

One Year tenure for Board Members?

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IT appears that the FM is planning for a minimum one-year tenure for Board Members. While this will provide the much required longevity for a Board member to be of any use, its immediate fallout would be that some of the very senior and deserving Chief Commissioners will not make it to the Board as they have less than an year of service left. This would also mean that some most undeserving officers will make it to the position of Members in the Board. Selecting officers with at least one year of service left, is not going to make the Board more effective if the ones with more years of service are not really the ones with any capacity to run a complex tax administration in the country.

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But the FM's idea of appointing Members with at least an year of service will provide some sort of continuity in the Board. Now what happens is that some body becomes a Member of the Board at the fag end of his career with just a few months to go for retirement. He usually spends his few months of time in the Board looking for post-retirement jobs. He has hardly any time or interest (after all he has to think of his future) for the mundane matters like income tax, excise laws or customs complications.

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Even a one year tenure is not going to really benefit the system. It is possible that officers with more than a year of service left are not really the most suitable ones to man the Board. Instead of a totally incompetent man running the Board for a few months, we may end up with a totally incompetent man running the Board for 12 months or more and that is more devastating. The selection process should start somewhere at the bottom not the top. We can have a system where every year one officer is promoted based on merit and a rigorous test and not seniority, from each cadre starting from sepoy up to the Chief Commissioner. Over a period of time we will have a small core group of excellent officers, some of whom will reach the Board, not because of blunt seniority but a little merit.

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Why the Board at all?

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Do we really need a Board? The only function the Board had been successfully doing was creating confusion with its clarifications and notifications. In any case, many of the important wings like TRU and TPL have slowly slipped out of the Board. So may be the whole concept of having Revenue Boards should be reviewed. Like other departments, this department can also be headed by an IAS Secretary, who will be heading the department for a short tenure. With officers who have worked in the department for thirty plus years manning the Board, we have all kinds of confusions like faulty notifications and clarifications, it will hardly make any difference if an IAS officer heads the department.

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A recently appointed Board Member told an Under Secretary, "I have been working hard for the last 34 years and I have six more months to go; I want to take rest; please don't bother me with any files" . The under Secretary with hardly six years of service and stars in his eyes knows that this man has not been working for the last 34 years; what he will work for the next six months?

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Until tomorrow with more of DDT

Have a Nice Day