broad subject-heads, which are pre-determined, have usually some fixed numerical symbols tied to them, the symbols attached to the sub-divisions within the subject-heads, which are flexible, tend to vary. The result is that the same numerical symbols have different meanings not only for different Ministries or different sections within the same Ministry, but for the same section for different years. The file-numbers are of little help in ensuring the expected physical grouping of the files dealing with related subjects or even aspects of the same subject. They tend to drift apart and often travel so far away from each other as to render almost impossible any study of the complete history of the transactions they reflect. Moreover, as we have seen, the practice leads to mingling up of important papers with routine and enclosing in the same file papers dealing with a wide variety of topics. No file-register can under this arrangement be of much use either in identifying or tracing a document.

45. The lacunae are often sought to be remedied by annual indexes. (*Manual*, Ch. III). But indexes in very few Departments are quite up to date<sup>20</sup>. Since, moreover, the files created according to the prevailing method do not admit of proper indexing, the indexes compiled in the circumstances often fail to serve as satisfactory keys to the information needed by a user. A recent official enquiry has revealed that transactions have often to be conducted without reference to their past history because papers embodying that history are not easy to trace<sup>21</sup>. This shows the inadequacy of the existing arrangement.

46. We have already stressed in para 26 above the need for adopting the present practice in such a manner that the subject headings as well as the different sub-divisions within them are

<sup>19</sup>The administrative need for prompt and easy access to the full history of an official transaction has been very lucidly explained in two authoritative reports on the subject of machinery of administration—(1) Memoranda and Conclusions by the Taft Commission on Economy and Efficiency (of the United States Federal Administration) 1912, and (2) Report of the Machinery of Government Committee presided over by Viscount Haldane, 1918. We have nothing, in fact, to add to the conclusions embodied in these reports.

<sup>20</sup>An enquiry made between 1948-52 showed that only 44 out of 232 public agencies which furnished answers to it had any kind of indexes to their records. The rest had none.

<sup>21</sup>One view is that since the character of Government business has of late altered considerably past precedents are no longer needed in understanding present problems. But this view is not borne out by the volume of requisitions for files which the National Archives of India receives each year from the Central Ministries alone. The requisition figures for past five years are: 20,765 (1955), 38,692 (1956), 29,154 (1957), 24,750 (1958), 25,503 (1959).

grouped together strictly on the basis of their logical relation to each other. It needs to be explained that closely corresponding to the arrangement of subjects in the scheme there should also be a scheme of numerical symbols under which each symbol is to be permanently tied to the subject it represents. This would not only enable a file to get automatically numbered as soon as the theme on which it is to be opened has been decided on, but will ensure exclusion from the file matters alien to its theme. Moreover, as the files in a Department are to be arranged according to their number, and the numbers are to correspond strictly to the arrangement in the proposed scheme of the subjects they symbolise, the files will, if the scheme is strictly followed, get automatically arranged in an order which will be the exact reflection of the organic relation in which the topics they deal with stand. Given a subject it will normally be possible to know the appropriate numerical symbol and given a number it will be equally possible to know the exact scope of the file it symbolises and its precise location in the series. The file registers, under the reform proposed, would serve as an efficient key to the records figuring in them and the logical arrangement of subjects which the reform presupposes will make indexing a much simpler proposition. The measures described above, we may add, do not involve any departure from what is laid down in the *Manual of Office Procedure* (Sections 85-86, 90, 106). What we have endeavoured to do here is to spell out some of the procedures outlined therein as also to place special emphasis on others. Similar suggestions, we note, have been made by the Weeding Sub-Committee in its Report dated 15 January and 10 February 1958.

47. A further pre-requisite of a sound record management policy is that the arrangement of the files in a Department should strictly follow the order dictated by the classification scheme to which they owe their origin. On no account should an attempt be made at any reclassification, renumbering or retitling of any file in violation of this 'original' order. There can be noticed a general tendency to divide, disperse, reclassify or even renumber records, following every reorganisation or redistribution of the functions of a record-creating body. This tendency has in the past inevitably led to the dismemberment of many record-series and often to the total disappearance of valuable records or record-groups. It is important to stress here that any alteration in original order of files whether dictated by administrative changes or by a simple desire to be logical can end only by rendering totally useless the existing index registers and other reference aids and making almost impossible the location of the documents wanted or any study that may be attempted of the complete history of the transactions they reflect. The only advisable course would be to

ensure that whenever any inter-Departmental or inter-sectional redistribution of functions takes place, only the incomplete files relating to the functions transferred to a unit should move to that unit to be integrated with the new files to be opened on the subject by the latter. Files already closed should not be affected by the change, and should continue to remain as part of the records of the parent unit. If any of them are needed by the unit concerned they can be transferred as on loan, subject to the condition they return to the parent collection as soon as they have served their purpose. By the same count any change introduced in the file classification system of a Department should affect only the records post-dating that change. The reform should in no circumstances be forced on any file already closed<sup>22</sup>.

**Records  
Semi-curr-  
ent and  
Non-curr-  
rent**

48. An essential feature of an efficient record-management programme is a well-planned system of administering the records which have passed out of currency. Under the existing arrangement (*Manual*, p. 40, Sec. 111 & 112) all closed files are required to be retained by the creating units (Sections) for three years and thereafter they are to be kept in the Departmental Record Rooms for five more years, at the end of which they are to be retired to National Archives repository. As, however, very few Departments have properly planned record rooms of their own the sections are obliged to retain with them a mass of records exceeding the three years limit. A recent official enquiry showed that the present accumulations in the Secretariat office rooms constitute about 50 per cent of the records actually housed in the temporary resting places allotted for them mostly in the Secretariat basements. The eight year limit fixed for the retirement of records to the National Archives is scarcely adhered to in actual practice. As we have noticed, the papers accumulated in the Secretariat Offices alone already cover about 40 linear miles of space. The gap between the rule and the practice is wide enough to justify radical rethinking, and if the disposal procedure outlined by us is to be tried the present system will require a thorough revision.

<sup>22</sup>The procedures outlined above follow as logical corollaries from the principle which in archival parlance is variously known as *respect des fonds* or *provenienz-prinzip* (principle of provenance). The first enjoins that all records originating with an administrative authority are to be kept together in Groups (Fonds) whose integrity should on no account be violated. The principle has been given official sanction in France by the circular from the Ministry of Interior issued on April 24, 1840 and the regulations (Lois) issued by the Ministry of Public Instruction and Fine Arts in 1884. The principle of provenance, which first received official recognition in the Prussian Regulation of July 1, 1881, similarly requires that the main divisions within the State records should be formed by arranging separately the records originating from the different administrative units. The principle figures prominently in the archival laws of almost every progressive country (Regulation of 10 July 1897 of the Dutch Ministry of Interior, Swedish Royal Order, May 22, 1903, etc.).

49. We have suggested in para 39(a) above that five years should be regarded as the maximum length of time up to which files can be kept in a Department unreviewed and that all files should be subjected to the proposed First Review on or before the fifth year of their existence. The date on which the files in a Section become mature for the review is in our opinion the date most convenient for their transfer to the appropriate Departmental Record Room. The changed procedure will ensure the regular transfer of records from the appropriate Sections only after they had been stripped of the greater bulk of their ephemeral components, and will help to relieve substantially the prevailing congestion in storage space.

50. The records surviving the First Review should be regarded as having passed from the stage of currency to that of semi-currency. It is a stage in which records are less frequently required in administration. The stage continues till they become mature for their retirement to their permanent home in the appropriate repository. We have shown in para 39(g) why we feel that no record should be deemed fit for retirement till it has reached its twenty-fifth year and has survived the final review to which it is to be subjected at that stage. An exception should in our view be made in respect of the records of such agencies, organisations or bodies which may become defunct without their functions being inherited by a successor body. These records should be regarded as fit for retirement as soon as the bodies originating them have ceased to function, since there is not likely to be any successor body to take care of them.

51. The eight year limit prescribed in the *Manual* is in our **Intermediate Repositories** interview too short for the purpose, as it can never bring about the perspective necessary for the correct selection of a document for permanent retention. The records still to reach this age of maturity (intermediate records) are, as we have seen, being indifferently kept mostly in office-rooms and rarely in rooms exclusively allotted to them. It seems essential that all records in the intermediate stage should remain under the control of the creating Departments themselves and placed in properly maintained repositories conforming to scientific requirements. One possible alternative is to organise such repositories as in the United States of America on the basis of sole occupancy by the Federal Records Service. The other and more economical way would be to follow the model in the United Kingdom and set up repositories on the basis of joint-occupancy by the Departments.

52. Strictly speaking, all non-current records deserving permanent retention, and nothing but such records, should be retired to the National Archives repository. In actual practice the greater **Retirement Problems**

bulk of the records of this description is lying with their originating Departments and those retired include not only non-current records but records still in semi-currency, both embodying a large quantity of ephemeral contents. The transfers are usually effected sporadically and haphazardly, priority generally being given to the accumulations for which the owning Department has no space. Care is hardly ever taken for keeping intact the original order of the retired records or to provide them with properly drawn up lists. It is also a common experience to see the records of different provenance having been hopelessly mixed up at the time they are finally retired. The chronological limit for retirement varies from Department to Department, and even so there is no certainty that all preservable records prior to this limit have actually been transferred to the National Archives. The limit of 25 years we have recommended for the purpose of retirement should, we suggest, be made obligatory on all Departments, an exception being made only of such collections as may be frequently needed by the owning Departments even after they have passed this limit. It should be made equally obligatory on the Departments to retire records in an orderly manner without violating the principle of provenance.

53. The retirement procedure outlined above is, however, incapable of immediate implementation owing to shortage of space in the National Archives premises and till that shortage is removed the creating Departments themselves will have to retain with them their existing accumulations. Three measures are necessary to relieve the prevailing pressure on space :

✓ (1) Expurgating the National Archives repository of all non-archival accretions for which it has no use. This would include (a) a huge mass of books, pamphlets and reports accumulated in the Departmental Library which have no bearing either on Archives Keeping or on modern Indian history ; (b) the fairly big collection of Oriental manuscripts which deal mostly with religious, literary, astrological, etc. topics and very rarely with history, and which are never needed either by the staff working in the Department or the research workers visiting it. The manuscript collection is likely to grow in bulk with coming years in consequence of a recent decision of Government to build up in the National Archives a repository of non-archival manuscripts. It is not our intention to suggest that such manuscripts do not require to be cared for. But what we do wish to emphasise is that they should on no account be allowed precedence over the Central Government's own records, which, being unique, are irreplaceable, and which would most certainly

be lost for good unless immediate arrangement is made for their proper housing.

(2) Appraisal of such record collections as have been transferred to the National Archives without any prior review. A review is particularly necessary for the records of the defunct Residencies which are believed to contain a fairly large quantity of ephemeral papers (see para 42, foot note No. 18).

(3) *Additions to the present buildings*: However much the bulk of the existing contents of the National Archives may be reduced, it is clear that even to house the records of permanent value lying outside that repository it would need extra space that cannot at present be provided in the present building. A proposal for the construction of an annexe to the building has been, we understand, under consideration since 1945, but it has not been so far implemented owing to financial reasons. Further postponement of this work will in our view be a measure of doubtful economy. The longer the delay the more difficult and more expensive is sure to become the task of keeping the records at present uncared for even in a reasonably good state of repair.

54. It is incumbent on us to examine in this context the possibility of setting up zonal repositories for housing the records of such central agencies as may be located outside Delhi. The main argument in favour of such a step is that it would remove the prevailing congestion in the National Archives premises. The argument, however, is not one which will carry conviction. Dotting the country with a number of miniature National Archives repositories is not likely to prove less expensive than effecting legitimate extensions in the present building in New Delhi. Even the construction of an additional repository in the Capital is sure to be more economical than the proposed dispersal of records among various centres, as in the first case the records housed in the additional building can have easy access to the repair facilities provided in the present premises. Any dispersal of Central records that may be taken up will impose on the public the additional burden of having to maintain an enormous additional staff and to acquire additional technical equipment. Besides, such a step would greatly add to the difficulty of research scholars, whose studies usually embrace the records of a number of Departments. Difficulties will also arise when work is transferred from one Department to another, for every time such a change takes place records will have to be moved from one zonal office to another. The other alternative would be to keep the records of the same provenance dispersed among several repositories. Neither of these alternatives would be desirable.

Problem of  
Zonal  
Reposi-  
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ries

55. There is one other point requiring to be examined in this connection. The Central agencies located outside the Capital fall into three broad categories: (1) those whose activities embrace the whole of India (like Geological Survey, Anthropological Survey, Indian Forest Research Institute, etc.); (2) those whose activities affect an entire state or a bigger region embracing several states; (3) small units or field offices serving a very small area like a Division, District, a town or even a village (Post Offices, Customs Offices, Income-tax Offices). While the records created by the first two categories are sure to contain a substantial quantity of preservable material, there is little likelihood of anything of permanent value being found among the records of the last. The greater bulk of the last mentioned class of records consists of what may be regarded as particular transaction papers kept in forms, registers, ledgers, etc., and may be eliminated without much harm as soon as they have served their administrative purpose. There is thus no particular need for setting up zonal repositories to cater to the need only of this class of records. As regards the records mentioned under (1) and (2) above it will be possible to accommodate the preservable part among them in the repository at New Delhi, if the procedure suggested for the periodical appraisal and substantial reduction is scrupulously followed. The advantages of concentration of all records of permanent value in a Central repository are so obvious and the disadvantages of their dispersal among several zonal offices are so many that the latter step in our view does not merit any serious consideration. The question whether zonal repositories may be developed for housing State records which may be declared of national importance is a separate issue and will be discussed in its proper place.

**Need for  
Unified  
Control  
and  
Coordina-  
tion**

56. It is essential to the successful implementation of the various programmes outlined in paras 34-53 above that there should be a system of effective and unified control over the entire field of archival activities of all public offices under the Union. Such a system at present is conspicuous by its absence. As already pointed out, barring a few, no public office has any obligation statutory or of any other kind either to administer or to dispose of its records. So far as the task of disposal is concerned the Destruction of Records Act (1917) empowers the Central Government to frame rules in respect of their own records and any other public records "which do not relate to the purposes of the States", but it does not require them to do so. In actual practice this power has never been exercised and no rules have consequently been framed under the Act. Such rules as exist whether they relate to the management of records or their

disposal are advisory rather than mandatory in character, and they are more often violated than observed<sup>23</sup>.

57. There is, moreover, under the existing system no single authority having the exclusive control over all matters pertaining to the Central Government's records. Till 1910 the late Home Department used to exercise something roughly approaching such a control. But this was limited to the issue of general instructions affecting record making and record disposal, both the manner and the extent of their application being left entirely to the discretion of the individual Departments. Till 1891 there was no Central repository to house inactive records, and it was only in 1898 that necessity was felt for the first time for the regular retirement of such records from all Central Departments. Even so the use of any compulsion in this respect was never thought of. When in 1892 rules were first formulated for systematic selection of inactive records with a view to their retirement to the central repository their application was limited to the Home Department only. Precisely the same was the case with a set of more comprehensive rules framed seven years later (Order No. 197, 30 September 1899) with the same object in view. The position did not improve any way when, following the creation in 1910 of the Department of Education, the portfolio of Archives was transferred to that body. This in practice meant nothing more than that the Education Department was henceforth to look after the records retired to the Central Repository, while Home was to shoulder, as before, all responsibilities in respect of records in currency and semi-currency. In 1913 an Inter-Departmental Conference entrusted the former Department with the duty of framing a set of rules to govern the disposal of non-current records. But the same body also decided that the individual Departments should have the power to add or subtract from these rules so far as their own records were concerned. In the end, the majority of the Departments viz., Foreign, Army, Public Works, Commerce and Industry, Revenue and Agriculture compiled special rules of their own. The Education Department's competence to frame such rules, though admitted in theory, was thus denied in practice. The Department, moreover, had little voice either in planning record management programmes or in determining the manner or the method of record retirement.

<sup>23</sup> Out of 129 Departments of the Central Government which furnished answers to an enquiry instituted in 1948-52 in respect to disposal of records only 53 stated they had some kind of weeding arrangement and the rest admitted that they had never weeded out any of their records. A more recent enquiry affecting 20 Ministries and important Departments shows that out of these as many as 15 have no arrangement for regular weeding, and as many as 9 have not yet issued any instructions relating to the retention limits of different classes of records with them. What applies to disposal would seem equally applicable to other archival tasks.

Since 1954 the responsibility of the Ministry (formerly Department) of Home Affairs affecting archival matters has partly devolved on the Organisation and Methods Division of the Cabinet Secretariat, which now formulates rules embodying, among others, record-making and record-disposal procedures. Since, however, archives still continue to be within the portfolio of the Ministry (formerly Department) of Education, the latter is often consulted by the bodies concerned on matters chiefly affecting disposal, retirement and accessibility of records. But the advice tendered has no binding force, and the Ministry hardly has any decisive voice in determining the archival policy of the Central Government. It is only over the records retired to the Central repository that the Ministry exercises anything approaching effective control. But even here its role is that of a mere custodian and its powers are extremely limited. It cannot, for instance, control the way in which the records are to be retired nor the manner in which they should be borrowed or returned by the owning Departments. The upshot of all this is that in most matters affecting archives the Departments enjoy the fullest conceivable autonomy, and such over-all control as the present system permits is divided among several authorities and that too not in a very logical manner.

**Machinery  
for Overall  
Control**

The only way to remove the existing anarchy in the archival field is to demarcate precisely the respective spheres of the various authorities concerned and to vest in a single Minister or a single Organ of the Executive the sole responsibility in respect of overall supervision and coordination of the archival activities of all public offices under the Union. The Minister charged with this responsibility should have the power not only to instruct the owning Departments on all matters affecting their archives, but also to maintain continual check on the archival work done by each and to see that the procedure outlined in paras 34-53 above was strictly followed. The inevitable corollary of this would be to define the powers and responsibilities of the Minister in this respect by a statutory enactment, without which in our considered view it will not be possible for him to function properly. It will be equally necessary to have a consolidated body of general administrative orders issued within the framework of the enactment, that would spell out the basic principles and procedures relating to archive-making and archive-administration<sup>24</sup>. It will further be the duty of the Minister to report to Parliament on the working of the law proposed. The change suggested is not likely to impinge on the general responsibilities of either the Ministry of

<sup>24</sup> The scope of the proposed law and the executive order will be discussed in a separate section below.

Home Affairs or the Organization and Methods Division in respect particularly of records in the making and in current and semi-current stage except to the extent, that, after the change has taken place, none of the authorities will be within their competence to issue any rule or instruction which may be inconsistent with either the act or the executive orders promulgated under it.

60. Under the reform suggested the National Archives will **Role of the National Archives in Records Management** of necessity, be required to play a more active role in the record management operations of the Central Government than it is competent to do at present. The efficient administration of non-current records by the National Archives is largely dependent on the owning Departments making, keeping and reviewing their records properly and transferring regularly to the former's custody those selected for preservation. While these are matters for which the Departments themselves should continue to be responsible, the National Archives should be entrusted with the duty of co-ordinating the arrangements to be made for the selection and the retirement of the Departmental records for permanent preservation. To enable the National Archives to meet this obligation we suggest that an Officer in the Department, not below the rank of a Deputy Director, should be exclusively charged with the task of the supervision of the coordination programme. He should have the assistance of liaison officers to help him in his work.

The primary duty of the staff would be to ensure that the review and selection work was being done by the Department concerned in the proper manner, and while they are not actually to participate in the operations themselves they might assist the Departmental Record Officers by suggesting ways and means by which they can be carried out most efficiently. At the time of final review, however, the liaison staff would be required to collaborate actively with the Departmental Officers concerned in the selection of records fit for permanent preservation [see para 39(g) above]. It will be equally the duty of the National Archives to advise the Departments on the methods of preservation and to assist them in maintaining proper standards in the various archival programmes undertaken by them.

61. The collaboration of the sort we have in view will not only lead to a positive improvement in the quality of the archival work done in the various Departments but will eventually succeed in standardising their archival policies and procedures. Several changes in the organisation of the National Archives and also in the scope of its present activities will be necessary in order to enable it to concentrate on this collaboration. We propose to deal with this subject in a separate section below. But it will be appropriate to point out here that a necessary corollary

of the reforms we are suggesting is that the head of the National Archives should be given a better status than he enjoys under the existing arrangement. If the new system is to work, as we want it to, the Director of Archives will have to bear the lion's share of the statutory responsibilities devolving on the Minister responsible for Archives. It seems only logical that his status and powers should be commensurate with and accurately reflect, the magnitude of these responsibilities and we strongly recommend that the proposed statute should precisely define not only the scope of his duties but that of his powers as well.

