



The Genesis of Central Public Works Department

The Public Works Department was formally established in the year 1854 in the sixth year of Lord Dalhousie's tenure as Governor General. In the minutes of a meeting held on 12th July, 1854, the Governor General resolved that a Central Agency be provided by creating an office of Secretary to the Government of India in the Department of Public Works. The note recorded by Lord Dalhousie was as under:

“...The organization of the Department of Public Works in the Indian Empire will be incomplete unless there shall be provided for the Supreme Government itself some agency by which it may be enabled to exercise the universal control confided to it over Public Works in India with the best of scientific knowledge with authority and system.

The Government of India shall no longer be dependent on expedients, but should be provided with a permanent and highly qualified agency to assist in the direction of this important branch of public affairs.

I have, therefore, now to propose that such an agency should be provided by creating an office of the Secretary to Government of India in the Department of Public Works. The person who holds it should always be a highly qualified officer of the Corps of Engineers. He should have the aid of an Assistant Secretary, also an officer of the Corps of Engineers. His salary I think should not be less than that of the Secretary to the Govt. of Bengal, namely Rs. 3,000 per month and the salary of the Assistant should not be less than that of the Assistant Secretary in the Military Department...”

Col. W. E. Baker of the Bengal Engineers was accordingly appointed first Secretary to the Department of Public Works – this is the genesis of the Central Public Works Department.