

BACKGROUND

3. Our appointment followed expressions of discontent arising in the main from matters connected with pay relativities and communication within a number of areas of the civil service. This had been the subject of debate in the Legislative Council during November 1978. With over eight years having passed since the review by the 1971 Salaries Commission, it was recognised that there was a need for a further overall review of the salary scales, structure and conditions of service of the civil service. Some of the innovations introduced by the 1971 Commission had not proved successful. Moreover in the years since the 1971 Salaries Commission produced its report the civil service has undergone substantial changes and its size, scope and responsibilities have all increased. To cater for these changes adjustments to grades have had to be made on a piecemeal basis. These ad hoc amendments led to pressure for adjustments from other grades which believed themselves to be related. The basic framework of the civil service salary structure was therefore being eroded and staff associations increasingly felt it necessary to make claims for improved pay in the belief that only those who asked would be considered. If confidence in fair overall treatment was to be restored, a more systematic approach to the review of civil service pay structure and conditions of service had to be found. The decision was therefore taken to appoint a Commission independent of the Government administration to undertake such a review.

4. Our appointment also represented a departure from previous practice in that not only is the Commission composed entirely of local residents but it is a Standing Commission. We are thus a continuing organisation whose duty it is not only to review civil service salaries and conditions of service in the light of the present situation but also to keep such salaries and conditions under review to take account of any changes which might occur in the future.

5. Another area in which we differ from previous Salaries Commissions is that our appointment follows five years of annual pay trend survey awards. Other Salaries Commissions had been appointed at intervals of five years or more during which there had been no or only marginal increases in civil service salaries. One of their main tasks, therefore, was to bring civil service salaries back into line with the private sector and generally they were able to recommend the grant of service wide salary increases. With the introduction of annual pay reviews in 1974, civil service salaries have largely kept pace with the private sector and thus in our case, the need to grant across-the-board pay increases to enable civil service salaries to "catch up" with the private sector does not arise.