**Public  
Offices to  
be included  
in the  
Proposed  
System**

62. It remains to decide which of the record creating bodies apart from the Ministries should be included in the proposed system of control. The principal categories of such bodies are enumerated below:

(1) *Departments subordinate to the Secretariat or the Attached Offices.* These roughly fall into 5 categories : (a) those having all-India jurisdiction ; (b) those whose jurisdiction affects an entire State or a bigger region embracing several States ; (c) those whose activities are limited to a small area like a Division or a District; (d) small units and field offices serving a very small area like a sub-division, town or even a village ; (e) Educational and Research Institutions run by a Government Department.

In para 55 above we have explained the reasons why we consider it necessary that the records emanating only from (a) and (b) above should be included in the proposed record management programme, and we have nothing further to add. As regards class (c) our suggestion is that for the purpose of inclusion in the programme a rigid criterion should be used in distinguishing important institutions from those which are of minor importance. While the papers of the former may contain valuable material, those of the latter are likely to be for the most part ephemeral in character, and may in the majority of cases be eliminated as soon as they have served their purpose, without jeopardising the cause of research.

(2) *Bodies outside the Secretariat, but forming integral part of the Central Government set-up* (e.g., Union Public Service Commission, the Comptroller and Auditor General, Planning Commission, Prime Minister's Secretariat, President's Secretariat, Cabinet Secretariat). These should obviously be included in the system proposed. A word need to be said in respect of the Comptroller and Auditor General, some of whose records have a quasi-judicial character. But the problem relating to their retirement to the National Archives may be solved by

enacting that the legal validity of any record will not be affected by its removal to a repository in accordance with the provisions of the Statute. The twenty-five year limit prescribed for retirement of records may not be found applicable either to the Cabinet Secretariat records or those of the President's or the Prime Minister's Secretariats. While we agree that this limit may be altered by arrangement with the authorities concerned, we should like to stress that no relaxation in other measures of reforms suggested by us would be justified.]

(3) *Boards, Committees, Commissions etc., set up under the authority of the Government of India.* The records of the temporary bodies of the above description should be treated as part of the Archives of the Ministries processing their work. When these have been set up on a permanent basis they should be treated as though they were independent Government Departments. In either case they should come under the purview of the system proposed.

(4) *Statutory Bodies of All-India Character.* Many of these we believe are already covered by categories 2 & 3 above. Some deviate from the types composing those categories. They do so by virtue of their being entrusted with functions widely different from those normally discharged by the Secretariat Departments. We have little precise information on the nature of their records, but in view of the voluminous nature of their periodical accruals, of which only a small fraction may be found to be of permanent interest, and also in view of the wide divergence between their documentation practices and those of the Secretariat, we do not think it will be practicable to force on them the reforms which are primarily applicable to the latter. While these bodies should be placed under a statutory obligation to arrange for methodical selection of records with a view to preservation of those having permanent interest no attempt should be made to bring them within the system of executive control we wish to see established in respect of other Departments. It would follow logically that their records should be retired to the National Archives for permanent preservation by special arrangement. They should be allowed to frame rules in respect to all archival matters within the frame-work of the proposed enactment.

(5) *Nationalised enterprises and undertakings.* The same consideration should in our view apply as for the bodies mentioned in sub-para (4) above.

(6) *Parliament.* The records of Parliament would include not only those of the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha Secretariats but those of all Legislative bodies of pre-Independence days as

also those emanating from the Constituent Assembly. While we do not think it will be quite consistent with the established constitutional practice to vest in the executive control over these records, we wish particularly to emphasise the need for having a statutory provision for their systematic arrangement and preservation; under the control of the authorities concerned while they are in the current or semi-current stage, and their regular retirement to the National Archives as soon as they become inactive. The procedure for retirement should be settled by arrangement between the National Archives and the Parliamentary Secretariats<sup>25</sup>.

(7) *The Supreme Court* has its own arrangements for keeping and disposing of records. While we consider that the Court should have a statutory obligation to select and preserve records of permanent value in accordance with the accepted standards, we do not think it will be appropriate to interfere with the power the Court possesses for dealing with its own records.

It remains to add that even where a category of public records is excluded from the system of executive control we are proposing, the technical advice of the National Archives should be made available to their owners, whenever there is a call on such service.

### C. PUBLIC RECORDS IN THE STATES

63. The problems which public records in the States pose closely resemble those which we had to examine while dealing with the Union Archives and we have very little new to say in respect of them. As in the case of the Union Archives the principal problems which confront us here are those relating to the proper housing and upkeep of these records at every stage of their life-span, from the time of their coming into existence till their final disposal, their systematic review in order to strip them of their external components, and their retirement for permanent retention in a well-equipped repository conforming to scientific standards. These problems have been further complicated by that accelerated growth in volume which characterises modern records, a process which, as we have seen, cannot be arrested without a radical change both in documentation and disposal practices.

**The problem of bulk** 64. An idea may be formed of the acuteness and the magnitude of the problem if we direct our attention to the conditions

<sup>25</sup> It may be stated here that the manuscript originals of the proceedings of the Supreme Legislative Council from 1854 to 1880 are already housed in the National Archives repository. The practice in the United States of America is to house Congressional archives in the Federal Repository at Washington D. C.

prevailing in some of the major States. In Madras, for instance, the records deposited in the State Record Office, which consist mostly of Secretariat and Board of Revenue papers, already cover 47,332 linear feet of space (about nine miles) and the Record Office has just enough space for housing Secretariat accruals for the next ten years (covering 3,450 linear feet). The figures do not take into account either the accumulations in the District and Divisional headquarters (of which the portions prior to 1857 are already in the archives) or those in the Subordinate Courts, which are proposed to be included in the State record-retirement programme, or those in any of the non-Secretariat offices which are still excluded from that programme. The conditions in other States are still worse. The records in the Bombay\* Secretariat Record Office already total 40,960 of footage exclusive of the accumulations in the non-Secretariat or regional agencies. Though there is a plan for concentrating the latter accumulations, the archives building has no room for further accessions. In the Andhra Pradesh, the Secretariat accumulations awaiting retirement include over 1,41,200 files covering about 7,060 linear feet and the total volume of annual accrual from the Secretariat offices is estimated at 83,000 files. These totals do not include the accumulations in the offices outside the Secretariat whose bulk is likely to be several times as voluminous as that of those already retired. Yet the State Records Office already seems packed almost to suffocation. The West Bengal Record Office with its 22,113 feet of shelving, already full to capacity, has no room even for further inflow from the Secretariat Offices, let alone the accumulations in the Departments outside the Secretariat (such, for instance, as the Board of Revenue, the Directorate of Land Records, and the Botanical Gardens, whose records go as far back as 1793). While the Secretariat Record Room in Madhya Pradesh contains 5,522 linear feet (just above a mile) of records, the combined accumulations in Indore and Rewa Record Rooms cover 59,600 linear feet (over eleven miles). The figures for the holdings in other record rooms are not available. The conditions in other States are by no means more encouraging in any respect, and it may be stated without any deviation from the truth that the records now figuring in the retirement programmes in the States form just a small fraction of the vast accumulations which are yet to be taken over by properly constituted repositories<sup>26</sup>.

\*i.e., before the bifurcation of the State into the separate States of Maharashtra and Gujarat.

<sup>26</sup> It has not been possible to collect annual accrual figures for all the States to which our questionnaire was issued, but those obtained are sufficiently alarming to make one pause to think, e.g., Kerala 1,20,000 files, Andhra Pradesh 83,000 files, Madhya Pradesh 25,572 files, Bihar 1,000 files. All these figures relate only to Secretariat records.

**Arrange-  
ment for  
Preser-  
vation**

65. Intimately connected with the problem of bulk is that of preservation, for the larger the volume of the records the more difficult and more costly in years to come will become the task of preserving them in good state. Barring Madras, no other State can claim to have either an organised central record office or an independent repository, conforming to scientific standards for housing all its non-current records. West Bengal records, for instance, are kept in several dingy rooms in the Writer's Buildings, Calcutta, which, stagnant as they are, afford hardly any safe-guards against attacks by damp or dust or fungi or insect pests. There is a proposal for shifting the records to a new building recently acquired but this we understand is located in a crowded area close to slum quarters, where its invaluable contents, we have reasons to fear, will become constantly exposed not only to fire hazards, but to the deleterious effects of the surrounding foul air, which is sure to contaminate the record rooms. The obvious alternative is that a healthier site consistent with the accepted standards of preservation should be selected for setting up the proposed repository. The existing record rooms abound in brittle records, and though there are some arrangements for repair, they can hardly be regarded as adequate. There is no arrangement for fumigating records infected by fungus or insects. The position with regard to non-transferred records whether in the Secretariat or elsewhere is not likely to be better in any respect.

66. The existing arrangements in the majority of States do not differ materially from those described above. The Andhra Pradesh Central Record Office is located in a residential building, a large portion of which is occupied by other Government offices, but the greater bulk of the State records which are yet to be retired are dispersed among several record rooms. None of these rooms provides optimum conditions of record storage, and no arrangement exist for protecting records from excessive heat or moisture. Bihar Archives occupy a portion of the State Secretariat Building. The rooms are ill-ventilated and they hardly provide any safeguards against the vagaries of temperature and humidity. The condition in the Uttar Pradesh State Archives, which is yet to have a building of its own, is officially reported to be far from ideal. The condition in the Secretariat record-rooms in Lucknow seems even worse. Bombay State Archives shares a building with the Elphinstone College, which has a laboratory housing volatile chemicals, the proximity of which to the records has not been all to the good of the latter. No arrangement has been made by the State to control the humidity in the record-rooms beyond providing them with exhaust fans, and exhaust fans are not the right fitting for a building which is located in an industrial town, as they tend to let in impure outside

air which may be unhealthy for records. The arrangement for humidity control even in the Madras Record Office (undoubtedly the most progressive of all State Archives) seems far from adequate, particularly in view of the fact that the building is exposed to the humid effect of continual sea breeze and the ozone and salt contained in it. As for tackling the problems arising from dust, moisture and insectal or fungal attacks, Madras relies chiefly on dusting, cleaning, ventilation and use of naphthalene balls. It has no arrangement whatever for fumigating infected records.

67. It is a far cry from Madras to the States which have yet to develop a well articulated retirement policy. Mysore and Orissa, for instance, have yet no repository to which to retire their inactive records. In Kerala the records are dispersed among four separate repositories; in Madhya Pradesh among five record rooms located in five different places; and in Rajasthan among 20 separate buildings scattered all over the State. The conditions of these repositories are better imagined than described.

68. The procedures of record storage vary from State to State, Bombay is the only State which claims to have started use of carton-boxes. Even so the records actually enclosed in these boxes cannot be more than a fraction of its total holdings. Madras, Assam, Orissa, and West Bengal still believe in the traditional *liasse* system. In Andhra Pradesh and the Punjab the records are kept partly in *liasses*, and partly in *bastas*, in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar mostly tied between card-board covers; in Madhya Pradesh partly in *bastas* and partly between card-board covers, and in Rajasthan mostly in *bastas*. Instances also are not lacking where the records have not been provided with any kind of protective cover whatever. It will be needless for us to say that carton-boxes, made to specification, provide records with the maximum conceivable protection against both dust and damp and surface-feeding insects. While the use of *liasses* made of 5-ply wooden boards may continue so long as boxes are not available, there is no justification whatever for the continued use of *bastas*, which absorb moisture and attract both insects and mildew spores. While Assam, Bombay and Mysore report all their records having been stored on steel-shelves, in all other States wooden shelves still continue to be used along with steel ones, a practice which involves grave risks. Wood absorbs moisture, attracts fungi and insects, and especially termites, the deadliest enemy of records, and is easily liable to catch fire.

69. The records in almost all the States contain a very large proportion of folded documents. This is particularly the case with the States which, like Kerala, Rajasthan or Madhya Pradesh, have

yet to centralise their records. But even States possessing records offices of their own like Madras and West Bengal, for instance, are not altogether free from this defect. This is all the more surprising in the case of Madras, which has a regular repair section. While many of the States have taken up a flattening programme, the progress has necessarily been slow, owing evidently to the chronic shortage of funds, which continue to impede archive-work in almost every State. To the same circumstances is attributable the present inadequacy in repair arrangements in almost all record offices and the slow progress in such repair-work as has been attempted by them.<sup>27</sup>

### **Shortcomings in State Record Offices**

70. Thus the serious shortcomings from which the State records suffer include (1) acute shortage of space, (2) lack of control over natural conditions, and (3) absence of adequate repair arrangement. For the removal of all of these what is primarily and most immediately needed in each State is a Central repository conforming to scientific standards. In several States a move has already been made for constructing buildings to house their records; but financial difficulties would explain the present slow progress in taking up any of these schemes. Records occupy a very low (if not the lowest) place in the State list of priorities. But if records are to play their rightful role as the chief instruments of public administration, it is imperative that very high priority should be given to the task of developing State Archives and consequently of setting up proper repositories to house them.

### **Disposal Procedures and Documentation Practices**

71. The problem of preservation inevitably leads to that of selection. As it will never be practicable to provide accommodation or repair service for every document a State produces, it is necessary that each State should have a well thought out plan for regular sorting out of records of permanent value from those of ephemeral nature. The selection procedures actually followed in the States betray almost the same shortcomings as are noticeable in the case of the Union records. Almost every State has a Manual prescribing the procedures of disposing of its Secretariat records, but none of these provides for automatic separation, at the very initial stage, of 'policy' papers from 'case' papers or important materials from unimportant, which, as we have noticed,

<sup>27</sup> An exception is provided by Madras Records Office whose total annual out-turn of repaired sheets is 70,000. The corresponding figures for the Punjab is 37,000, West Bengal 25,000, Bihar 2,020, Assam 9,000, Rajasthan 20,000 pieces, Andhra Pradesh 16,803 pieces, Orissa 10 volumes.

That the repair staff in most of the record offices is inadequate will become clear from the following figures : Madras has 6 menders and 1 binder ; Uttar Pradesh 9 menders ; Andhra Pradesh 4 menders ; Bombay 1 mender ; Punjab 7 menders and 3 binders ; Bihar 2 menders ; Assam 4 menders and 1 binder ; Orissa, Madhya Pradesh and Mysore have no special staff for repair work.

is the basic requirement of any sound selection policy<sup>28</sup>. Such a practice, unless accompanied by elaborate indexing (which, in the present circumstances, is beyond the resources of any public office) renders extremely difficult identification of files for the purposes not only of reference but of selection with a view to disposal. The result is that every file has to be examined by the reviewing officer at the time of its recording with a view to fixing the retention period to which it may be entitled. Voluminous as, in consequence, the task is bound to prove, it has normally to be assigned to a member of the subordinate staff<sup>29</sup>, a procedure which, as we have seen, involves grave risks. It makes little difference that at this stage files are elaborately classified into different artificial categories according to the retention periods fixed for them<sup>30</sup>. For one thing the criteria according to which the retention limits have to be decided on are not always very precise, and often they are too wide to be of much practical use or have no relation to actual file-categories in the creating offices concerned<sup>31</sup>. The huge labour and expenditure involved in these complicated operations can easily be done away with, if the present system is replaced by the one we have recommended for the Union Government.

72. The task of the reviewer has been rendered even more difficult by the obligation imposed on him of using the historical criterion in judging the value of papers. Madras, Madhya Pradesh and Mysore believe that the present system of single review by subordinate officers amply ensures the criterion being efficiently

<sup>28</sup>This requirement as well as the means by which it can be met has been explained in paras 23-39 above and we need not expatiate on them.

<sup>29</sup>The magnitude of the task so far as it relates to Revenue Administration records is officially recognized in the following extracts from the Madras Government General Order No. 1931, dated 18 May 1956: "In view of the large number of..... files that will have to be scrutinised ..... the Government consider there is no harm in Collectors deputing their personal Assistants to attend to this item of work .....". The difficulties pointed out would seem applicable to all varieties of records.

<sup>30</sup>Madras Secretariat has only two broad categories: R, meaning the files to be retained permanently and D, those to be destroyed after they have exceeded the prescribed retention limit. West Bengal maintains three categories: A (to be retained permanently), B (to be retained for varying periods), C (to be destroyed after a year). In Bombay, B files have to be retained for 12 years, and C up to 5 years, while there is an additional category D including papers which can be destroyed as soon as they have become inactive. Madhya Pradesh has 3 categories: Files meant for permanent retention, Deposit files to be destroyed after a year, and K. W. files (routine and ancillary papers) which may be retained beyond a year. Files are classified both in Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan according to the following retention periods: 1 year, 5 years, 10 years, 20 years, permanent.

<sup>31</sup>The Andhra Pradesh schedule of retention-categories, for instance, contains among others the following: "Papers of historical importance. Papers of Administrative utility, Papers relating to famous men." There can hardly be any file-series corresponding to any of the categories.

applied. Uttar Pradesh has expressed doubt about this. In West Bengal the Regional Survey Committee's advice is sought for determining the historical value of documents, which does not appear to be a practical procedure. In Andhra Pradesh the staff of the Central Record Office has to do the appraisal work in collaboration with the Secretariat staff, while in Bombay and Rajasthan the approval of the Director of Archives is needed before a file can be weeded out. All these operations really involve a two-stage review —one at the time of recording and the other on the expiry of the prescribed retention periods. But the process of reviewing tends to get complicated by reason, first, of the varying retention periods fixed for different files, and secondly, of the voluminous size of the papers which have to be examined individually page by page at the time of the Second Review. To simplify the procedures and also to ensure the preservation of all materials of real value we should suggest, as we have done in the case of Union Archives, the following measures :

(1) Adoption of a filing procedure which will secure automatic separation of 'policy' files from 'case' files and make possible their easy and prompt identification.

(2) Discontinuance of the present practice of fixing a separate retention period for each individual file and of its classification on that basis into any of the artificial categories in use.

(3) Subjecting to a preliminary review (to be called First Review) all non-policy files as soon as they have reached their fifth year, with a view to eliminating all papers for which the creating offices concerned have no use. This review is to be conducted solely by Departmental Officers, who are to use only the administrative criterion in determining the value of the records. The reviewers should be officers occupying a more responsible status than those at present available for the work. If judiciously carried out, the review suggested will make possible the reduction of the greater bulk of the ephemeral papers with which the offices are now cluttered.

(4) Arrangement for a Second Review of all surviving papers as soon as they have reached their 25th year with a view to final selection of papers for permanent retention and retirement to State Archives. This review is to be conducted jointly by Departmental representatives and members of the State Archives concerned, and both administrative and historical criteria will require to be used in carrying out the review. In view of the reduced bulk and the perspective brought about by lapse of time the collaboration we have in view will be possible to undertake.

(5) Setting up of intermediate repositories to take care of all Government records awaiting the final review. In its Central Record Branch the Madras Government already has a repository closely approaching what we have in view. The only change in the Madras practice we would suggest is that the records should be retained in the repository till their 25th year and not till the 3rd year as is the practice now. Other states, we think, will do well to follow the Madras model with such adaptations as their particular cases may necessitate.

(6) Appointment of trained archivists with suitable status to take charge of the repositories, and to arrange for the proposed reviewing of records and their subsequent retirement to the State Archives concerned<sup>32</sup>.

73. We have recommended in the preceding paragraph that **Retirement Programme** records should be selected for retirement only after they have been subjected to the final review due on their 25th year, in other words, only after they have been stripped of all their ephemeral contents. This is necessary not only for relieving the existing pressure on space in the State repositories concerned but also for rendering the records retired easily consultable by their users. But the practice in this respect varies from State to State and is in most cases far from satisfactory. In Andhra Pradesh, proceedings are to be retired as soon as they are five years old<sup>33</sup>. The date is too early for getting the records stripped of their useless contents before their retirement takes place. The same is the state of affairs in Bihar, West Bengal and Bombay, the retirement limits in whose cases are three years, four years, and five years respectively. In Assam, the records are to be retired as soon as they are closed, which means that stripping can be conducted only after the records have been transferred to the repository. In Madras, though the retirement limits for the Secretariat are three years and for the Board of Revenue ten years, no record comes to archives before it has been finally selected for permanent preservation. It is possible to follow this procedure because the final selection is made in the State as soon as a file has been recorded, and it has no arrangement for a Second Review of the files which may be initially marked ephemeral. Rajasthan goes to the other extreme of retiring only pre-1900 records. This has obviously been necessitated by lack of both accommodation and funds. Uttar Pradesh, Orissa, and Punjab have yet to develop retirement procedures, while Madhya Pradesh and Mysore do not seem to have even a plan for retiring records. For reasons already explained<sup>34</sup>, it is imperative that the

<sup>32</sup> For a detailed explanation of the procedures outlined above see paras 34-39 above.

<sup>33</sup> The State Government itself admits that the procedure is not being rigidly followed.

<sup>34</sup> Paras 39(g), 52-53.

