

that not only has the workload of a district collector or deputy commissioner increased, the job content and responsibility has undergone a complete transformation with the process of planned development. They complain that "there has been no recognition of these additional responsibilities on the district collector/deputy commissioner." The pay-scale of Rs 2,000-2,500 for the district collectors and deputy commissioners, which is also the present scale for DIG's, is available only to those IAS district collectors and deputy commissioners who are in the selection grade and in charge of important districts.

The memorandum concludes by saying: "The Government may keep the above submission in view and defer the proposed revision of the IPS pay-scale until a proper evaluation of the salary structures of various services is done by a pay commission."

The silent conflict between the services could well explode into the open if the DIG pay hike goes through. But what is at stake in this debate is not the question of a slight increase in salary for one particular post in the IPS, it is a basic issue of which service takes precedence. Under the present Constitution, the civil servant is meant to be in charge with the police taking orders from the IAS officer. Since salary is inextricably linked to some degree with position, a distortion could upset the established order of command at the district level. The steel frame of the Government at any rate sees the present move as just such a threat.

—COOMI KAPOOR

CENTRAL SECRETARIAT

Civil War

UNION Home Minister Prakash Chand Sethi has elevated the art of governance to a fine degree of pettifoggery. Political interference in the bureaucracy is not unusual, but Sethi is exhibiting a penchant for intervention in personnel promotions. In the process, he has heightened the siege mentality of the Central Secretariat Service (CSS), which is constantly tussling with the more powerful Indian Administrative Service (IAS) lobby.

Last fortnight the Central Secretariat Group 'A' Officers' Association was embroiled in yet another grim struggle to reverse one of Sethi's capricious decisions. On December 9 last year, when the Home Ministry's Department of Personnel and Administrative Reforms (DPAR) which handles all Central Government appointments, issued a list of 54 promotions from the under-secretary to the deputy

secretary level, it was discovered that seven names had been added to the 'outstanding' category that topped the list.

The insertion was effected the day before the list was made public, and Home Ministry sources say that Sethi was instrumental in overruling Minister of State P. Venkatasubbaiah, who had approved the original list. Technically the DPAR was within its rights in adding the seven names, but the irregularity arose because the list, originally due for issue on November 2, was postponed by five weeks.

Frustration: The situation has been rendered all the more frustrating for the seven under-secretaries elbowed out of the original list as a result of this manoeuvre because promotion to the deputy secretary level, being within the government's Class I grade, does not come under the purview of the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC). While 'outstanding' promotees usually do not exceed 10 per cent of the total, the 1982 list contains 13 such names, almost 25 per cent of the total. Worst of all, points out the Officers' Association in a letter to U.C. Agarwal, secretary (Services), two of the beneficiaries N. Seshadri and Data Ram of the Department of Industrial Development, have not gained at all from their promotions—Seshadri retired from service on December 31, and Data Ram exactly a month later. Seshadri was among the seven last-minute insertions, and had originally stood 90th in the 1982 Selection Grade Civil List of the CSS, too junior for normal elevation. Service rules stipulate that officiating arrangements cannot be made for a period of less than 45 days, so Seshadri and Data Ram did not even take over their new postings.

That was not all. The aggrieved officers' suspicion was raised on another point. Of the seven late insertions in the list, four stood consecutively 80th until 83rd in the Civil List, and the three others were 90th, 91st and 93rd—a clubbing that just did not coincide with the candidates' service records.

"The demoralisation caused in our ranks by this surreptitious operation can be imagined," says a senior CSS officer. "The fact that the four-member Departmental Promotion Committee of secretaries succumbed to pressure has caused a lot of disaffection and distrust."

Stalemate: What has irked the officers even more is the fact that when the promotions list was originally drawn up, in early October last year, it had contained

56 names—but two were put in 'sealed covers' because they were not cleared by the Vigilance Department. No substitution was made for these two drop-outs. Moreover, seven officers included in the list—apart from Seshadri and Data Ram—will be retiring sometime this year, and may not officiate in their new designations at all.

The Officers' Association is now trying to get the DPAR to issue a 'supplementary list', an accepted practice whereby extra promotions are sanctioned, taking into consideration expected retirements or deaths. The stalemate, meanwhile, has gone up to the Prime Minister's Secretariat. The association was encouraged to do so because of the promptness with which the Prime Minister's Secretariat reacted to news of the struggle between the UPSC and Sethi, which had resulted in 140 promotions from the section officer to the under-secretary level being frozen while Sethi tried to get the UPSC to promote his private secretary, S.R. Bhatia, out of turn (INDIA TODAY, January 15).

Late in the evening on January 7, the



Sethi: penchant for intervention

Prime Minister's Secretariat got on the phone to Venkatasubbaiah, the minister of state in charge of personnel affairs, and ordered him to remedy matters forthwith. The clerical staff of the DPAR had already gone home, but a skeleton group was marshalled at short notice, and the four people who had originally constituted the promotions panel—the UPSC's Mrs R.O. Dhan and joint secretaries K.C. Sodhia, Lalkhama and T. Ramaswamy—

summoned and asked to endorse the very list they had earlier drawn up and stood firm on. "The prime minister was extremely upset when she heard of Sethi's needless interference," says a highly placed source in the Home Ministry, "and ordered that the original list should be placed before her that very night."

But pettifoggery and interference do have some adverse effects. Joint Secretary Ramaswamy, who had been in charge of personnel and had fought hardest against Bhatia's irregular inclusion in the promotions list, was transferred in December to the inconsequential Foreigners Department as a measure of Sethi's displeasure. So far there has been no protest over Ramaswamy's patently unjust transfer. "It was probably felt that Sethi was entitled to a small victory to counterbalance the dressing-down he got from the prime minister," says a disgusted UPSC official.

—CHAITANYA KALBAG