25 year limit recommended by us or any other limit, not on any account shorter than 25 years but better suiting the varying circumstances of the States themselves, should be accepted as the norm to be followed. All that we need to stress here is that this limit should coincide with the date fixed for the proposed final review of all semi-current records.

**Need for  
over-all  
Control  
and Coor-  
dination**

74. The inevitable corollary of the reforms we are advocating is that each State should have an effective machinery for controlling and coordinating the archival activities of all public offices within its jurisdiction. A well-articulated record-management policy is yet to develop in most of the States. Such rules governing archive-work as exist in the States are far from mandatory in character, and are, in consequence, not always rigidly followed. What is needed, therefore, in each State is a definite central authority having a determining voice in all matters affecting the totality of its archives, and a body of basic rules regulating all aspects of record-management and record-administration which would be binding on all concerned. The control which the appropriate State Departments exercise over these matters is far from complete and in the States in which the over-all charge of State repositories vests in their Education Departments, this control tends to become divided, in as much as in those States the responsibility in respect of record-making and record-management still continues to be shouldered by Departments directly concerned with general administration. In some States (*e.g.*, Orissa, Punjab, Rajasthan) there is a regular hierarchy of authorities controlling archives with the head of the State Archives standing at the bottom, and the Education Department at the apex, while the Director of Public Instruction occupies a middle position<sup>35</sup>.

75. We consider it to be essential that control over archival matters should be vested in its entirety in a single authority, preferably in a single Minister. The latter should be authorised to exercise executive powers over the ways in which the Departments handle their records and take custody of any records which may be ripe for retirement. To enable the Minister in-charge to fulfil all his obligations under the proposed arrangement, it will be further necessary that the head of the State-Archives should be made directly answerable to him and should be empowered to discharge, on his behalf, all functions owing their origin to

<sup>35</sup> In Assam the control is exercised by Secretariat Administration Department, in Andhra Pradesh, Punjab, West Bengal and Rajasthan by Education Department, in Bombay by Political and Services Department, in Madhya Pradesh and Mysore by General Administration Department, in Kerala and Madras by Public Department, in Uttar Pradesh by Department of Cultural Affairs and Scientific Research, in Madhya Pradesh partly by General Administration Department and partly by Education Department.

these obligations.<sup>56</sup> The status of the latter<sup>56</sup> should be suitably raised in order to make it possible for him to shoulder the new responsibilities proposed to be vested in him. Under the existing arrangement he has very little real power, and plays practically no active role in the record administration programmes of his Government. We consider that the changes we have suggested cannot be effected except by defining precisely by a statutory enactment the scope of the powers and responsibilities proposed to be vested in the Minister as well as the head of the State Archives, though we believe that the instructions relating to the detailed working of the scheme we have in view may be suitably embodied in executive orders issued under the authority of the proposed act.

76. The obligations of the State Archives in relation to the record-management programmes in the State should be drawn up precisely on the same lines as indicated in the case of Union Archives with such adaptations as local conditions may necessitate. It will be the duty of the Archives, for instance, to see that the various programmes outlined in the preceding paragraph are carried out by the record-creating bodies as a matter of daily routine and that nothing is left in arrears. Representatives of the Archives should, moreover, actively collaborate in the final review of records referred to in para 39(g) above, and to ensure that the records finally selected are regularly retired to the State Archival repository. It will also be their duty to advise the Departments on all matters affecting the management, administration, preservation and disposal of records.

77. Two basic reforms in our view are called for in order to enable the State Archives Departments to concentrate on the programmes described above and to discharge their functions efficiently :—

(1) In the first place, the Archives should be totally divested of all non-archival and adventitious duties, which quite a few of them are obliged to carry out under the existing arrangement. The Uttar Pradesh State Archives, for instance, is required to acquire and care for non-archival manuscript materials

<sup>56</sup> The status and rank of the archival heads vary from State to State. In Andhra Pradesh the Director is an I.A.S. Officer; Assam has a Keeper of Records with a salary of Rs. 225-500; in Orissa the Curator is a Class II Officer with a salary of Rs. 250-850; the Madras Curator gets a salary of Rs. 400-800, and Director of Rajasthan Archives gets a salary of Rs. 500-900. Bihar has no whole-time Director. The Director in Bombay has a salary of Rs. 500-1150, but he combines the chiefship of State Archives with the duties of the Director of Historical Monuments. In the Punjab the Director of Archives also holds the post of Curator of the State Museum.

**Role of  
State  
Archives in  
Records  
Management**

**Reforms  
Recommended**

dealing with topics ranging from literature and religion to astrology and magic. The Keeper of the Punjab Archives is burdened with museological duties, while the Director of Bombay Archives has the State's historical monuments in his charge. Madras Record Office shoulders the responsibility of revising and re-issuing the District Gazetteers. None of these tasks has any remote connection with archive-work and sooner the Archives are relieved of these marginal and extraneous functions, the better it is sure to be for the State records.

(2) In the second place, the basic qualifications which ought to be demanded of the archive-officers should be knowledge of archives and archival techniques, and not mere knowledge of history or administration. We strongly recommend that the members of the archival service in the States should be recruited by open competition at a young age and should be promoted to higher offices as they acquire experience, and that no responsible post in an archives should be filled except by men of experience in archival work. The end we have in view will be met if a special archival cadre is created consisting of no more than three ranks of Officers : Keeper (the head of Archives), Assistant Keepers (Senior), and Assistant Keepers (Junior), all recruitment being made only at the level of Assistant Keepers (Junior). It may be profitable to examine, as a long term plan, the possibility of transforming the proposed archival service into an All-India Service. As for the manual workers engaged in cleaning, repair and related archival operations, we consider it advisable that efforts should be made to rationalise as far as possible the existing multiplicity of scales among which they are distributed and to make the emoluments attached to their posts attractive enough for the right type of talent.

**Scope of  
the System  
of Control  
proposed**

78. The system of control which in our opinion should be adopted for the States has been explained above. It is now incumbent on us to examine which of the different categories of records, apart from those pertaining to the Secretariat Departments and other Departments having state-wide jurisdiction (e.g., Board of Revenue, Public Service Commission, Intelligence Branch) should be included in that system. The principal record-categories deserving attention are stated below :—

(1) *Records of Subordinate bodies (other than those with State-wide jurisdiction)*: They roughly fall into the following classes: (a) the offices whose activities embrace a District, a Division or a larger area; (b) the small unit offices serving a very small area like a sub-division, town or even a village (e.g., Deputy Collectorate, Tehsil Office, Circle Office, Police Stations

and so forth); (c) Education, Cultural and Research Institutions run by Government Departments.

(a) The most important collections included in class (a) are the records of the revenue authorities at District and Divisional headquarters. There are hardly any local repositories designed to house the non-current records emanating from these bodies. In actual practice the latter keep these records in the record rooms attached to their respective offices along with current and semi-current papers. Generally, there is no system of regular retirement of these records to the appropriate repositories in the States. But in Madras all Collectorate records prior to 1857 have been concentrated and in Bihar the policy is to retire to the Secretariat Record Room all pre-1901 records of the same bodies. Neither the Punjab nor Uttar Pradesh follows any systematic retirement policy, and both have collected the records only of a limited number of districts. Uniformity is equally lacking in the procedure followed in treating the Divisional records. While the Assam Secretariat Record Room has acquired all non-current Divisional records, the Punjab and Uttar Pradesh State Archives have collected those relating to a limited number of Divisions only. Other State repositories have no arrangements for collecting either District or Divisional records. Many of these records go as far back as the 18th Century and embody valuable material for economic history. But in view of their primary importance to local administration, perhaps the most logical way to preserve them would be to set up special repositories at Divisional head-quarters to house them after they have reached the stage of non-currency and have been shorn of their ephemeral components. Such repositories, when set up, should accommodate not only revenue records, but all preservable records belonging to the other local administrations at the District and Divisional head-quarters. These repositories may be placed under the control of the State Archives Departments. If, however, the resources of the States do not permit the implementation of this, there will be no alternative but to retire them to the appropriate Central State repository. As revenue records are of a quasi-judicial character it will be necessary to include a provision in the proposed enactment that the legal validity of any record will not be impaired by its removal to a repository in accordance with the provisions of the Statute.

(b) The records falling under this class should as a general rule be excluded from the rigid system of control we have in view and the local authorities concerned should be

armed with a general power to destroy all their accumulations as soon as they have exceeded the retention limits fixed for them or they have ceased to be active in administration. It should, however, be accepted as a general rule that no pre-1860 records are to be weeded out on any account whatever and that no record relating to the period 1861-1900 is to be destroyed except in consultation with the State Archives concerned. All surviving records relating to both the periods should be retired either to the appropriate Divisional repository, in case it is possible to set it up, and failing that to the State Archives itself.

(c) As regards (c) a rigid criterion should be used in distinguishing important institutions from un-important ones before including any of them in the system of control proposed by us. But the rule that no pre-20th Century records are to be destroyed except in consultation with the State Archives concerned should be made equally applicable to all institutional records coming under this category.

✓ (2) *Records of Bodies which, though independent of the Secretariat, yet form integral part of the State Government set-up* : e.g., Records of Governors, of the Chief Minister's Office, of Statutory bodies controlled by the State etc. The procedure outlined in para 62(2) above should be applicable here.✓

(3) *Boards, Committees, Commissions, etc. set up under the authority of the State Government* : The procedure outlined in para 62(3) above seems applicable.

(4) *Records of Defunct Departments* whose functions have not been inherited by any other State Agency : The records of such Departments should be retired to the State repository immediately on their termination.

(5) *The Crown Representative's Records in State Custody*: These fall into two broad categories :

(a) Records of defunct Residencies or Political Agencies whose ownership has devolved on the Union Government with the lapse of paramountcy. These are in the custody of the State Governments on terms of quasi-permanent loan and should return to the owning authority as soon as they have been done with.

(b) The documents created by the different State Governments in exercise of the powers delegated by the former paramount authority for conducting the relations of the paramount body with the former princely States. These documents form an integral part of the series in the Archives

of the State Governments concerned, and cannot be separated from the parent body without violating the principle of *respect des fonds*. Yet on the eve of Provincial Autonomy these very documents were marked out as "Crown representative's papers", where they could be physically isolated, and as "Mixed Crown and Federal" records where physical separation was ruled out by reason of their being housed in the same files or proceedings along with other papers. The obvious object was to keep them screened from popular ministers. Since the compelling reason which dictated this special treatment has ceased to exist with the transfer of power there is no longer any justification for keeping them isolated from the rest of the archives of the State Governments originating them. They should, therefore, be reintegrated with the latter archives and treated as their property.

✓(6) *State records relating to the subjects included in the Union List* : We notice that it has already been decided by the Government of India that only open files relating to these subjects are to be regarded as the property of the Central Government, while all closed files irrespective of the subjects dealt with should be treated as the property of the State Governments concerned (Ministry of State Circular letter No. 23(12)-AE/53, dated the 29th June 1953). This decision is a corollary logically deducible from the principle of *respect des fonds* and we recommend that it should be strictly adhered to whenever there takes place a territorial readjustment or distribution of functions between one Government or administrative authority and another.

(7) *Records of Areas acquired by States under recent States Reorganisation measures* : It is a recent experience that whenever any territorial redistribution takes place between one Government or administration and another steps are taken to divide<sup>37</sup> between them the records relating to the affected areas without any thought being given to the administrative advisability of such a course. The records affected by such a course fall into three categories : Regional records created by District and other local offices located in the areas transferred; records of Law Courts, and District, Municipal and other local boards, located in the same areas; and central or Secretariat records among which are bound to occur documents and files relating to the

<sup>37</sup>Thus following the formation of the Andhra Pradesh the Secretariat and other Central records of the former Madras State were divided between the successor States, while the non-current District records which although they belonged to the administrations located in the areas transferred were kept intact in Madras Record Office. In dividing records between Maharashtra and Gujarat States following the recent bifurcation of the former Bombay State, the year 1945 has been used as the cut-off date.

areas concerned which cannot be torn out of the series to which they belong without violently disturbing the natural order of the records arranged therein. As regards the first two categories it is obvious that they can be transferred *en bloc*, along with the territories in which they are located, to the State which has acquired those territories. There is nothing wrong in this transfer as it does not necessitate any change in the original order of the records affected, which can thus continue to be intact and easily consultable. This course is, however, ruled out in the case of the Secretariat or other Central records of a State, whose division, as we have seen, inevitably leads to the break up and, sometimes, to total disintegration of the natural series. Such a step can only end by destroying the value of the records both as evidence and as instruments of administration. The internationally accepted procedure of treating such records is to limit the division only to 'open' files relating to the areas concerned while keeping intact all closed files that may have a bearing on them, and we do not feel any hesitation in recommending that this should be accepted as the basic principle governing the treatment of all records affected by any territorial change that may take place. As a logical corollary, any records that may have been acquired by any State in violation of this principle should return to the parent series to which they belonged while the records actually needed in administration may be retained on terms of loan.

(8) *Records of the former princely States in the custody of the State Governments* : These records form only a particular category of those described in the preceding paragraph and are to be treated in accordance with the same principle as applicable to the former. In other words, they are to be regarded as the legitimate property of the Governments which have acquired them by virtue of their inheriting the territories to whose administration they owe their origin. The relation in which any record-body stands to its legitimate owner is an organic one, which cannot be sundered without violating its value as record. The records in question have become the administrative instruments of the Governments in whose keeping they are now in consequence of their having inherited the rights and functions of the Governments which they have replaced, and to remove the records from their custody is to deprive them of the use and the control of those very instruments, a contingency which is sure to hamper at every step the discharge of their legitimate functions. It was in consideration of these facts that as early as 1949 the Government of India took the momentous decision that the records of the merged princely States should become

the concern of the States with which they had become integrated and not of the Central Government<sup>38</sup>. We also notice that the Union Government reaffirmed this policy when in 1955 they gave their official approval to Resolution III of the 30th Session of the Indian Historical Records Commission, which recommended that the records of all defunct States should become the property of the successor Governments concerned and only open files relating to the Union subjects were to be transferred to the Union Government. Any step taken now by the Centre to acquire ownership or control of the records of the princely States would involve not only a violation of the internationally accepted archival principle but a diametrical reversal of the policy so far officially approved and consistently followed conformably to those principles.

We are aware that the custody of records of the former Bhopal State upto 1914 has already been acquired by the Central Government and a Branch of the National Archives has been set up at Bhopal to house these records. But this arrangement was decided on at a time when Bhopal was still a centrally administered area and the Bhopal Administration formed a part of the Central Administration. But since the merger of that State in the newly formed State of Madhya Pradesh the circumstances which necessitated the arrangement have ceased to exist and it is our considered opinion that conformably to the universally established archival principle that the ownership of a record body should devolve on the legitimate successor of those responsible for its origin, these records should now return to the Madhya Pradesh Government, the legitimate successor to the Bhopal administration. As matters now stand, the pre-1914 section of the collection is under Central control while its post-1914 section is rightly retained by the Madhya Pradesh Government. Both sections form integral part of the same record body and it would, as we have seen, be contrary to the fundamental principles of archive-keeping to allow them to continue thus divided.

<sup>38</sup>In that year in response to a resolution of the Research and Publication Committee (Resolution V, 14th meeting) of the Indian Historical Records Commission a directive was issued to all Provincial Governments, States, and Union of States 'to take steps for the custody and the maintenance of integrity of records which were lately in possession of various princely States now merged with the provinces or have formed into Unions'. In case of larger States which had well-organised offices the Record Offices were to be maintained *intact*, control remaining with respective provinces and Union Governments (*Proceedings of the Indian Historical Records Commission*, XXVI, p. 46). We should recommend, however, that while dealing with these records special care should be taken of those which do not deal with local administration only but relate to such subjects as relations with the erstwhile paramount power or inter-state relations and other political and diplomatic subjects. These records, in our view, should not be amalgamated with local and District records, but should, where no Divisional Repositories have been set up by States to house them, be deposited in the State Archives concerned.

(9) *Records of State Legislatures* : On the analogy of Parliamentary records, we would recommend that they should, after they have been stripped of their ephemeral components, be regularly retired to the appropriate State repository. A statutory enactment will be necessary to make it obligatory on the Legislatures both to keep their records in proper order and to have a systematic disposal and retirement policy.

(10) *Court Records* : The Court Records at present are, as a rule, excluded both from the disposal and retirement programmes of the State Governments concerned. In Madras the Mayor's and the Coroner's Court records have already been retired to the State repository while arrangement has been made with the High Court for the transfer to the same repository of the late Supreme Court, Sadr Adalat and Faujdari Court records. Arrangement is also afoot for the retirement of all subordinate Court records prior to 1857. Whether the High Courts in other States will agree to similar arrangements being made in respect of their records is a question which is difficult to answer. At present the High Courts are expected to frame rules governing the disposal not only of their own records but also of the Courts subordinate to them under the Destruction of Records Act of 1917. But how far the Courts are pursuing a regular disposal policy is not known. In Madras it appears no steps have been taken so far to appraise for disposal any of the Court records. It seems to us desirable that a legal obligation should be placed on the Courts concerned to develop regular record administration and record disposal procedures. As to the systematic retirement of records to the State repositories, we consider that the question can be settled by arrangement between the archives-authorities in the States and the Courts themselves.

(11) *Records of Local Governments* (District Boards, Municipalities, Local Boards etc.) : Although we do not conceive that it will be possible for any State repository to provide accommodation for any records of this category, we would, at the same time, recommend that they should come within the purview of the enactment we have in view and an obligation should be placed on the bodies concerned both to maintain and dispose of their records in a systematic manner.

#### D. PUBLIC ACCESS TO RECORDS

79. We have so far dealt with the problems of public archives, whether of the Union or of the States, mostly from the point of view of their use in public administration. This has been due to the fact that public archives, to start with, are

nothing more than mere instruments of administration, and they are preserved primarily to enable the administrative bodies which created them to function efficiently. But, as time passes, archives come to acquire values other than purely administrative, values for historians, economists, sociologists and genealogists, in short, for any enquirer into his country's past. These values arise from that unselfconscious character of archives which forms one of their basic qualities. They are spontaneous growths, not conscious compilations, and mirror the past more accurately than any other sources of history. The special value of archives to research has been realised almost from the grey dawn of written history, *i.e.*, from the very moment when archives-keeping was started. But it is from the latter half of the 19th century that archives are being increasingly used as source material for history, and it is now almost universally recognised that an essential duty of a civilised government is to provide facilities for public access to, and public use in research of, all materials in its archives which have passed out of current use.

80. The Government of India have from time to time framed rules governing access to their records by qualified researchers. Before 1940 this access was normally limited to pre-1859 records only, and according to the rules then in force the permission of the appropriate Secretariat Department was necessary before any scholar could obtain access to the records. This restriction was rigorously applied in the case of Foreign and Political Department records. Thanks chiefly to the initiative of Dr. S. N. Sen, the then Keeper of Records, the Research Rules were revised in 1940, throwing open to a limited class of users, called *bona fide* research scholars, all Government records prior to 1880. In 1949 the rules were again relaxed extending the open period to 1901. In 1954 both the Ministry of Home and the Ministry of External Affairs agreed to abolish the censuring system so far as their pre-1902 records were concerned. In 1956 a general decision was taken to throw open to research all official records more than 40 years old. This has, however, hardly improved the position materially as various difficulties which are detailed below, still continue to affect public utilisation of records:—

1. The records of the Ministry of External Affairs are open up to 1935, subject to the condition that no records of a later date than 1900 can be shown to a scholar which may relate to the following territories: Pakistan, Gilgit, Chitral, Tibet, China, Sikkim, Bhutan, Burma, NEFA, Ceylon, Russia, Iran, Afghanistan and the Persian Gulf. So far as the Home Ministry is concerned neither verbatim extracts from office-noting nor any information relating to terroristic activities or intelligence reports can be released to a scholar for use from their post-1901 records, even though they may belong to the open period.

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Nor can a scholar be given access to any political records relating to the period which has not already been scrutinised by the Ministry and found to be innocuous. Records having a reference to Kashmir, even though they may be of the pre-1901 period, are equally inaccessible to scholars. No photographic copies of documents, moreover, may be released without the prior permission of the Ministry.

2. While the 'open' records of the Ministry of External Affairs are not subject to any scrutiny restrictions, excerpts taken from the same category of records of other Ministries relating to the post-1901 period, if they happen to be marked "Confidential", require prior scrutiny by the Ministries concerned before they can be released for use.

3. Even the 'open' records are open only to a very limited category of users, called *bona fide* scholars viz., Members of the Indian Historical Records Commission, Readers, Professors and Vice-Chancellors of Universities, University-sponsored students and Central Government employees.

#### Practices abroad

81. It may be thought that the 40 year limit applied in India compares favourably with the 50-year limit holding good in countries like United Kingdom, for instance. The fact is, however, otherwise. In United Kingdom the Grigg Committee on Departmental Records (1954) recommended the 50 year limit for reasons which have nothing to do with the problem of public security. The fact is that in 1954 Public Record Office had not yet obtained the custody of all Departmental records beyond the 50 year limit, and the Committee felt that for some time to come that Office would be too occupied with the accession of these records from different sources to be able to attend to public requests for more recent records. They, therefore, were of the view that steps could be taken to relax the limit fixed after the new accessions had been put in order. Moreover, this limit affects only the general public and not students or scholars, who can consult even the 'restricted' records without much difficulty. The same concession in favour of students extends also to the Foreign Office records, and the British system is innocent of any geographical 'discrimination' in this respect.

The practice in the United States of America is equally, if not more, liberal. Generally, all records transferred to the National Archives are open to public inspection without any restriction. The records of the State Department, including confidential papers, for the period upto 1929 have been open to the public since 1950 and later records of the same Department are open to qualified users. Here also there is no scope either for any

geographical discrimination or for any pre-censorship of excerpts from documents. This is more or less true of all progressive countries of the world<sup>20</sup>. The law of almost every progressive country, moreover, allows release to the public of facsimile copies of their 'open' records.

82. There are certain other facts which, we think, should be considered in this connection. The decision to screen materials on terroristic activities or embodying intelligence reports appears to be contrary to the spirit of the decision of 1956 setting the 40 year limit, which made no mention whatever of these restrictions. This decision however, is not likely to serve the purpose the Government may have in view, for several among the ex-terrorists themselves have published their memoirs, which deal with the terrorist methods at great length. The same methods, moreover, are very lucidly explained in the *Indian Sedition Committee's Report* as also in published proceedings of trials of terrorists, which are easily accessible to the public. The National Archives have recently acquired from the United States of America microfilm copies of the United States Government records and German Foreign Office files relating to Indian revolutionary and terrorist activities, including those relating to terrorist collaboration with Germany during the First World War. These records are available to the public without any restriction whatever.

As regards the records relating to Kashmir the present restrictions are based upon some misunderstanding. The fact is that the Government do not have a separate series of records relating to Kashmir. The so-called Kashmir records really consist of correspondence which passed between the Political Officer in charge of Kashmir on the one hand and the Supreme Government on the other, and these are recorded along with similar correspondence relating to other States in India in the same volumes of official proceedings. Thus to put a ban on the

<sup>20</sup> There is no chronological limit for the inspection of records in the Netherlands Archives nor any other restriction. In Sweden there is no restriction except on the use of records in currency. Hungary allows access, without restriction, to all records prior to 1918. German Democratic Republic permits unrestricted use of records upto the same date. Post-1918 records can be consulted with the permission of the Director of Archives. In Finland, there is no restriction on the use of records prior to 1918. In Portugal there is no restriction except on the use of legal records, which are open when they are 50 years old. In Switzerland Norway and Commonwealth Relations Office (United Kingdom) the chronological limit is 50 years, but there is no other restriction. The Archives Nationales, Paris, also maintains the same chronological limit though there is some restriction on the use of legal records. In Register House of Scotland, there is no restriction on the use of any record except current police records. The papers of English House of Lords are open without any restriction. Similar is the case with United Nations Archives. Union of Soviet Socialist Republic claims that it imposes no restriction on the use of public records.

use of the Kashmir records is virtually to prevent the use of any records of the late Foreign and Political Department, which cannot certainly be the intention of the Government of India.

Even if it be the intention to screen all materials relating to Kashmir irrespective of any chronological limit, it is not clear how that intention is going to be realised. Political relations with the State of Jammu and Kashmir used to be conducted by the Government of India through the agency of the Punjab Government from 1849 to 1877 when the Political charge was transferred to a Special Officer (designated since 1885 'Resident at Kashmir'). Thus a full set of all pre-1878 records relating to Kashmir are available among the Punjab records located in Lahore. Moreover, the India Office (Commonwealth Relations Office) has in its custody a complete set of Foreign and Political Department proceedings which embody almost every document on Kashmir that Government of India may have in their possession relating to the period before 1947. There are no possible means by which access to these records in London or Lahore can be prevented.

#### **Recommendations**

83. We have examined very carefully the various aspects involved in the question and feel convinced that a uniform procedure with regard to public access to records should be arrived at without further delay. Our recommendations in this respect are as follows :

1. All records, including those marked confidential, which are 40 years old, should generally be thrown open to the public.
2. Open records should be treated as open to every citizen of the Indian Union. After the open period there should be limited access period (extending say up to 10 years) records relating to which should be accessible to qualified users. Records beyond this limit should be open to researchers only with the permission of the appropriate Ministry.
3. Records made accessible to the public should not be subjected to any kind of censorship or any other restrictions as regards their use.

#### **Access to State Records**

84. As in the case of the Union Archives, access to State records is generally restricted to a limited class of users, known as *bona fide* scholars. The term has almost the same connotation as given to it in the National Archives Historical Research Rules. Excerpts taken even from 'open' records are subjected to prior censorship in almost all State Archives. The chronological limit for inspection varies from State to State. In Uttar Pradesh and Assam the date is 1901, and permission for access to non-confidential records of a later date (which are open till 1935) has to

be obtained from the Secretariat Departments. The chronological limit in West Bengal is 1901, in Madhya Pradesh 1900, in Bombay 1916, in Mysore 1925, and in Orissa 1857. Bihar, Punjab and Madras observe a 50 year limit and Andhra Pradesh proposes to introduce a 40 year one. In many of the States (e.g., Assam, Bombay, Bihar, West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh) there is no system of retiring confidential records, and thus they are not open at all to research. We consider that a uniform procedure in this respect should be established in all State archives without exception, and that the existing procedures should be modified precisely on the same lines as pointed out in the case of the Union Archives.

## THE COORDINATION OF ARCHIVAL WORK ON ALL-INDIA BASIS : THE PROBLEMS INVOLVED

85. The discussions embodied in the preceding section will have made it amply evident that the existing procedures relating to the treatment of archives, both of the Union and the States, whether they affect the preservation, management, disposal and administration of records or their use by the public exhibit a number of defects, and that these procedures are not only unnecessarily complicated, but unsuited to modern conditions of rapidly increasing production of records. What is more they are oftener than not ineffective and extravagant.

86. In the course of these discussions we have broadly indicated the reforms which must be effected if public records are to play their rightful role both as instruments of public administration and indispensable material for national history, and have laid particular stress on the need for evolving a system of coordinated control over the entire field of archive-work both at the Central and the State levels. We have also made it amply clear that none of the reforms suggested can work properly within the framework of existing arrangements, whether of statutory or executive origin, and have pointed out the need for supplying a statutory framework to what in our view are the fundamental principles underlying these reforms, leaving the details to be worked out in the shape of statutory rules having the force of law. What has not so far been discussed is the question whether, in addition to the systems of control which we wish to see established both in respect of the Union and for each of the States separately, it will be desirable to set up a single body for over-all supervision and control providing for the needs both of the Union and the State Archives. This question will have to be answered before we can proceed to examine in detail the need as well as the scope for legislation affecting public archives.

### Necessity of Co-ordi- nation

87. A system promoting co-ordination of archival activities in the country, so far as they affect public offices, would seem *prima facie* justified in view not only of the shortcomings noticeable in the existing archival procedures, but of the wide divergences which exist in respect of archival practice between one State and another and between the Centre on the one hand and the States in general on the other. Repositories in the States are in various stages

of growth. In some States they are still in their infancy; in others they are yet to come into existence. Maintenance of common standards not only in documentation and arrangement procedures but in those relating to disposal and preservation is the essential pre-condition of the continued survival in good and consultable order of all public records of permanent value. Deviation from these standards is sure to be fatal to any archival collection, and that many valuable collections have disappeared in the past is attributable to this, rather than to any other cause. It is a well-known fact that whenever, following a political or administrative change, a territorial redistribution or reallocation of functions takes place among several authorities, their records tend to become divided, leading first to their physical dispersal and ultimately, in a great majority of cases, to their total disappearance. It is possible to keep track of a document as long as it is safely lodged in the series to which it belongs, but when it leaves that series it is as good as lost. Such events have happened in the past, and are still happening, because there is no uniform body of rules, applicable to all concerned, enjoining the maintenance of the integrity of archive series. Dismembered record series are difficult to consult and more difficult to understand, and a variety of documentation or arrangement practices can only bewilder the record-user, whether he is an administrator or a research worker. Preservation of records in an undisturbed state and their arrangement conformably to a common norm is thus fundamental to their proper utilisation. This is more than a mere pet idea of the archivist; it is a basic requirement of good administration and democratic government, since records kept in order are the only effective means of drawing the attention of the executive to incontrovertible documents and of thus securing executive accountability.

88. Admitting, therefore, the need for some kind of coordination in archive work we have next to examine if the existing arrangements allow any scope for this. So far as the Central Government is concerned, from 1834 till the reforms of 1919 they had the constitutional competence not only to effect the coordination we have in view but to exercise real control over the archive work of the then provincial governments as well as other local administrations. During this period both local governments and administrations constitutionally formed integral parts of the Central administration, and the records of the former could be legally treated as branches of the Central records. In actual practice, however, the Central control was limited to periodical issue of instructions on record-making and record disposal procedures, which were generally followed by the administrations

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concerned. So far as the preservation or the use of inactive records was concerned this control seldom extended beyond occasional tendering of advice. When, for instance, a Record Commission was constituted by the Central Government in 1861 to consider ways and means for preserving records of value, its scope was strictly limited to the archives of the Central Government and those of the local administration in Bengal. As we have already seen, there was no statutory obligation on the part of any Government, Central or Provincial, in respect of their records, except that under the Regulations XVIII and XXI of 1793 (para. 15 above) it was legally binding on the Supreme Government to preserve the records of the Courts and the Revenue authorities within the jurisdiction of the Presidency of Fort William. The operation of the Regulations was extended to any new territory acquired by Central Government in North India. The records in both Bombay and Madras remained unaffected by the provisions of the statute. In 1873 the Regulations were removed from the Statute Book (para. 15 above). The only serious proposal made during the period to bring the State records under the control of the Centre was that which S. C. Hill, a former Keeper of Records, formulated in 1902<sup>40</sup>. But this related to the records already retired in the different provincial archives and had no bearing on the record management or record selection policies of the Governments concerned. Nothing of course came out of it.

89. The constitutional changes brought about by the Act of 1919 drastically reduced the scope of central responsibility in respect of State Archives, a process which was completed with the inauguration in 1937 of Provincial Autonomy. The position remains unaltered even after Independence and although in List I of the 7th Schedule of the Constitution there is an entry relating to "Ancient and historical.....records as may be declared by and under law made by Parliament to be of national importance" that entry as we shall presently see (para. 95 below) does not give the Centre the legal competence to take care of State records. Even so the Centre has never completely abdicated its moral responsibility in respect of these records. In 1919 it set up the Indian Historical Records Commission<sup>41</sup>, composed of a "body of expert advisers whose opinion would carry weight with the records officers" and who would tender advice on matters chiefly relating to access to and utilisation of records both in the Central and Provincial custody as also in the possession of the former State Governments. The lacunae which existed in the

<sup>40</sup> Public Proceedings, March 1903, nos. 97-99.

<sup>41</sup> Department of Education Resolution no. 77 (General), dated 21st March 1919.

prevailing systems were sought to be removed by using the Commission as a clearing house for information and, in a very limited way, as a means of co-ordination between the archival activities at the Central and at the local levels. The Commission has since then undergone several reorganisations, the most significant one being that effected in 1941<sup>42</sup>, which transformed it into a representative body composed not only of the Provincial and State Government nominees but members nominated by Universities and learned societies also. It has two adjuncts : Research and Publication Committee, having the same composition as the parent body which tenders advice both to the Central and the State Governments, and a Local Records Sub-Committee, the scope of whose activities is limited to the Central Records only.

90. It will become readily evident that neither the Commission nor any of its adjuncts are in a position to discharge either its advisory or coordinating functions except in an extremely limited way. They can at best make recommendations to the Governments concerned and that also on specific matters referred to them, but have no means to see the recommendations implemented. The Commission meets no more than once a year and the Research and Publication Committee only twice. There is no permanent machinery to carry on their work during the interval between these meetings. Being rather a large body with a huge membership the Commission is not in a position to meet with greater frequency and it is not in a position to be properly informed concerning the functioning of the archives. Nor has it any machinery for inspection in respect of any records in official custody. The members are mostly persons who have not much archival training or experience, and as such are not in a position to render advice in matters relating to archives-keeping. We, therefore, do not consider that it is possible under the present circumstances to depend on the Commission for the exercise of that coordinated control over the entire field of archive work in the country which we consider essential for the survival of public archives in good order and in a healthy state.

91. The question which we have to answer now is whether the present defects can be removed, as has sometimes been suggested, by vesting the ownership and control of the State Archives in the Central Government, and thus enabling them to administer them in the same way as their own records.

92. There are certain fundamental difficulties, which, in our view, render any step to bring the State records under the direct control of the Centre one of doubtful wisdom. Records bear an organic relation to the authorities which create them, and the

<sup>42</sup> Department of Education, Health and Lands Resolution no. F. 92-9/40-E, dated 16th September 1941.

links which bind them to their creators cannot be sundered without impairing, if not altogether destroying, their value as archives. It is a universally established canon of archives-keeping that records should be kept in the custody of either their originators or the latter's legitimate heirs. The reason is that they are primarily needed in the discharge of day-to-day work by those who created them; no administration can function properly unless it has full access to, or complete control of, its own archives. The transfer of the State records to external control is thus sure to give rise to what appears to us a difficult administrative problem. Moreover, such a transfer can be arranged only by effecting a physical division of the records concerned in as much as no State will, for obvious reasons, be in a position to make over its current records to the Central administration. Why such a division will be impractical and unwise has already been explained [Para. 78(7) and (8)] and we need not discuss that point here. Besides, the management of State records involves problems which can be solved only by a person who is thoroughly acquainted with them. A representative of the Central Government, however competent or knowledgeable, can never expect to acquire the requisite knowledge. The measure, moreover, seems opposed to the basic principles of federal government. Exercise by the federal administration of any control on the records of the component states is a possibility which is never even thought of in a state conforming to the federal type. Even in totalitarian states like the Hohenzollern Germany or Hitler's Third Reich no attempt was ever made to bring State records under the control of the Centre.

#### **Financial Difficulties**

93. We have also to take into consideration the heavy capital and recurring financial liability such a radical step is sure to impose permanently on the Central Revenues. The question before the Centre is not one of dealing with a limited number of collections reasonably restricted in size, but of an almost fantastically huge mass of papers consisting of millions of documents. The Centre, as we have already seen (paras. 18-20 above), has not yet been able to meet its primary obligations in respect of its own records which are formidable in volume. Before the problems relating to them have been fully tackled, it will be, in our view, extremely unwise to formulate a plan for assuming further responsibilities in respect of State Archives.

#### **Opinion in the States**

94. We have also to take into consideration the fact that any step to impose control on the State records is likely to be resented by local opinion, both official and unofficial. Whenever in the course of our tour we were able to sound local opinion on the subject, we were invariably forced to come to the conclusion that such a measure would result in seriously wounding public

susceptibilities in the States. We are, therefore, definitely of the opinion that the proposed measure raises a host of problems without satisfactorily solving a single one and feel persuaded to express our opinion against its adoption. This, in our view, also disposes of the question of setting up zonal repositories under Central control for the purposes of housing such State records as might have been declared to be of 'national importance'.

95. Finally, such a measure would necessitate the enactment **Constitu-**  
**of Central legislation for which the Parliament under the Con-**  
**stitution has no competence.** There is not a single entry in the **Constitu-**  
**tional Diffi-**  
**culties**  
7th Schedule of the Constitution which gives Parliament the necessary power to legislate on State records. Entry 67 in List I, no doubt, empowers the Central Legislature to legislate on "Ancient and historical monuments and records, and archaeological sites and remains declared by or under law made by Parliament to be of national importance", but the exercise of this power presents almost insurmountable difficulties. In the first place the attributives "ancient and historical" in the entry qualify not merely 'monuments' but 'records' as well, and it is difficult, if not impossible, to draw exactly the line between records which are 'ancient and historical' from those which are not, as all records, irrespective of their chronological limit, constitute the very stuff of history. A record-body, moreover, is an organic whole and as such is incapable of division on the basis of the potential research value of its components or any other basis. By the same count, any division of a record collection into 'ancient' and 'recent' cannot be undertaken without destroying its integrity and seriously impairing its evidential value.

Nor is it any the easier to distinguish a record which is of 'national importance' from that which is not. The expression is too vague to serve any useful purpose when applied to public records. Again, the wording "declared by or under law made by Parliament" makes it obligatory that the law itself should specify the records that are of national importance. The declaration has to be made in such terms that it should directly, readily and unmistakably point to the records within its scope and the classification should follow automatically without the intervention of any argument. The problem cannot be solved simply by taking as recommended by the Inter-Ministerial Conference, held in 1956, the year 1919 as the cut-off date prior to which all State records are to be declared of national importance. Apart from the fact that no such general declaration is possible without specifying the records to be so declared, the division of records on a chronological basis, which such a step entails, is open to the same objections as render impracticable their division on any other basis.

**Alternative  
system for  
coordinat-  
ing archival  
activities**

96. It still remains to be decided what alternative system can be thought of in the circumstances for effecting coordination between Central and State archival activities. We may state here that in the course of our investigations in the States we found that while representative local opinion was strongly opposed to any form of active central control, it was quite eager to welcome machinery, set up under the Central auspices, for tendering advice on technical problems relating to archives-keeping and attempting a coordination in the activities of the States if such a machinery could be made fully representative of the States themselves. The arguments in favour of setting up such a central advisory body in our view are quite strong. A body like this, if properly constituted and invested with the requisite authority, will be able to fulfil the moral obligation which the Centre very rightly feels in respect of State records, without at the same time treading on local susceptibilities. This, in our view, will be a practical solution of the deadlock which otherwise the country will have most surely to face. How the proposed body is to be constituted we propose to discuss in a subsequent section.

## THE NEED AND SCOPE OF A LAW RELATING TO ARCHIVES

### A. NECESSITY FOR A LAW

97. The recommendations we have made in the preceding sections envisage the establishment of a complex of three independent, but closely inter-related systems which, taken as a whole, will comprehend the public archival activities of the entire country, *viz.* (1) a system for the Centre (2) a system applicable to each of the States and (3) a third one whose aim would be to connect the two. We have also suggested that to be really effective the first two systems would need statutory foundation embodying the basic principles which underlie the reforms we have in view and a superstructure, built on the same foundation, of rules dealing with consequential matters for giving effect to these principles. On what basis the third should be organised has not been suggested so far. But before this can be taken up it is incumbent on us to examine carefully the need for supplying a statutory basis to the reforms we have proposed.

98. There is no gainsaying the fact that there has been almost a persistent demand from the interested public for a law or laws <sup>Public De-</sup> <sub>mand for</sub> governing Indian Archives since 1930. In that year, following a <sup>Archival</sup> <sub>Legislation</sub> suggestion from Lieutenant-Colonel H. L. O. Garrett, the Indian Historical Records Commission recommended early enactment of laws similar to those in England both by the Centre and the Provinces for the preservation and disposal of records<sup>42</sup>. No action was, however, taken under the impression, hardly justified, that the proposed laws, if enacted, would prevent the record repositories from sending out documents in response to administrative demands. The question was taken up again in a different shape at the 19th Session of the Commission, which recommended the amendment of the existing Destruction of Records Act with a view to preventing unwarranted destruction of public records. The possibility of establishing coordinated control over State records was examined at the 8th (1946) and again at the 12th meeting (1948) of the Research and Publication Committee of the Commission, and by two Sub-Committees appointed by the Government of India, one in 1946, and the other in 1948, to review the problem. They recommended in favour of such control. To enable Parliament to legislate for public records in general, steps were taken in 1949 to amend Entry 67 in the 7th Schedule, List

<sup>42</sup> Resolution VIII, 13th Session, 1930.

I, so as to include 'ancient and historical.....records.....declared by Parliament by law to be of national importance'. Although this did not confer on the Centre the necessary legislative competence, the very attempt at the amendment shows a keen awareness of the need for legislation. In 1949 the Indian Historical Records Commission made a precise proposal for establishing by law a Central Archives Council whose functions would be strictly limited to laying down the archival procedures for the whole of India<sup>44</sup>. In 1957 the matter was taken up by Dr. Raghbir Singh, one of our colleagues, who introduced in the Rajya Sabha his Historical Records (of National Importance) Bill seeking to declare certain classes of records as of national importance and also to provide for their preservation and management. Opinions received on the bill are generally in favour of some such legislation. In November 1958 the problem was carefully examined by an Inter-Ministerial Conference which recommended the appointment of a Committee to report on the subject. In 1959 while welcoming the move the Indian Historical Records Commission reiterated its previous recommendations for early enactment of suitable archival legislation. It will be needless to add that the present Committee owes its existence to these demands.

**Jurisdiction for Legislation**

99. We do not intend to consider the merits or demerits of the various moves so far made for initiating archival legislation. What we wish to emphasise is that all these moves provide an ample index to the genuine anxiety the public have been feeling, for over three decades now, regarding the future of public archives in the country. The reason for this anxiety is not far to seek. Public records, as we have stressed more than once before, are indispensable instruments of public administration. They are an effective means of securing executive accountability. If they protect the rights of the State against frivolous claims of designing individuals, they equally defend the rights of citizens against unlawful encroachments, public or private.

Under an irresponsible form of government whose main function was the maintenance of law and order for the purpose of perpetuating alien rule the problems of creation of records and their preservation was not a matter of vital importance, but in an independent state where a constitutional and democratic government consisting of the representatives of the people and responsible to public opinion is functioning the problem assumes a wholly different aspect. The records constitute a mirror of the nature of the State, a history of its development and manner of working, and a narrative of the processes of policy making, and a

<sup>44</sup> Resolution VII, 26th Session.

report of the effects of the measures taken to implement the policies. A democratic government is essentially a rational process, arguments and precedents are its essence. Such an important instrument of government as records cannot dubiously be founded on and left to be energised by executive orders.

We have also to remember that a highly complex and vastly expanded organisation of administration requires that in a matter so closely related to the functioning of numerous departments and their attached and subordinate offices principles for their guidance should be embodied in a set of rules laid down by the highest legislative organs of the State, for they ought to have stability and prestige.

It becomes even more imperative that laws should govern archival affairs and not executive orders, when we realise how important it is that uniformity should be observed in the creation, preservation, maintenance and disposal of the records not only of the Central Government in its different branches of legislative, judicial and executive functions but also of the State Governments. This is necessary not only for administrative orderliness, but also for the convenience of the generations of scholars who will use them for research.

100. The obligation for orderly maintenance of archives as we have already very clearly shown is not being properly met in respect of the great majority of record-collections, and in many cases it is not being met at all. We fear this unsatisfactory state of affairs will continue so long as the present vagueness and confusion respecting archival responsibilities is allowed to persist. This vagueness can be removed only by placing this executive obligation on a firm foundation, in other words by precisely defining the full extent and implications of responsibility by a statutory enactment. Since the obligation is of a fundamental nature it requires a more stable and secure basis than what an executive order, however carefully worded, can ever be expected to provide.

101. Executive decisions are liable to material alteration, and sometimes complete reversal, not only because the executive itself is variable, but also because its views are easier to change. We hardly need to cite examples to prove this, for the matter is well-known. In 1862, for instance, the Central Government decided to concentrate all their records of permanent value in a single repository. But within a year this very important decision was reversed and the principle was accepted that the Central records should continue to remain, as before, in the Secretariat Offices. In consequence, the country had to wait for over 30 years for a national repository of its own, and when George Forrest examined the accumulations in 1891 many valuable documents

had already perished. Again in 1913 it was decided by the Central Government that no document of an earlier date than 1860 was to be destroyed, whereas just nine years later the same Government came to the opposite conclusion that the same records did contain many ephemeral documents which could easily be destroyed. The consistent administrative practice of keeping records in their natural series was virtually abolished by a stroke of pen in 1937 when Government took action to get the records in all official repositories whether Central or State to be divided physically into several categories, according as they related to Federal affairs or the affairs of the Crown Representative. These are not matters of mere past history, for what has happened in the past may happen again. We need hardly add that such fluctuations in policy do harm to the cause of the archives, because of the inconvenience they cause to those genuinely interested in the study of history.

#### B. THE CONSTITUTIONAL PROBLEMS INVOLVED

102. The above will have made it sufficiently clear that the law we have in view represents something more than a public aspiration, it is an administrative necessity and a practical requirement. It is now incumbent on us to examine next if the three-fold system of coordination we have referred to in para. 97 above should be combined together to form parts of a single Central Statute, or each of the three inter-dependent systems should be treated separately for the purpose of enactment, the part concerning the Centre being enacted by the Central Legislature, and that concerning the States being taken care of by each of the State Legislatures.

**One Law not Possible** 103. We have first to ascertain if it is possible to have a Central Law providing for the three-fold system of coordination we have in view. The position as we find, however, is that there is not even one specific entry in the 7th Schedule of the Constitution which would by itself enable the framing of a law meeting the above requirement. We have already seen that the competence which Entry No. 67 in List I seems to confer in this respect is more or less illusory (para. 95 above) and cannot be made use of in framing a law of the kind we have in view even for the Union records, let alone records of the States. The same may be said of Entry 32 in the same List which confers on Parliament the competence with certain restrictions to legislate in respect to 'property of the Union and the revenue therefrom'. For even if the Union records may be treated as Union property for the purposes of the entry, that would not solve the problem in respect either to State records, or the Central Advisory Body which, in our view, should cater to needs both of the Central

and the State Archives. List III (Concurrent) has an entry which reads : "Evidence and Oaths : recognition of laws, public acts and records and judicial proceedings". But it is clear, this entry vests in the Parliament power in respect only of 'recognition of public records', and not in respect to record themselves. It is, therefore, equally unavailable for the purpose of the enactment we have in view.

104. The inevitable alternative is that suitable laws should be enacted separately for the Centre and for each of the States by their respective legislatures. But here also we are confronted with the difficulty of finding a suitable entry in the 7th Schedule, for there is none. The case is the same with the State List (List II). Entry 12 in the List is an exact counterpart of Entry 67 in List I and is equally incompetent. Entry 45 in the same List which relates to 'Land Revenue, including the assessment and collection of revenue, the maintenance of land records, survey for revenue purposes and records of rights and alienation of revenue', has little relevance to the present problem. The State records for which we are advocating legislation has a more extensive connotation than what is conveyed by the terms 'land-records' or 'records of rights'. While, however, it is clear that none of the existing entries in the Schedule can be relied on even for separate enactments for the Centre and the States, that in itself need not constitute an argument for effecting a suitable amendment in the Constitution. The Constitution confers both on the Union and the State Governments enough general and incidental powers to enable them to frame laws relating to the records within their respective spheres. Our suggestion, therefore, is that these powers should be relied on to frame the separate laws we have recommended.

105. This leaves unsolved the question of how to set up the proposed Central Archival Council. The separate laws to which we have made a reference cannot make provision for such a Council. It, therefore, follows that it can be made into a statutory body only by amending the Constitution. It will, therefore, be necessary to have a suitable entry made in the Concurrent List, in case, we must have a statutory advisory body. Of course, the same purpose as we have in view may be achieved by constituting the proposed body by a Presidential Order in accordance with the provisions (b) and (c) of Article 263 of the Constitution relating to the creation of Inter-State Councils. But this we suggest only as an interim measure, as in our view it will be advisable to have a single Central Law providing for the three-fold system of coordination as we have recommended.

**Recom-  
mendations**

106. Our suggestions, therefore, are that :—

- (1) Steps be taken to amend the Constitution by making a suitable entry in the Concurrent List to enable the framing of a single Central Law that would take care both of the Union and the State Archives.
- (2) Pending the amendment proposed separate archival laws be enacted for the Centre as well as for each of the States.
- (3) As an interim arrangement the proposed Archival Council be constituted by a Presidential Order in accordance with Article 263 of the Constitution. As a long term and permanent measure, however, we would recommend that steps be taken to include a suitable entry in the Concurrent List with a view to enabling the setting up of the Council by a Central Law.

### C. CONTENTS OF THE PROPOSED ARCHIVAL LAW

107. The preceding paragraphs will have clearly shown that within the framework of the present Constitution it is not possible to have one single law providing both for the Central and the State Archives, and the only immediate alternative before us is to arrange for two separate laws, one for the Centre and the other for the States, to be enacted respectively by the Parliament and the State Legislatures. Even so we feel that although passed by different legislative bodies the laws in question should be basically uniform and should conform to the same general principles, though allowance may be made, where called for, for the varying circumstances in each State. The purpose we have in view will be amply served if the proposed Central Law is used as the model which each State should follow in framing their respective legislations. The great advantage of the procedure we suggest arises from the fact that it will enable each State to frame its own archival law suited to its local needs without essentially deviating from the norm which must be conformed to in dealing with archival problems.

108. The laws in question, as we have already indicated more than once before, should embody only the fundamental principles governing the treatment of archives. Detailed instructions regarding the procedures to be followed in their making, management, preservation, disposal or use are, in our view, best left to be dealt with in the rules to be made under the Statutes. We propose below to indicate the general outline of the Central Law we have in view.

109. The scope of the proposed law should in our view Scope of the law embrace the records of (1) all Ministries, Departments and other offices of the Government of India wherever located and whether existing or defunct, (2) all statutory and non-statutory bodies of all-India character, temporary or permanent, set up, controlled, administered and financed by the Government of India, (3) all nationalised undertakings and enterprises whether industrial, commercial or of any other sort, (4) the Union Parliament, and (5) the Supreme Court. So that there may not be any scope for misunderstanding as to what may or may not constitute 'records' for the purposes of the law, we would recommend that the term should be defined as precisely and lucidly as possible. It should in our view include records in any form or on whatever material prepared (e.g., rolls, codices, sheets, files, dossiers, films, photographs, charts, plans, diagrams, sound recordings, etc.)<sup>45</sup>.

110. The law should clearly define the responsibilities of Central Government in respect of the different classes of records indicated in the preceding paragraphs. Government is responsible not only for the care, management, disposal and preservation of all these records, but for ensuring that reasonable facilities are given to the public for their consultation after they reach the stage of non-currency. The law should ensure that all Ministries and other Central bodies (mentioned in para. 109 above) which may be responsible for the records housed outside the National Archives of India, make suitable arrangements for regular selection of those records which are to be permanently preserved and for their safe-keeping, and for the disposal either by destruction or any other way of all papers which may on review be found to be of ephemeral character. The law, in our opinion, should make it quite clear that no records of a date earlier than 1860 are to be destroyed on any account whatever.

111. The law should further make it obligatory on the public bodies concerned to retire to the National Archives repository all their records which have been selected for permanent preservation not later than 25 years after their creation. It is necessary for us to indicate here two possible cases, in respect of which the 25 years limit proposed may not work, (1) the case in which the records to be retired pertain to a body which has become defunct and whose functions have not been taken up by any other body, and (2) the case in which a public body may want to retain for purposes of administration or for any other special reason, certain records or certain categories of records although they may have exceeded the 25 year limit. In the first case our view is that the law should provide for the retirement

<sup>45</sup>In this connection we should like to call attention to the definition of public records given in para. 4 above.

of the records as soon as the creating or the owning body becomes defunct. In the second case, the law should permit the public bodies concerned to withhold their retirement with the consent and approval of the Central Government.

The public bodies concerned should have the statutory authority to recall any records which may have been retired to the National Archives.

### Accessibi- lity

112. As we have recommended in para. 83 above all public records which may be more than 40 years old should be made available for public inspection in the National Archives of India. It is at the same time our view that the Director of Archives, Government of India, should be made responsible for ensuring that reasonable facilities are available to the public for inspecting and obtaining copies in whatever form (manuscript, typescript, facsimile, photographic) of any public records in his custody that may have been thrown open to research. He should further be empowered to permit any person to inspect records beyond the limit fixed if the latter has obtained special authority in that behalf given by a competent officer of the public body concerned.

### Role of the Director of Archives

113. For reasons already explained in paras. 60-61 above it is considered necessary by us that the powers and responsibilities of the Director of Archives in respect of public records should be statutorily defined. He should, in the first place, have the full charge of the National Archives and of all records therein, and it should be his duty to undertake all practicable steps for the preservation of records under his charge. In the second place, he should have the legal custody of all records in his charge, and to enable him to discharge his functions in this respect, it should be provided in the law that the transfer of any public records to his custody by their owners will not affect their legal validity and that a copy of or extract from any public records in his custody certified as true and authentic by the Director of Archives or any other officer authorised by the latter and sealed with the seal of the National Archives should be admissible as evidence in any legal proceedings in the same way as their originals.

114. The Director, moreover, should, under the proposed law, have the power to do whatever may appear to him necessary or expedient for maintaining or improving the utility of the National Archives. Powers should in particular be vested in him for compiling and making available guides to and lists, calendars and edited texts of the records in his custody; bringing out publications concerning the activities of and facilities available in the National Archives; regulating the conditions under which members of the public may inspect records in his charge

or use this facility in the National Archives; accepting responsibilities for safe-keeping of any records other than public records which may be received as gift or loan; lending records for display at exhibitions or for other special purposes with the concurrence of the appropriate public body; and ensuring regular transfer to his custody of all records from the different public bodies which may be ripe for retirement.

115. We also consider it necessary that the Director of Archives should be entrusted with the responsibility of co-ordinating, guiding and supervising all operations in the public bodies connected with the management, administration, preservation, selection, disposal and retirement of their records, while the latter should be placed under an obligation to conduct all these operations under the guidance and advice of the Director of Archives. It should be open to the Director of Archives to postpone retirement of any class of records until arrangement has been completed for their reception in the National Archives whenever he is convinced that such a course would be justified in the interest of their proper administration.

116. With a view to eliminating any ephemeral materials that may still be found among the records in the custody of the Director of Archives the latter should in our view be required to subject all these records to a continued review, and be authorised to destroy or dispose of in any other way, with the concurrence of the public body concerned, any papers which are duplicated in the public records selected for permanent preservation or any other papers which on any other ground may be thought unfit for permanent retention. This power he is to exercise subject to the restrictions referred to in para. 110 above or any other restrictions that the Government may think necessary. He should, moreover, maintain a list of all records which may be destroyed in this way.

117. Among public records mention may be made of those of the Supreme Court which has its own arrangements for keeping and disposing of records. The proposed law in our view should authorise the Supreme Court to continue to make, as before, its own rules regarding management, administration and selection of records for permanent preservation. The Court should be equally empowered to make arrangement for the preservation in its own custody of all its records as may be of permanent value and frame its own rules for public access to them.

**Categories  
of Records  
Needing  
Special  
Treatment**

118. The other records needing special treatment include those of Parliament and the statutory bodies of all-India character mentioned in para. 109 above. These bodies should, in our

view, be empowered to make their own arrangements for systematic management, review and disposal of their records and determine the time-limit or procedure of their retirement to the National Archives of India for their permanent preservation.

**Report on the Working of the Law** 119. To keep the Parliament informed of the actual working of the proposed law we consider it essential that a report in that behalf should be annually placed before both houses of the Parliament.

**Rules to be Framed Under the Law** 120. We have explained earlier that the statute we have in view can deal only with the general principles relating to archival matters and that so far as the actual application of these principles is concerned it will be necessary to provide for them in rules framed on the basis of the statute itself. The field which should be covered by these rules has been indicated in paragraphs 34-53, 58-61 above. But here we propose to draw particular attention to some important points which, in our view, ought to be given special emphasis in these rules. In the first place, we consider it desirable that the management of matters relating to public records should be entrusted to a single Ministry or a single organ of the Government and that the relations between the Minister and the Director of Archives, who is to discharge his functions under his guidance and direction should be precisely defined in these rules. Secondly, we believe that for the proper implementation of the reforms we are advocating it is desirable that all public bodies brought within the purview of the proposed law should adapt their documentation, arrangement, preservation and disposal procedures to the requirements indicated by us, and that it should be made particularly obligatory on them to keep their records arranged in the original order of their creation and to refrain from disturbing that order on any account whatever. It should be made equally incumbent on them not to divide their records on the ground of any change that may occur in their respective jurisdictions whether by way of contraction or expansion or any redistribution that may take place in their prescribed functions, or on any other ground whatever. Any division of archival assets that may be necessitated by any administrative, jurisdictional or organisational change should, as already pointed out by us, be strictly limited to records on which action yet remains to be completed.

121. With regard to the disposal of records we think it necessary to stress that special care should be taken by all public bodies concerned while reviewing the records relating to the period 1860-1900, and that none of them should be actually destroyed, even though found to be administratively unimportant, except with the concurrence of the Director of Archives, Government of India. A list should be maintained by the Ministries

of all records destroyed in accordance with the procedure. As to the records in the Director of Archives' own custody it should be made incumbent on him to send annually for examination to the proposed Central Advisory Council the lists of all papers selected for destruction. He should be authorised to destroy them if no advice is received from the Council to the contrary within a period of six months from their submission.

122. There is one other point which in our view should figure in the statutory rules proposed. We have already recommended that the law should provide that all records which may be 40 years old should be made accessible to the public. We have also suggested that the records of later years and less than 40 years old should be accessible to qualified research workers, including University sponsored students upto a limit of 10 years. It will, of course, be open to Government to prohibit the availability of records less than 40 years old. It is desirable that the proposed statutory rules should make provision for this limited access period and vest in the Director of Archives discretionary power to permit scholars to consult records falling within the prescribed limits.

123. While we consider that the general principles indicated **Laws for the States** in paras. 109-119 should be embodied in a Central Statute, we would at the same time recommend that the State laws should be framed as far as possible on the model of the above Statute, after it has been enacted, keeping in view the varying circumstances of the individual States concerned. The State laws, in our view, should in addition make provision for the maintenance and preservation of records of such local bodies as Municipalities, City Corporations, District Boards, Local Boards and the like.

124. It remains to be added that it does not seem practicable to include either in the Central or the State Laws any provision regarding the preservation of or control over records in private custody. But this is a subject which we propose to examine in a subsequent section.

#### D. PROPOSED CENTRAL ADVISORY COUNCIL ON ARCHIVES

125. In paragraph 96 above we have stressed the need for **Objects** setting up a Central body which would advise both the Union and the State Governments on all matters connected with the management, administration, preservation, disposal and public use of records, and would effect coordination not only between archival activities in one State and another but between those of the Central on the one hand and the States on the other. We have

also seen why under the present Constitution it is not possible to provide for such a body in a Central Statute and that, as matters stand, it can be constituted only by a Presidential Order in accordance with provisions (b) and (c) of Article 263 of the Constitution. It is now incumbent on us to examine in detail how this Council should be composed and what should be the precise scope of its functions.

**Composition: Representation of the States**

126. It is necessary for us to stress in the first place that if the Council is to function properly it should be fully representative of all the States forming the Union. It is only by investing each State with a right of representation on the proposed body and by providing each State with an opportunity to place before the Council through its accredited member its particular opinion on a problem under consideration that we can hope to make the Council voice with authority opinion in all matters pertaining to State Archives. The advice which the proposed body may tender or guidance which it may offer will carry weight with the States only if the latter are enabled to participate in its deliberations and to contribute materially to the formulation of its policies. Our investigations in the States have also convinced us that while the general opinion in the States is firmly opposed to any kind of control being exercised over the State Archives by the Central executive, it is quite eager to welcome a Central Advisory Council on the lines we are proposing, provided it was made representative of the States themselves.

127. There is another side to the question which should not be lost sight of in this connection. Only a representative body like the one we have in view can provide opportunities for that exchange of experience and pooling up of information which is essential to the building up of a uniform system of archives-keeping for the entire country. If a decision to be taken by the proposed Council on any archival problem is to lead to any positive results that decision should not be arrived at on the basis of mere theoretical speculations but should be based on actual experience, and take full account of the varying circumstances in the States. It is by keeping constant and close contact with persons having intimate experience of State Archives that a Central Council can expect to make a correct assessment of the archival needs of the different States. The inevitable corollary, therefore, seems to be that the Central Council should have 15 members representing the 15 States which now constitute the Union. The members in our view are to be nominated by the State Governments themselves though the formal appointment should be made by the President of the Union.

128. Besides the nominees of the States, the Council should have 10 additional members of which no less than four are to represent the Central Government. The Director of Archives, Government of India, should naturally be one of the four. He will be in a position to place at the disposal of the advisory body the technical knowledge and experience essential for its deliberations and it is desirable that he should be present at all its meetings. The remaining six members in our view should be non-officials selected by the Central Government from among eminent scholars including University Professors who have distinguished themselves in the archival field or in the domain of modern Indian history. They will take care of the interests of research scholars and other users of public records.

129. All members whether nominated by the Central or the State Governments should in our view be appointed by the President for a term of five years. The Council should have as Chairman a person whose voice will command universal respect, and whose inclusion in the body will confer on it dignity and prestige. In our view the Education Minister (or any other Minister who may be in-charge of the Archives) should occupy the position of the Chairman of the proposed body. As for its General Secretary, we do not at present find any other alternative than that of requiring the Director of Archives, Government of India, to hold the position till such time as it may be possible for the Central Government to provide a permanent Secretary. As, however, the Director is expected to be fully occupied with the duties he has to discharge as the head of the National Archives, in addition to those which are sure to devolve on him under the proposed act, we would strongly recommend that the body should have the services of a whole-time Administrative Secretary working under the former's advice and guidance.

130. The Advisory Council in our view should meet at least once a year, the venue of the meeting for every year being fixed by the Chairman in consultation with the members. If, however, the Chairman is convinced that any matter of great urgency needs to be placed before the Council for its immediate consideration, he may call a special meeting at any time during the year.

131. As all the members of the Advisory Council will be eminent men usually having their hands full with other work and, in consequence, it may not be possible for them to devote that undivided attention to the tasks entrusted to that body which is essential to their successful accomplishment, we feel it necessary that the Advisory Council should appoint a Standing Committee consisting of seven persons selected from among its own members.

Its Chairman, who is normally to be a non-official, should be selected by the Chairman of the Advisory Council, and the Administrative Secretary of that body should act as the Secretary of the Committee. The Advisory Council should have the right to invite experts from outside, whether official or non-official, to be associated with the Standing Committee in discharge of any special duty that may be assigned to it. The selection of the members of the Standing Committee should be made for their knowledge of archive problems and modern Indian history. It should be the duty of the Standing Committee to prepare programmes of work for the Advisory Council, to collect information on the basis of which programmes can be prepared, and to make arrangements for the implementation of the programmes after they have been approved by the parent body. They may meet as often as necessary depending upon the condition of work. The tenure of the members composing the Committee should be five years and as in the case of the parent body all members should be eligible for re-appointment. If necessary the Standing Committee may with the permission of the Chairman of the parent body appoint sub-committees to deal with special problems relating to archives, such as, those relating to preservation, record-management, disposal, public access, publication etc.

#### **Functions of the Council**

132. The functions of the Advisory Council as we have already stressed should primarily be advisory and the scope of its activities should relate to all problems vitally affecting the up-keep as well as the use of public records of all categories whether of the Union or of the States. Its additional duty should be to explore ways and means by which the archive work of the entire country can be conducted on a scientific basis and in conformity with uniform standards and bring about such coordination between the activities of the Central and State Archives as would promote gradual development of uniform archival procedures and practices all over the country.

#### **Compila- tion and dissemina- tion of tech- nical infor- mation**

133. To promote all these objects it would be necessary for it to pool information on the state of archives and in regard to the administrative arrangements at the Centre and in the States, to study carefully the problems connected with these archives, to endeavour to find solutions for them, and to offer these solutions to the authorities concerned. This will entail an extensive study not only of the archival methods in use in India but also those in progressive countries in Europe and America, and it will be incumbent in our view on the Advisory Council to try to take full advantage of the experience acquired and advances made in the field in the leading archives of the world. As a logical corollary, it will be one of the duties of this body to build up under its aegis a body of useful technical information on different

aspects of archive-keeping and to make arrangements for its dissemination among those needing them. The last task, we think, can be best accomplished by systematic issue of reports or circulars embodying the requisite technical information.

134. To enable the body to discharge efficiently its advisory **Inspection** or coordinating functions it will be necessary to authorise it to **of Archives** arrange for periodical inspection of the different archive repositories whether belonging to the States or to the Centre. The **Reposito-ries** body should have the authority to entrust the duty of inspection to any of its members or any other person whom by reason of his special experience in the field, it may consider competent, to discharge this duty. Reports on the inspection carried out and all recommendations made on its basis should as a matter of routine be placed before the Governments responsible for the archives. It will be equally the duty of the Advisory Council to examine any lists of records marked out for destruction that may be submitted to it annually either by the National Archives of India or any State Archives, and the Council will be within its right to tender to the parties concerned whatever advice it may feel necessary on the desirability or otherwise of any papers included in the lists. While we consider that it should be open to the Government concerned to accept or reject the advice tendered, we think it desirable that it should be made incumbent on the latter to keep the Advisory Council informed of its reactions to the latter's proposals and of the progress made in implementing them where they are found acceptable. This will provide the Council with an opportunity to explain to the Government concerned the implications of its recommendations and to try to resolve any difference of opinion that may arise.

135. There is yet another field in which the Advisory Council **Grants-in-aid to States** may play an active and useful role. We have in paragraph 69 **aid to** called attention to the fact that archive work has not been placed **States** on a sound footing in many States for lack of sufficient funds, and in the course of our talks with official representatives of almost every State we visited, we gathered that each State was only too eager to re-organise their records conformably to scientific standards if requisite financial assistance could be found. We feel that this is a matter for active consideration by the Central and the State Governments, and while we are not in a position to make any positive recommendation, we do recommend that the Central Government should consider the desirability of giving financial assistance to the States so that they may without undue delay and consequent apprehension of damage to the records provide suitable accommodation and proper equipment for preservation of their archives. If this

view is found acceptable to the Government, the proposed arrangement of grants may be processed through the Advisory Council which may be required to examine each case on its merits and make the requisite recommendation to the Government. This body, if constituted on the lines we have indicated, will be in the best position to assess the needs of each State requiring help and to draw up a realistic proposal on the basis of actual facts studied and examined by it.

**National  
Register of  
Private  
Archives**

136. Finally, the Council will also be of substantial help in promoting the project which, we understand, the Central Government have undertaken, of conducting, in collaboration with the State Governments, a survey of important archives in private custody, and of preparing a National Register of such records. The Central Government have set up a small Central Committee for drawing up the survey programmes and for coordinating and guiding the activities of the different State Governments in this behalf. The Central Government also make an annual grant to the State Governments participating in the scheme. We learn from the proceedings of the second meeting of the National Register Committee (3 September 1960) that in their opinion the task undertaken is not making sufficient progress owing, among other reasons, to the absence both at the Centre and in the States of appropriate organisations that would give full-time attention to the task. The Committee has, therefore, recommended that the National Register Committee should be reconstituted so as to include representatives from such State Governments as may cooperate in the programme and that the body should help in effectively coordinating the work done in the States. While agreeing with the main recommendations of the Committee, we wish to point out that the central advisory body if constituted on the lines indicated by us would provide the exact machinery which in the Committee's view will be able to undertake better planning and better coordination of the survey activities. As the Advisory Council is to be fully representative of the State Governments and will in addition consist of eminent University Professors and archival experts its voice is sure to carry as great a weight in all matters relating to archives in private custody as in those connected with State Archives. We, therefore, find no hesitation in recommending that the functions of the National Register Committee as outlined in the Committee's proceedings should be entrusted to the Advisory Council, which through its standing Committee, will be in a better position to supervise and guide all operations necessary to be carried out in this behalf.

**Secretariat  
Personnel**

137. The various duties outlined above will necessarily entail not only an enormous amount of technical work, such, for

instance, as study of archival problems, inspection of State Archives, drawing up of reports and recommendations, compilation of information through reports and circulars and the like, but also an equally enormous volume of secretariat work. We have suggested the creation of the post of a permanent Administrative Secretary who would bear the main burden of processing all these tasks. He, in our view, will, however, need substantial assistance, both technical and administrative, from a full time staff working under his guidance. It is too early to assess the precise strength of the staff which may ultimately be required, but a start, we think, may be made with a reasonably modest staff of four Research Officers having a status and a salary not inferior to that of the Assistant Directors in the National Archives of India. It will be a logical corollary from the above that the salary and status of the Administrative Secretary should be similar to those of the Deputy Director of Archives, Government of India. To enable the officers to discharge their duties efficiently it would be necessary to provide that they should be selected from among persons who possess adequate knowledge of and experience in archive-work with an equally wide and sound knowledge of modern Indian history.

138. It is obvious that the expenses incurred by the Advisory Council in discharging its functions and in entertaining the staff outlined above should be a charge on the Central Revenues. The expenses would include those incurred by members on tours of inspection of State Archives or in attending meetings of the Advisory Council, as also in preparing its reports, information pamphlets and other literature. It logically follows that it should have a separate budget of its own and have the authority to spend the sums provided for it on the different programmes included in the scope of its activities.

139. We further recommend that the Advisory Council should furnish the Central Government with an annual report on its activities which should be placed before both the Houses of Parliament along with the annual report on the working of the Central law on Archives. A similar report may be drawn up by Council in respect of its activities touching only the State Archives, which may similarly be placed by the State Governments concerned before the State Legislatures.

140. It remains to find a suitable name for the advisory body proposed above. Since its main functions would be advisory, and since, moreover, its activities would embrace public records all over India, we think, an appropriate name for the body would be INDIAN ARCHIVAL COUNCIL. Such a

nomenclature in our view would be accurately descriptive both of its status and its functions.

**Existing  
Advisory  
bodies on  
Archives :  
their future**

141. The constitution of the Council on the lines indicated above will, in our view, render redundant all other advisory bodies set up by the Central Government which are at present performing, some of the functions which, according to the recommendations made by us, should in their entirety be entrusted to the new organisation. A reference has already been made to three of the existing advisory bodies *viz.*, the Indian Historical Records Commission, the Research and Publication Committee and the Local Records Sub-Committee. The first two of these have advisory duties in respect both of the Central and State Archives, while the activities of the last are confined only to the Central Archives. Since, however, the same advisory functions are going to be entrusted to the proposed Archival Council, there does not seem any particular necessity for continuing any of these organisations. Simultaneous existence of more than one advisory body discharging almost the same functions will be unnecessarily intricate. In recommending the replacement of all these bodies by a single central advisory body, whose voice will carry weight with all concerned, we have taken into consideration the past history of each of these bodies as also the value which is attached to them by public sentiment. The Indian Historical Records Commission, for instance, has been in existence since 1919 and one of its functions, in addition to those which it has been discharging as an advisory body has been to organise an annual gathering of historians and provide them with an opportunity to read research papers based on original sources. But the Indian History Congress, which is a voluntary non-official organisation of historians, provides the same opportunities for reading of research papers and in our view such a Congress rather than a body primarily concerned with technical matters relating to archives, is the proper forum under whose learned auspices such papers should be read. We are not aware of any other archival organisation anywhere in the world which devotes much of its energies to objects having no special bearing on archive-work, and we firmly believe that an archival advisory body should not encumber itself with non-archival duties if it is to fulfil its primary obligations in respect of archives.

**National  
Committee  
of Archi-  
vists**

142. Besides the three advisory bodies mentioned above, there is still in existence another called the National Committee of Archivists constituted by the Government of India in 1953. It is composed exclusively of the heads of the Central and the State Archives, and its functions are limited to discussions on problems relating to archive-keeping and archive-preservation and

tendering advice on these subjects to the Governments concerned. While we agree that archivists in India should meet for periodical exchange of opinions and experiences which are likely to be useful to them in their daily work, and that one of the objects of the National Committee of Archivists, as we have understood them, is to provide such a forum, it does not appear to us that the Committee as constituted at present is meeting this object adequately. We think that with the establishment of the Indian Archival Council it will be necessary to redefine the scope, functions and composition of the Committee.

## THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF INDIA

143. In paragraph 60 above we have expressed the opinion that the National Archives will be required to play a more active role in the record-management programmes of the Central Government than is possible for it to do under the existing arrangements. We have also pointed out broadly what this role should be. In Section IV(C) have been indicated the scope and the extent of the responsibilities which in our view should be entrusted to the National Archives by a Central Law. But as explained earlier (para. 61), the reforms we are recommending would necessitate not only certain changes in the organisation of the National Archives but a radical re-thinking on what should or should not be the proper sphere of its activities.

144. The National Archives of India, known as the Imperial Record Department till 1947, was founded in 1891 with the object of housing the inactive records of the Central Government and of facilitating their increasing use by the public. Since then both its holdings and the scope of its activities have steadily expanded with the result that today it is the biggest and the best equipped record repository in Asia. In recent times it has assumed many new responsibilities, some of which do not have any relation with its primary and substantive functions. The various duties it has been discharging can best be reviewed under the following heads.

**Acquisi-  
tions: Non-  
current re-  
cords**

145. Although the National Archives is primarily meant for the housing of the non-current records of the Central Government selected for permanent preservation, there still seems to be a good deal of mis-understanding as to what should be its proper acquisition policy. An index to this misunderstanding is provided by the expression 'Secretariat Record Room' used in the *Manual of Office Procedure* as an alternative designation of the Department. The inevitable consequence is that the Department is being consistently used as a place of storage for all kinds of official files, current, semi-current, or non-current, ephemeral or of permanent value. There is, as we have seen, no well-articulated programme either for selection of records for permanent preservation or for their regular retirement to the Department. While some agencies have transferred to the Department their most recent records, the greater majority of them have not transferred even a single scrap of paper. This is no doubt

due, to a large extent, to the acute shortage of space in the Departmental building, 16 miles of whose shelving is almost fully occupied with materials of one kind or another, but this is partly attributable also to the absence of a methodical retirement programme to which we have already drawn attention. To remove the first shortcoming we have strongly recommended that top-most priority should be given to the construction of the proposed annexe to the present premises and that the Department should be shorn of materials which are of no value to it (para. 53 above). How to tackle the second we have indicated in detail in para. 52 above and also in the second dealing with the contents of the proposed archival law.

146. The lack of a well-articulated acquisition policy has also **Published** been responsible for the rapid accumulation in the Department **Material** of a huge mass of materials which are non-archival in character. The repository of the archives is often treated as a place where any material might be dumped for which Government agencies have no storage space. The accumulations which have resulted from this practice include an enormous collection of books, pamphlets, reports, gazettes and what not, many of which are duplicated or triplicated in the Departmental library, and for the greater bulk of which neither the Department nor the scholars visiting it have any real use. Mention may be made in this connection of a huge collection (2016 bundles and 840 volumes) of British printed patent specifications acquired as recently as 1953 which occupy a substantial portion of the shelving space available. We have already recommended that the Department should get rid of these useless accretions (para 53 above). We wish also to recommend that the present practice of retiring to the Department materials other than non-current records should cease, and that so far as printed literature is concerned the Departmental acquisition policy should be strictly limited to works dealing with or having a bearing on archives, modern Indian history and ancillary subjects.

147. The Department, moreover, maintains a fairly large collection of oriental manuscripts dealing mostly with literary, religious, medicinal, astrological and similar topics but very rarely with history. Following a demand recently made by the Estimates Committee for a repository which should house non-archival manuscripts the Department has been asked to collect and take over from private sources manuscripts declaredly of non-archival significance. The collection is, therefore, likely to grow in size in years to come. The manuscripts of the above description have their value and the Central Government have certainly a duty in respect of their preservation. But we do not think that the National Archives is the right institution to take care of them, and it can do so only at the expense of its primary obligations

**Oriental Manuscripts**

in respect of the Central Government's own records. The right place for the preservation of such manuscripts is in our view a museum or a manuscript library and we should recommend that the oriental collection accumulated in the Department should be handed over to some such institution.

**Private  
Papers**

148. In recent years, the Department has also acquired a number of private papers (including stray historical documents, and fragments of family or personal archives) by gift or by purchase. There does not seem, however, any well-defined policy in this respect, and we recommend that the acquisition programme of the Department should be limited as far as possible to private archives which may throw light on important phases of modern Indian history or which may help to fill in the gaps in the existing holdings of the Department. Among these should be classed private papers of statesmen, high government officials, writers, scientists and all eminent Indians who have played or may play a significant role in the country's history. Private papers of mere local or regional importance should, in our view, be excluded from the programme. The right place to house them are State Archives or local museums or institutions.

**Microfilm  
Copies**

149. Since 1948 the Department has been acquiring microfilm copies of records and documents bearing on modern Indian history available in foreign repositories, public as well as private, with the object of supplementing the materials available in the Department, and thus saving the Indian scholars the expense of going abroad for consulting papers not available in the country. Under this programme, microfilm copies of significant documents have been obtained from well-known repositories in the United Kingdom, France, Netherlands, Norway, Denmark and the United States of America. The collection though small is most valuable for the study of India's recent past and is being increasingly used by scholars. We feel, therefore, no hesitation in recommending that the programme should be carried out by the Department at an accelerated speed and the requisite foreign exchange should be made available for enabling early implementation of the project.

150. Before we conclude this topic it is necessary for us to emphasise that the primary duty of the National Archives is to house only such non-current records of the Central Government as may be deemed fit for permanent preservation and that all other acquisition programmes which we have recommended should be regarded as forming its secondary duty only. A microfilm collection, a collection of private archives and a library of printed books and documents bearing on modern Indian history are no

doubt necessary adjuncts to the Department's archival holdings, but the scope of these collections should be strictly limited to the object which they are required to fulfil, namely, that of supplementing the information furnished by the available records. They should on no account be allowed to grow as independent units pursuing independent acquisition policies.

151. Next to accession deserve to be considered those activities of the Department which relate to preservation and repair of records. These activities are taken care of by the Preservation Division of the Department which has at its head an Assistant Director with a good science degree and considerable archival experience to his credit, and a fairly large staff of scientific as well as manual workers. It has adopted the latest techniques of repair and renovation of documents both mechanical and manual. It provides arrangements for air-cleaning, vacuum fumigation, lamination, manual repair and binding as also for microfilming and photostating of records. It has as its adjunct a research laboratory which undertakes testing of repair materials both for the Department and outside agencies who may require help. It is also engaged in research on different problems arising from and relating to manuscript preservation under tropical conditions. But although primarily concerned with the conservation of the Central Government's records the preservation programme of the Department has suffered because it has been continually saddled with repair or photo-copying duties which have no reference to its normal work. There seems to be a vague popular impression that the Department is somehow intimately concerned with the preservation of old manuscripts wherever they may be located. In consequence, it is often flooded with requests from both private parties and institutions for the repair or photo-copying of their manuscript collections. The Department has recently taken up, among others, two large programmes relating to the conservation of the Raza Library manuscripts and of those in the custody of the Gandhi Memorial Trust. It is far from our intention to suggest that no steps should be taken to repair these collections. They are certainly of very great value and must be preserved at all cost. But we do not think that the best way to realise these aims is to burden the National Archives with the task of their repair and thereby force it to neglect its primary duty of conserving Central Government's own records. It is, in our view, time that the Department be relieved of these additional functions and is required to devote its undivided attention to the fulfilment of its primary obligations. So far as records or documents other than those of the Central Government are concerned we believe the National Archives' activities should be limited to advisory work.

Preservation, Repair  
and Photo-  
duplication

**Arrangement, Analysis and Description of Records**

152. Records are maintained for their use, and to facilitate this it is necessary that they should not only be kept arranged in accordance with scientific principles but they should be analysed and listed in proper inventories, guides, and, where necessary, in descriptive lists. Guides and inventories are also necessary for exercising effective control over records in the Departmental custody. A large portion of the records *viz.*, those received particularly from the defunct Residencies and Political Agencies remain still to be arranged and restored to their original order. Most of these collections are still without proper lists or inventories. The tasks of re-arrangement or listing should, in our view, receive high priority.

**Indexing and Descriptive Listing**

153. A programme which has seriously impeded the implementation of these tasks is that relating to indexing of pre-1859 records. The programme was taken up in 1940 in preference to less costly, if also less ambitious, descriptive listing and although twenty years have since passed the Department has been able to produce only two volumes of Land Revenue Index (1830-59) and one volume of Index to the Foreign and Political Department Records (1756-1780). These indexes may be of use to the intelligent amateur but it is doubtful if they will ever meet the need of a more serious researcher. A scholar usually likes to have a precise idea as to the contents of every document relating to his period, a requirement which can be met only by full descriptive lists. We wish, therefore, to recommend that the present elaborate and expensive process of indexing entire series of records be given up and be replaced by the comparatively cheap and less elaborate task of descriptive listing. Such listing, however, should be limited to important collections or series.

**Publication Programmes**

154. The major publication programmes of the Department include printing *in extenso* of (1) the General Letters to and from the Court of Directors (1748-1800) in 21 volumes, (2) Selections from English records or texts, (3) records in oriental languages and select documents not included in (2) above. Of these schemes, the first has been entrusted to external editors appointed by the Government of India under the general-editorship of the Director of Archives. But in actual practice the brunt of the publishing responsibilities including those relating to textual editing, annotation, indexing and other incidental tasks devolve on the Departmental staff, and even so only seven out of the 21 volumes projected have been produced in the 18 years that have passed since the first formulation of the programme in 1942. The volumes included in the second scheme are to be edited by the Director of Archives himself and only two, *viz.*, *Indian Travels of Thevenot and Careri* and *Major Browne's Correspondence* have

so far seen the light. Both editing and publication of the volumes included in Scheme III constitute the responsibility of such outside agencies as may make an agreement in this behalf with the Government of India, and the National Archives have normally to do very little in this series beyond selection and transcription of the documents to be published.

Besides the above the National Archives have since 1958 taken up on behalf of the Union Ministry of Education a comprehensive and elaborate programme of publishing selections of educational records from 1860 to 1947. The printing of only the first volume in the series has so far been completed.

Finally, the National Archives have also undertaken the task of calendaring the Persian records of the late Foreign and Political Department and have since 1911, when the project was first taken up, brought out 10 volumes covering the period 1759-1793.

155. Impressive as all these undertakings are they seem keyed to the one end of making available to the scholar at distance, *i.e.*, the scholar who is unable to visit the archives, full texts or detailed summaries of all the important series in the Departmental custody or extensive selections from them. The object is no doubt laudable, but we have also to consider how far this is capable of implementation in actual practice. The records in the National Archives already cover 16 miles of shelf space, and if we add to these other Union records which are scattered among numerous offices in India the total archival holdings which any serious publication programme has ultimately to take into account become almost fantastic in size. There is hardly any chance of even a reasonable selection from this enormous mass of material ever being made available to the 'distant scholar'. We have seen that in 49 years the National Archives have been able to bring out only ten volumes of *Calendars of Persian Correspondence* and in eighteen years no more than seven volumes of *Fort William—India House Correspondence series*. It may be mentioned also that the Public Record Office, London, after more than 60 years' work has barely completed the publication of a small fraction of only one series in its custody and has not been able even to touch other equally important series. These examples should make us pause before we think of burdening the Department with ambitious and costly<sup>46</sup> publication programmes of the kind noted above.

Lacunae in  
the present  
Publication  
Programme

156. The programmes, moreover, are at present limited to several well-known series belonging mostly to the 18th Century.

<sup>46</sup>A recent calculation shows that each volume in the *Fort William—India House Correspondence series* costs approximately Rs. 50,000 in terms of expenditure on printing and labour. A *Calendar* costs about the same amount, if not more.

Used for the most part by historians interested in the 18th Century, they can be of little direct help to researchers dealing with later periods. But recent times have brought to the forefront a new class of readers, particularly, economic and social historians, who want to work directly on the enormous and rapidly increasing mass of modern accruals, which are still outside the Departmental programme. The problem before the Department, therefore, is whether it should continue to cater, as before, for only a limited section of readers or whether it should not rather adapt its programmes to the needs of the largest number of record-users. The latter alternative seems to us most reasonable, but if it is accepted the Department will have to think of forms of publication other than the reproduction of full texts or calendars of an entire series of records. The answer, we believe, is provided by descriptive lists. They are much easier to compile and take much shorter time to complete and afford a more accurate idea of the contents of the series to which they relate than, for instance, an elaborately edited volume of selections from the same series. These lists will enable the record-user to find his way to his precise requirements, and if he needs a full text, a microfilm or photostatic copy can always be supplied to him on demand. It is estimated that a negative microfilm copy of the entire material contained in a volume in the *Fort William* series can be made at a cost of Rs. 100 only and a positive copy can be furnished at half of that amount.

**Changes  
Suggested**

157. We are, therefore, of the view that the present practice of publishing the full text or abridged summaries of a record series in its entirety or selections from them should cease as soon as the programmes in hand have been completed, and that the privilege of full publication should be extended only to such special collections as may relate to a phase of history of which there is at present little or no knowledge, or may reflect a period for which few authorities exist, or to documents which once printed would continue to be read for their intrinsic worth by a wide public and not merely by a limited class of readers. So far as the Educational Records are concerned, we would recommend that the entire task of their editing and publication should be taken out of the hands of the National Archives and should either be undertaken by an appropriate Branch of the Ministry of Education itself or entrusted to any suitable institution.

**The Indian  
Archives**

158. Apart from the publications mentioned above the National Archives also issues a bi-annual journal called *The Indian Archives* which deals mainly with technical matters relating to archive-science, and publishes information on the archival activities not only in India but all over the world. The journal

also constitutes a forum for exchange of ideas and experience in archival matters among leading archivists in the world. It has been playing a very active role in the dissemination of useful information relating to the archival field and we feel no hesitation in recommending that the Department should continue to publish it as before. It has along with many other publications fallen into arrears owing mainly to printing difficulties. We wish particularly to recommend that the matter deserves to be carefully examined by Government and better printing facilities should be made available to the Department.

159. One of the most important functions of the National Archives is to make its archival holdings and the information contained in them easily available to all persons wanting to consult them whether for research or for other academic purposes. Besides supplying records for reference to official agencies and researchers who work in the Departmental Research Room, the Department undertakes to furnish information available in records or in published documents to all types of investigators whose number is steadily on the increase. Prolonged researches are often undertaken on behalf of both government agencies and members of the public for collecting information bearing on their subjects of enquiry. There are arrangements for supply to scholars and other interested parties of copies of documents wanted by them in typescripts as well as microfilm and photostatic transcripts. One obstacle which impedes the consultation by the public of the archival holdings of the Department is as we have already seen in Section II (D) above the absence of a well-defined policy in respect of public access to records, but the reforms, we have suggested in that section, if carried out, will help in removing this obstacle. Another impediment to research to which we need to call attention is the absence of proper lists for several important series in the Department, but we have already recommended that the listing work should be given the top-most place in the Department's list of priorities. Another way by which the cause of research may be served will be to take up a project of what in United States Archives is known as microfilm publication. The object of such a project is to keep ready for distribution at cost microfilm copies of selections from important record-collections or series.

160. Since 1943 the Department has been conducting courses of training in archives-keeping with the object of providing suitably trained personnel for performing archival duties particularly in the official record repositories in the country. The course at present includes a year's training in different aspects of archive-science, on the successful completion of which the trainees are

awarded diplomas. There are arrangements for the award of five stipends of Rs. 150 each per month to the most deserving among the trainees while the trainees deputed by State Governments and other official agencies outside Delhi are each given a special allowance of Rs. 75 per month. The scheme, however, suffers from the defect that under it there is no obligation on the part either of the Central Government or of the States to fill all vacancies in archival posts necessarily with the holders of the National Archives diploma. The scheme has so far failed to attract really talented students because at present it offers no hope whatever of suitable employment even on the successful completion of the training course. As a modification in the present scheme, we would suggest that the trainees be selected in future against actual vacancies either in the National Archives or any other record office whether of the Central Government or of the States outside the National Archives of India. The selection of the candidates for the posts may be left to the Union or the State Public Service Commission as the case may be, who, if necessary, may subject them to a written test. Training facilities, in our view, should normally be made available only to the candidates who have passed the Public Service Commissions' tests and they should be posted only after they have successfully completed the training in the National Archives.

**Research  
Fellowship  
Scheme**

161. The Department has a Research Fellowship Scheme under which five Fellowships of Rs. 200 each per month are awarded annually to University students preparing doctoral dissertations on selected topics of modern Indian history. The Department is required to furnish each student with all the necessary guidance and assistance in the use of the original material available and is also to supervise the work done by them. While we consider the scheme to be useful from many points of view, we do not think that an archive repository is a suitable institution for it. It can assume such responsibilities only at the expense of its normal obligations in respect of the Central Government's records which, as we have already shown, are not always being properly fulfilled. The task, we believe, is best left to Universities or Historical Research Institutions.

**Depart-  
ment's  
Status and  
Organisa-  
tion**

162. The present functions and activities of the Department having been reviewed, it devolves on us to examine next its existing organisation and the structure of its office-establishment. The Department is for administrative purposes a Subordinate Office of the Union Ministry of Education. It is headed by the Director of Archives who has the assistance of a Deputy Director of Archives in the internal management and coordination of the various activities of the Department. We have already stressed the

need for raising the status of the Director of Archives so as to enable him to discharge the new responsibilities which will devolve on him under the Central Law proposed by us. A logical corollary of this would be to accord the National Archives the status of an Attached Office.

163. For the execution of the different programmes outlined in the preceding paragraph the National Archives is organised at present into five main divisions, each under an Assistant Director :

1. *Records and Reference* : On this division has fallen the greater part of the primary functions of the Department including duties connected with accession, care of record, arrangement and description, research and reference, Diploma Course in Archives-Keeping, Research Fellowship Scheme, liaison work with record-creating Departments.

2. *Preservation and Photo-duplication* : This division is responsible for the remaining part of the primary duties of the Department viz., repair, renovation, cleaning, fumigation and photo-duplication of records and conducting investigations on preservation problems.

3. *Publication of Edited texts and indexing*.

4. *Publication of Education Records*.

5. *Oriental Records Division* : It is entrusted with the task of calendaring of Persian records, acquisition of oriental manuscripts.

164. It will be clear from the above that the last three divisions are chiefly concerned with the work of publication. Each of the divisions has a corps of subordinate staff of three different categories (Class II, Class III and Class IV) to help it in its work. Apart from the above, the Department has a Library, which works as a separate unit, and has as its head a Librarian (Class II Officer), and an Administrative Division to look after the house-keeping functions of the Department.

165. What strikes us most in regard to the above arrangement is that there is palpable over-congestion in Division number I. If the Department is to perform efficiently all its substantive functions this congestion will have to be removed as soon as possible. The reforms we have suggested in respect both of systematic selection of records and their regular retirement to National Archives are sure to add substantially to the duties the Division is performing in respect not only of accession, arrangement and listing but of liaison work with the record-creating Departments. To enable the Department to shoulder the added responsibilities devolving on it under the new system proposed we consider it

*Suggested Reorganisation*

necessary that the present Record and Reference Division should be split up into three separate Divisions. The first of these should look after accession, arrangement and listing and all ancillary duties, the second should take care of Research and Reference and other public relations activities while the third is to be entirely devoted to liaison work. The Library should be integrated with the proposed Research and Reference Division. We have already suggested that the liaison work should be entrusted to an officer with the status of Deputy Director who would have a helping staff of Archivists (Liaison Officers) working under his guidance. The liaison work we have in view would include among others, periodical examination of the records in the Departmental custody, their systematic review with a view to selection of materials deserving permanent retention and their regular retirement to the National Archives. The staff concerned will have also to advise the record-creating Departments on the methods of arrangement, preservation and disposal of records.

166. We also consider that the present arrangement under which the record publication work has been distributed among three independent Divisions should cease and all publication activities should be unified in a single unit. We do not think there is any special justification for maintaining a separate Oriental Records Division as such. The so-called oriental records are really the papers emanating from the Persian Branch of the late Foreign and Political (earlier, Secret) Department and form a very small fraction of the totality of archives belonging to the parent body. The main duties of that Division are preparing English summaries (calendars) of Persian documents and publishing their edited texts. The distinction between this particular item of work and those performed by other Divisions engaged in the publication work is too thin to merit any special attention. Our view, therefore, is that the Division should be integrated with the main Publication Division of the Department.

167. The cleavage which separates the three publication divisions from one another is a necessary consequence of the existing arrangement under which the activities of the Department are organised into more or less water-tight compartments. The situation has made possible the development of each Division in the Department in practical isolation from all others and has further bred an atmosphere of over-specialisation in which transfer from one division to another becomes almost an impossibility, and encourages indifference to functions not immediately concerning an officer of a particular section and tends to create confusion as to the real purpose of the different departmental programmes. The system, moreover, creates a tendency to attempt by

correspondence to do jobs which could very easily be accomplished by much simpler methods, with the result that files are multiplied and progress of work is hampered. It has also the unfortunate effect of dissociating senior officers from technical work and reducing them to administrative duties concerned more with files than with records. It is possible under the present system for an officer to spend all his life in the National Archives without learning even the basic ideas and processes of archive-administration. The system, moreover, tends to breed a feeling of competition between the divisions and provides ample scope for the operation of Parkinson's Law and consequent multiplication of subordinate posts. While in 1947 the National Archives had 173 employees, the total number of employees at present is 388. If we add to this the staff employed in Bhopal, the total number becomes 426. We cannot say that the entire staff is being always usefully employed.

168. The prevailing compartmentalism is attributable to a large extent to the multiplicity of the criteria which are used in selecting the personnel for each Division. The staff for Records and Reference Division as well as all Publication Divisions except the Oriental Records Division is recruited on the basis of historical qualifications; that for Preservation Division exclusively on the basis of a degree in science; and that for the Administrative Division exclusively on the basis of experience in administrative work; while for the personnel of the Oriental Records Division a degree in Persian is felt to be necessary. In none of the cases it is thought desirable that emphasis should rather be placed on knowledge of archives or of archival technique. The use of multiplicity of criteria evidently owes its origin to a belief that a man engaged in research and reference work is incapable of handling repair duties, or a person knowing technical work is incapable of tackling administrative problems. None of these beliefs in our view appears to have much force. It is only too obvious that for running a technical Department what is most necessary is not a mere knowledge of office rules and regulations, but a thorough acquaintance with its purposes and functions. This knowledge can be acquired only through training and experience in the technical field. There seems no reason whatever why a man with the requisite technical training and experience should prove incapable of mastering the very same office rules which an ordinary graduate or even an under-graduate can learn after undergoing training in office administration.

169. Our suggestion is that the present cleavage between the Administrative and other Divisions should be removed and that the former should be placed under the charge of an Assistant Director with the same experience, training and qualifications

as his colleagues of the other Divisions. The procedure will not create any administrative difficulty if all the Assistant Directors are required to undergo training in office administration and to take charge of administration after regular intervals conformably to a system of rotation. We are strongly of the view that the present compartmentalism should be reduced as far as possible.

170. We would have been glad to be able to recommend one common cadre for the entire supervisory staff of the Department. But this seems hardly possible in view of the fact that the Preservation Division already has a large staff of employees with scientific qualifications and it will be a problem to decide the future of that staff. But there seems no objection to merge all the supervisory staff in the remaining Divisions in one common cadre and to adopt the same criterion of selection in respect of all of them provided those who do not fit in the cadre by reason of their qualifications can be successfully absorbed elsewhere. The reform we propose will have the added advantage of providing each member of the supervisory staff in the Department with the same chances of advancement and promotion.

171. There is one other point relating to the existing office-structure which deserves attention. The structure is too pyramidal to permit efficient or prompt disposal of work. There are too many subordinate workers at the bottom needing guidance and too few 'responsible' officers at the top expected to guide them. (The total strength of the office staff, as we have seen, is 388, while the number of gazetted officers is only 28). The gap between the topmost and the lowest posts is filled in by a multiplicity of grades. In the Preservation Division, for instance, there are no less than 14 different grades of posts. The existence of too many levels of supervision tends only to delay work and involves waste of time, effort, and public money. The stratification also makes extremely difficult a rational distribution of responsibilities among the various levels of authorities. The same type of job is often found allotted to Archivists and Assistant Archivists (both of Grade I and Grade II). The system also encourages multiplication of unnecessary file work. The obvious answer to the problem is that the number of grades should be reduced to the minimum possible and the office structure should be re-modelled on a more rational basis. The principle to be followed should be that of '*one man, one job*'. As a practical means towards this end, we would suggest that the existing three grades of Archivist, Assistant Archivist (Grade I), and Assistant Archivist (Grade II) be merged in one suitable running scale. This reform, if effected, will transform the hierarchy which exists in all divisions (except that of Preservation) into a simpler

structure consisting only of Assistant Directors and Archivists. There is, we believe, ample room for effecting similar reform in respect of Preservation Division as well.

172. The reforms proposed above would necessitate revision in the present system of recruitment and selection for the Departmental posts. It is usual to regard the archivist's job as equivalent to that of an historian and knowledge of either archives or archival techniques is hardly given any recognition in making appointments to archival posts. Archival work requires techniques which are different from those of writing history. An archivist should no doubt have a wide historical perspective, but what he needs more than any thing else is the knowledge of the archives as well as the methods of archive-administration. Recruiting archivists at a very young age and promoting them to higher posts as they gain experience of archive work is, we believe, the only way by which the shortcomings in the present system of recruitment or selection can be removed. We would suggest that recruitment should start at the level of the Archivist (or the lowest supervisory post in the Department) and once a person has been selected his promotion to the higher posts should be assured, provided he is able to acquire the necessary experience in archive work and the requisite knowledge of records. The appointees, in our view, should be selected by the Union Public Service Commission on the basis of a written test, after which they should be given training in the different aspects of archives-keeping in the National Archives. Only on the successful completion of such training should an appointee be regarded fit for being posted in the appropriate Division. While the posts in the Archivist's cadre should be filled by recruitment the higher posts in the Department may appropriately be filled by promotion of the fittest and the most experienced. This, however, does not preclude the possibility of the appointment of an eminent archivist from outside to the post of the Director of Archives if no suitable person is available in the Department.

173. The system we have in view is more or less similar to that obtaining in progressive record offices in the West where it has been tried with remarkable success. In the Public Record Office, London, for instance, the practice is to make all recruitment of superior staff at the level of Assistant Keepers through an examination (both oral and written) by the Civil Service Commission. The nominees thereafter are given a thorough training in the different branches of the Department, each of them being required to acquaint himself with all aspects of the Public Record Office's work. Only on the completion of training a candidate can be entrusted with some responsible assignment. The greater

part of the technical work in the Department, besides routine manual work, is done by the Assistant Keepers who may rise by promotion to the position of Principal Assistant Keeper or Secretary and finally of the Keeper who is the head of the Department. The office structure provides for only three levels of supervisory officers :

(1) Assistant Keepers, (2) Principal Assistant Keeper (and Secretary who is in charge of administration) and finally, (3) Keeper. The system is refreshingly free from any hierarchical entanglements comparable to those that obtain in the National Archives, and will, we believe, well-worth being given a trial in this Department.

#### **Manual Workers**

174. Finally, we need to say a few words about the large corps of manual workers in the Department who are normally required to handle records physically and perform routine, though highly skilful, jobs connected with accession, arrangement, listing, checking, supply of requisitions, manual repair, processing of records for lamination and photo-duplication services and the like. The greater majority of the staff, numbering about 76<sup>47</sup>, is included in Class IV and because of this fact, and for no other reason, they are allowed scales of pay which have no correspondence whatever to the responsibilities entrusted to them. The disadvantages inherent in the maintenance of such a large number of low-paid personnel with a bewildering multiplicity of scales are too obvious to require elaboration. We have studied in this connection carefully the scales recently suggested by the Government on the basis of the recommendation made by the Pay Commission and we feel forced to say that the revisions effected have not materially altered the present position. We wish, therefore, to recommend strongly that a careful re-examination should be made of this very important problem and every effort should be made not only to do away with the present multiplicity of scales, but to give the manual workers a scale which adequately reflects the magnitude of responsibilities entrusted to them.

#### **Accommodation**

175. Of the urgent need of extending the accommodation available for the reception and deposit of records we have already spoken. In considering plans of extension it should be remembered that for the safety and preservation of such fragile material, as documents, special arrangements have to be made for the control of temperature, dust, insects and humidity. In planning for the additional buildings these matters will have to be kept in view.

<sup>47</sup>This excludes unskilled workers included in Class IV viz., peons, helpers, sweepers etc., whose number comes to a total of 87.

3. The Antiquities (Export Control) Act of 1947 should be suitably amended to prevent migration and unauthorised export of private archives. Dr. Raghbir Singh's bill (1957) for amending this Act will meet the purpose if the definition of the term 'antiquity' as suggested in that bill is appropriately revised (paras. 188-91).

We have considered the report and append our signatures to it.

Sd. Bisheshwar Prasad

Sd. R. S. Sarkar

Sd. Fateh Singh

Sd. Raghbir Singh

Sd. K. R. Ramachandran

Sd. S. Gopal

Sd. P. M. Joshi

Sd. Sourin Roy

Sd. Mohibbul Hasan

Sd. Tara Chand

## APPENDIX I

### QUESTIONNAIRE FOR COLLECTING INFORMATION FROM STATE GOVERNMENTS

#### I

1. Is there a Central Record Office in the State? If not, when is it proposed to set up one?
2. Has the Record Office its own building? If so, where is it located?
3. What is the name of the Secretariat Department having the administrative control of the Record Office at present?
4. Is the Record Office placed under the charge of a whole-time Keeper of Records? If not, when is it proposed to do so?
5. What are the official designation, qualifications and salary scale of the Officer-in-Charge of the State Record Office?
6. What is the total strength and cost of the establishment of the Record Office? (Please give details regarding various categories of posts, qualifications for appointment to those posts and their pay scales).
7. Is formal training in archive-keeping an essential qualification for appointments to the posts of technical nature?
8. What facilities are available for training in archives work in the Record Office?
9. Are members of the staff of the Record Office deputed for training to the National Archives of India or any other institution in India or abroad?

#### II

10. What groups of records are in the custody of the Record Office? (Please give a list of the main series with inclusive years. Also indicate the total foot-run of shelving occupied by them).
11. Has the Record Office in its custody papers and documents other than the non-current records of the State Government and administrative agencies controlled by it?
12. Has the Record Office in its custody special class of record material such as seals, maps and plans, photographs, motion pictures, sound recordings and microfilms?

13. Does the State Record Office accept deposits of private records or semi-public records? If so, under what conditions are such records accepted?

14. Does the Record Office acquire old manuscripts of historical, religious or literary works? (If so, please give a brief description of the nature of the manuscripts collection in the Record Office).

15. Has the Record Office any programme of acquisition of transcripts, photostats or microfilm copies of records from other repositories to fill the gaps in the archival holdings of the State Archives or to provide supplementary material to research students?

16. What is the approximate size of the annual accruals of records from the Departments to the Record Office? (Please answer this question in terms of linear foot-run of shelving required for those accruals).

17. (a) What is the total shelf-space available in the Record Office?

(b) Is it adequate to accommodate the annual accruals for the next ten years?

(c) Is there any proposal to increase the storage space in the repository?

### III

18. Are all the records in the custody of the Record Office arranged strictly in their respective series i.e., according to the principle of provenance? If not, what other scheme of arrangement is followed in the repository?

19. How are collections of private archives, if any, organised and arranged?

### IV

20. Are there any rules governing continuous and systematic transfer of inactive records from the creating agencies to the State Record Office? (Please furnish a copy of the rules, if any, otherwise state the general practice in regard to transfer of records to the archival repository, particularly indicating the period after which records meant for permanent retention are to be transferred to the Record Office).

21. Do the Departments of the State Government and other administrative agencies retain any control over their records transferred to the Record Office?

22. What are weeding rules applicable to records in the Departments? Do these rules ensure complete security for the material which may be of historical value?

23. Is the Keeper of Records of the State Government consulted by the Departments in regard to the preparation of disposal and retention schedules? Do the weeding rules of the State Government provide for such consultation?

24. Is any weeding of records done in the Record Office after their transfer from the administrative Departments or other government agencies? If so, what are the rules governing such weeding?

25. Are the records in the Secretariat Departments and other government agencies kept under charge of special officers? If so, what are the qualifications, status and salary scales of such officers?

26. Where are the records in the Department kept and what are the arrangements for their maintenance and protection?

27. What arrangements are made for the security of records outside office hours?

## V

28. Are the non-current records of the district and divisional administrations of the State kept at the district or divisional headquarters or at the State Record Office?

29. Are there any separate record repositories at the district and divisional headquarters for the maintenance of the non-current records of those administrations? Do the record rooms there offer adequate facilities for proper protection, maintenance and preservation of records?

30. What arrangements have been made for the maintenance of the records of the former princely States merged in the State?

31. Has there been any division of the records of the merged princely States between the Union Government and the State Government? If so, what were the principles applied in such a division?

32. Are the records of the districts and divisions, other than those transferred to the State Record Office, open for *bona fide* research? If so, what are the rules governing access to those records?

33. What arrangements have been made by the State Government for the administration of records of State owned commercial and industrial undertakings, if any?

34. Is it proposed to transfer to the State Record Office records of those undertakings which are appraised as possessing permanent retention value?

## VI

35. Are the old records of the High Court and other courts in the State transferred for custody to the State Record Office? If not, what arrangements have been made for their maintenance and access to the public?

36. Are records of the courts in the State periodically weeded? If so, what rules are followed for weeding these records?

37. Is the Officer-in-Charge of the State Record Office consulted by the Courts in regard to weeding of their records? If not, is there any plan for arranging for such consultation?

## VII

38. Has the State Government appointed a Regional Records Survey Committee? If so, when was it done? What is the constitution of the Committee and what is the mode of its operations for surveying records in the State?

39. Does the State Regional Records Survey Committee serve as advisory body for the State Archives?

40. Does the State Government extend its patronage to any society or institution interested in the collection of private archives and manuscripts? If so, what are the conditions on which such patronage is extended?

## VIII

41. Is there a hand-book or a guide to the records in the custody of the State Record Office and other record offices in the State? If so, when was it published? (If the answer is in the negative, please state if there is any plan to compile one within the next five years).

42. What other reference media, e.g., calendars, indexes, inventories, press-lists, are prepared by the Record Office for facilitating research work?

43. Has the Record Office undertaken a publication programme? If so, what are the publications already issued and those which are expected to be published within the next five years?

44. Does the Record Office undertake publications in co-operation with Universities and learned societies? If so, what is the nature of cooperation received from them?

**IX**

45. (a) What is the practice in regard to the use of records deposited in the State Record Office for official purposes ?

(b) Are records of a creating agency or its successor agency loaned to other government agencies without the permission of the former ? If so, under what circumstances ?

46. Does the State Record Office undertake detailed searches and reference work on behalf of Government Departments?

**X**

47. Are there any rules governing access to the records in the custody of the State Record Office by the Public ? If so, what are those rules ?

48. Is there any arrangement for giving certified copies of records to the public for legal or other purposes ? If so, what are the fees charged for certifying copies ?

49. What are the rules governing access to the records for *bona fide* research ? (Please state what records are thrown open for research with year limits and special restrictions, if any).

50. Is there any proposal to modify the research rules in the near future ?

51. Are excerpts taken from records of the open period scrutinised before their release to researchers ? If so, what are the rules pertaining to such scrutiny ?

52. Is the State Record Office provided with a separate Research Room ? If so, how many scholars can it accommodate at a time ?

53. Is this accommodation adequate for the needs of the scholars ?

54. Is the Research Room properly ventilated and lighted ?

55. What has been the number of research students granted admission to the Research Room each year since 1947 ?

56. Is there a special staff designated for the Research Room to look after the needs of scholars ? If so, what is its strength ?

57. Is there a reference library attached to the Record Office for the use of researchers ?

58. Are facilities available for providing copies (typed, photo-stats and microfilms) of records for research purposes ? If so, what are the charges for each type of service ?

59. Does the Records Office undertake any search and reference work for scholars and other persons on payment of fees? If so, what are the fees charged?

60. Are students permitted to consult records in the Secretariat Departments (before their transfer to the State Record Office) for *bona fide* research? What are the principles followed in giving such permission?

61. Does the Record Office maintain an archival museum and does it hold exhibitions of historical documents in its custody?

62. Is any other educational work undertaken by the Record Office?

63. Is the State Record Office building a functional structure or is it a residential or an office building adapted for use of the Record Office?

64. What is the size of the muniment room or rooms?

65. (a) Are the muniment rooms provided with metal or wooden shelves?

(b) What is the size of shelves?

66. How are the records kept in the Record Office?

(a) Are they kept in carton-boxes, or tied between plywood boards, or tied with string without any protection whatsoever?

(b) Are unbound documents folded or flattened?

(c) Are all the documents provided with protective covers?

(d) Are the records kept on the shelves vertically or horizontally?

67. (a) Are the muniment rooms suitably ventilated?

(b) Are proper precautions taken against direct sunlight falling on records?

68. (a) What arrangements are there to secure the records from the risk of injury by fire, or natural calamities?

(b) Are there any inflammable materials e.g., nitrate base films in the Record Office? If so, how are they preserved?

69. What arrangements are there to protect records from dust, heat, excessive humidity and infestation by insects and fungi?

70. Is there any arrangement for fumigating records? If so, are the records fumigated before they are taken into the repository?

71. (a) Are there arrangements for repair and binding of records in the Record Office?

(b) What methods of repair are followed?

(c) What is the approximate volume of records repaired annually?

72. Do you find any difficulty in procuring suitable repair materials?

73. (a) Are there any arrangements for photo-duplication of records? If so, is there any regular programme for photo-duplication of records with the object of preserving them or reducing their bulk?

(b) Is photo-duplication work undertaken on behalf of researchers? If so, what are the prescribed charges for the same?

74. Are there any development plans in regard to preservation and rehabilitation of records in the custody of the State Record Office?

75. Does the State Government think that the Government of India can render any assistance to the State Archives in the matter of administration and preservation of archives? If so, in what way?

## APPENDIX II

### SCHEDULE OF VISITS OF THE COMMITTEE TO THE STATES

19—21 October 1959	(i) <i>West Bengal</i>	Calcutta
22—24 October 1959	(i) <i>Assam</i>	Shillong
26—27 October 1959	(i) <i>Orissa</i>	Bhubaneswar
28 October 1959	(i) <i>Orissa</i>	Puri
4—5, 7 November 1959	(i) <i>West Bengal</i>	Bombay
6 November 1959	(i) <i>West Bengal</i>	Poona
9—11 November 1959	(i) <i>West Bengal</i>	Hyderabad
12—14 November 1959	(i) <i>Assam</i>	Bangalore
16—18 November 1959	(i) <i>Assam</i>	Madras
2 December 1959	(i) <i>Assam</i>	Chandigarh
3 December 1959	(i) <i>Assam</i>	Patiala
7—8 December 1959	(i) <i>Assam</i>	Lucknow
9 December 1959	(i) <i>Assam</i>	Allahabad
29—30 December 1959	(i) <i>Assam</i>	Jaipur
4—5 January 1960	(ii) <i>Assam</i>	Bhopal
21—22 January 1960	(ii) <i>Assam</i>	Patna

### APPENDIX III

#### PERSONS CONSULTED BY THE COMMITTEE IN THE STATES

##### (i) *West Bengal*

1. Shri Rai Harendra Nath Chaudhuri, Minister for Education, West Bengal.
2. Shri K. K. Hajara, Secretary, Law Department, Government of West Bengal.
3. Shri P. N. Sengupta, Deputy Secretary, Education Department, Government of West Bengal.
4. Shri K. Lahiri, Deputy Secretary, Education Department, Government of West Bengal.
5. Shri G. N. Chandra, Keeper of Records, Government of West Bengal.
6. Dr. S. N. Sen, 6 Ekdalia Place, Calcutta-19.
7. Dr. N. K. Sinha, Professor of History, University of Calcutta, Calcutta.
8. Dr. A. Tripathi, Professor of History, Presidency College, Calcutta.
9. Dr. P. C. Gupta, Reader in History, University of Calcutta, Calcutta.

##### (ii) *Assam*

1. Shri Debaswar Sarma, Minister for Education, Assam.
2. Shri A. N. Kidwai, Additional Chief Secretary, Government of Assam.
3. Shri R. B. Vagaiwalla, Commissioner, Hills Division, Assam.
4. Dr. H. C. Bhuyan, Secretary, Department of Education, Government of Assam.
5. Shri B. K. Bhuyan, Joint Secretary, Home Secretariat and General Administration Department, Government of Assam.
6. Shri S. C. Rajkhowa, Director of Public Instruction, Assam.
7. Dr. S. K. Bhuyan, Vice-Chancellor, University of Gauhati.
8. Dr. H. K. Barpujari, Professor of History, Cotton College, Gauhati.
9. Shri K. N. Dutt, Editor, State Gazetteers, Assam.

10. Shri P. D. Chaudhury, Curator, Assam Museum, Gauhati.
11. Shri P. C. Sarma, Keeper of Records, Assam Government Secretariat.
12. Shri Benudhar Sarma, Journalist & Writer, Shillong.

*(iii) Orissa*

1. Shri H. K. Mahtab, Chief Minister, Orissa.
2. Shri V. Ramanathan, Chief Secretary, Government of Orissa.
3. Shri B. Sivaraman, Member, Board of Revenue, Orissa.
4. Shri Promod Singh, Secretary, Home and Education Department, Government of Orissa.
5. Shri G. B. Misra, Secretary, Law Department, Government of Orissa.
6. Shri N. Sahu, Secretary, Board of Revenue, Orissa.
7. Shri S. Nayak, Deputy Secretary, Home Department, Government of Orissa.
8. Shri G. C. Satpathy, Deputy Secretary, Education Department, Government of Orissa.
9. Shri S. C. De, Curator of Archives, Government of Orissa.
10. Shri B. Nath, Superintendent of Archaeology, Government of Orissa.
11. Dr. B. C. Roy, Lecturer in History, Ravenshaw College, Cuttack.
12. Shri Parmananda Acharya, Retired Superintendent of Archaeology.
13. Shri Sudhakar Patnaik, Retired Deputy Collector.
14. Dr. M. N. Das, Lecturer in History, Utkal University, Cuttack.
15. Pandit Suryanarayan Das, Journalist.
16. Shri Sadasiva Rathasarma, Librarian, Raghunandan Library, Puri.
17. Raja of Puri.

*(iv) Bombay*

1. Shri Y. B. Chavan, Chief Minister, Bombay.
2. Shri N. T. Mone, Chief Secretary, Government of Bombay.
3. Shri D. R. Pradhan, Special Secretary, Government of Bombay.

4. Shri P. J. Chinmulgund, Secretary, Education Department, Government of Bombay.
5. Dr. P. M. Joshi, Director of Archives and Historical Monuments, Government of Bombay.
6. Dr. G. M. Moraes, Professor of History, Elphinstone College, Bombay.
7. Shri D. N. Marshall, Librarian, University of Bombay.
8. Professor D. V. Potdar, Member, Advisory Committee, Alienation Office, Poona.
9. Shri C. V. Karve, Member, Advisory Committee, Alienation Office, Poona.
10. Shri B. K. Apte, Member, Advisory Committee, Alienation Office, Poona.
11. Shri G. N. Quereshi, Assistant Settlement Commissioner, Poona.

(v) *Andhra Pradesh*

1. Shri Syed Asghar Hussain, Secretary, Education Department, Government of Andhra Pradesh.
2. Shri D. Suryanarayana Swami, Secretary, Law Department, Government of Andhra Pradesh.
3. Shri V. K. Bawa, Director, Central Record Office, Hyderabad.
4. Shri Hadi Bilgrami, Deputy Secretary, Education Department, Government of Andhra Pradesh.
5. Dr. R. Kemal.
6. Professor A. M. Siddique.
7. Dr. Nizamuddin.
8. Shri Anil Roychowdhury.
9. Shri K. A. Sajun Lal.
10. Dr. Abdul Lateef.
11. Shri D. V. Subba Reddy.

(vi) *Mysore*

1. Shri B. D. Jatti, Chief Minister, Mysore.
2. Smt. Grace Tucker, Deputy Minister for Education, Mysore.
3. Shri M. Rahmatullah, Secretary, Education Department, Government of Mysore.
4. Shri R. P. Vasudeo, Secretary, Law Department, Government of Mysore.

5. Shri G. R. Ethirajulu Naidu, Advocate General, Mysore.
6. Shri M. A. Srikrishna, Additional Deputy Secretary, Government of Mysore.
7. Shri Channaraj Urs, Under Secretary, General Administration Department, Government of Mysore.
8. Shri D. P. Patel, Under Secretary, Technical Education, Government of Mysore.
9. Dr. M. Seshadri, Director of Archaeology, Government of Mysore.
10. Dr. K. N. V. Sastri, Retired Professor of History, University of Mysore.

(vii) *Madras*

1. Shri T. N. S. Raghavan, Chief Secretary, Government of Madras.
2. Shri K. S. Palaniswami, Joint Secretary, Law Department, Government of Madras.
3. Kumari A. R. George, Deputy Secretary, General Administration Department, Government of Madras.
4. Prof. T. Balakrishnan Nair, Principal, Presidency College, Madras.
5. Shri M. Natesan, Assistant Curator, Madras Record Office, Madras.
6. Shri A. Uttandaraman Pillai.
7. Shri K. K. Pillay.
8. Shri S. K. Gajendran Naidu.
9. Shri R. Viswanatha Ayyar.
10. Shri P. Sivasanbaran Pillay.
11. Shri T. Chandrasekharan.
12. Shri R. Bhaskaran.
13. Shri K. R. Venkata Raman.

(viii) *Punjab*

1. Shri Amar Nath Vidalankar, Minister for Education, Punjab.
2. Shri B. N. Mangat Rai, Chief Secretary, Government of Punjab.
3. Shri Jagjit Singh, Secretary, Legislative Department, Government of Punjab.
4. Shri C. D. Kapur, Secretary, Education Department, Government of Punjab.

5. Shri I. M. Verma, Director of Public Instruction, Punjab.
6. Shri J. D. Sharma, Deputy Secretary, Education Department, Government of Punjab.
7. Shri V. S. Suri, Keeper of Records, Government of Punjab.
8. Shri G. N. Aggarwal.
9. Shri Harnam Singh Shan.
10. Dr. Ganda Singh.
11. Sardar Nahar Singh.

**(ix) *Uttar Pradesh***

1. Dr. Sampurnanand, Chief Minister, Government of Uttar Pradesh.
2. Shri M. Zaheer, Joint Secretary, Cultural Affairs and Scientific Research Department, Government of Uttar Pradesh.
3. Dr. G. N. Saletore, Keeper of Archives, Government of Uttar Pradesh.
4. Dr. M. M. Nagar, Curator, Lucknow Museum.
5. Dr. B. P. Saxena, Professor of History, University of Allahabad.
6. Shri O. P. Bhatnagar, Reader in History, University of Allahabad.
7. Dr. Umesh Misra, Ganganatha Jha Research Institute, Allahabad.

**(x) *Rajasthan***

1. Shri Mohan Lal Sukhadia, Chief Minister, Government of Rajasthan.
2. Shri Punam Chand Vishnoi, Deputy Minister for Education, Government of Rajasthan.
3. Shri B. L. Rawat, Additional Chief Secretary, Government of Rajasthan.
4. Shri V. D. Sharma, Secretary, Education Department, Government of Rajasthan.
5. Shri P. D. Loiwal, Secretary, Law and Judicial Department, Government of Rajasthan.
6. Shri N. R. Khadgawat, Director of Archives, Government of Rajasthan.
7. Shri L. L. Joshi, Chairman, Rajasthan Public Service Commission.

8. Shri Devi Shankar Tiwari, Retired Chairman, Rajasthan Public Service Commission.
9. Shri Bhim Sen, Dean, Faculty of Arts, University of Rajasthan.
10. Dr. G. N. Sharma, Professor of History, M. B. College, Udaipur.
11. Thakur Madan Singh.
12. Dr. Gopi Chand.

**(xi) Madhya Pradesh**

1. Dr. K. N. Katju, Chief Minister, Government of Madhya Pradesh.
2. Shri S. P. Mushran, Special Secretary, Government of Madhya Pradesh.
3. Shri L. C. Gupta, Secretary, Education Department, Government of Madhya Pradesh.
4. Shri R. G. Trivedi, Secretary, Law Department, Government of Madhya Pradesh.
5. Shri V. S. Krishnan, Editor, District Gazetteers & Deputy Secretary, General Administration Department, Government of Madhya Pradesh.
6. Shri K. Krishnan, Deputy Secretary, O. & M., Government of Madhya Pradesh.
7. Shri S. H. Aole, Deputy Secretary, General Administration Department, Government of Madhya Pradesh.
8. Shri B. V. Deo, Deputy Secretary, Education Department, Government of Madhya Pradesh.
9. Dr. R. M. Sinha, Professor of History, Mahakoshal Mahavidyalaya, Jabalpur.
10. Dr. M. H. R. Taimuri, Vice-President, Itihasa Parishad, Bhopal.
11. Shri V. P. Pandit, Registrar, Historical Record Section, Gwalior.
12. Shri P. C. Malhotra, Principal, Hamidia College, Bhopal.
13. Dr. K. S. Lal, Professor of History, Hamidia College, Bhopal.

**(xii) Bihar**

1. Shri Kedar Pande, Deputy Minister, General Administration, Bihar.
2. Shri M. S. Rao, Chief Secretary, Government of Bihar.

3. Shri K. Raman, Land Reforms Commissioner, Government of Bihar.
4. Shri N. P. Mathur, Secretary, Revenue Department, Government of Bihar.
5. Shri Saran Singh, Secretary, Education Department, Government of Bihar.
6. Dr. K. K. Dutta, Director of Archives, Government of Bihar.

7. Shri R. B. Lal, Under Secretary, General Department, Government of Bihar.

8. Shri G. Narayan, Under Secretary, Education Department, Government of Bihar.

9. Shri S. V. Sohoni, Commissioner, Patna Division, Patna.

10. Shri S. H. Askari, Professor of History, Patna College, Patna.

11. Shri P. C. Roychoudhury, Editor, District Gazetteers, Government of Bihar.

12. Shri B. A. Deshpande, Secretary, Revenue Department, Bihar.

13. Dr. K. M. Sures, Professor of History, Mysore College, Mysore.

14. Dr. M. H. R. Tamim, Vice-Principal, Indian Institute of Agriculture, Jaspur.

15. Shri V. B. Pandit, Registrar, Historical Section, Bihar Legislative Assembly, Patna.

16. Shri K. S. Tiwari, Professor of History, Hansi College, Hansi.

17. Shri G. C. Malhotra, Professor, Hansi College, Hansi.

18. Dr. K. S. Tiwari, Professor of History, Hansi College, Hansi.

19. Shri K. S. Tiwari, Professor of History, Hansi College, Hansi.

20. Dr. K. S. Tiwari, Professor of History, Hansi College, Hansi.

21. Shri K. S. Tiwari, Professor of History, Hansi College, Hansi.

22. Dr. K. S. Tiwari, Professor of History, Hansi College, Hansi.