

APPENDIX V

Colonial Secretariat  
Hong Kong.

25 June, 1974.

CIVIL SERVICE BRANCH CIRCULAR NO. 45/74

Staff Association Activities

(Note: This circular deals with the question of time off for officers engaged in the work of the Senior Civil Service Council and in Staff Association activities. It should be read by all officers.)

This Circular clarifies the position of civil servants appointed by their Staff Associations to serve either as members of the Staff Side of the Senior Civil Service Council, or as officials of individual Staff Associations and deals in particular with the grant of time off for such activities. These matters have been the subject of close consultation with the Staff Side of the Senior Civil Service Council.

2. Government fully recognizes the value of an efficient and responsible Staff Side, and of well organised and fully representative Staff Associations. It is in the interest of the Civil Service and of Government that Staff Associations should be capably and responsibly represented. Departments should therefore ensure that no officer should feel debarred from accepting any office in a Staff Association except for reasons associated with his particular appointment, (for example, if he is posted to the Civil Service Branch or serves in an isolated location). All officers should feel that a career in the Public Service is in no way incompatible with involvement in Staff Side activities. Although it is clearly not possible for Government to say that an officer can take off whatever time he likes from his normal duties for such activities, and the efficient performance by the officer of his official duties normally takes priority, Departments should as far as possible recognize and take into account the officer's Staff Side responsibilities.

Meetings of Senior Civil Service Council & Committees

3. Save in the most exceptional circumstances, which should be reported by telephone to the Secretary for the Civil Service, Heads of Departments should allow accredited Staff Side representatives time off to attend meetings of the Senior Civil Service Council or its individual Committees. "Committees"

in this context includes not only actual meetings of the Council or its Committees but also meetings of the Staff Side of the Council and within sensible limits necessary consultations between Staff Side representatives on Senior Civil Service Council matters. The responsibilities of the Staff Side Secretary go somewhat beyond this, and are not fully covered by the foregoing. If the Head of Department finds it difficult to release the Staff Side Secretary for essential Staff Side business, he should consult the Secretary for the Civil Service. If the issue cannot be satisfactorily resolved, it may become the subject of consideration in the Senior Civil Service Council.

#### Time off for Staff Association Activities

4. Most of the business of Staff Associations, as distinct from Senior Civil Service Council work, is conducted outside office hours. Nevertheless, in addition to time off for Staff Side activities (see paragraph 3 above), a limited amount of Staff Association activity may be permitted during office hours. The scope of this depends upon the degree of reasonable involvement of the officer concerned, and each situation should be considered on its merits. Rightly, the needs of the Public Service and the efficiency of the individual officer in the performance of his official duties must be the major consideration and will normally take priority; but it is also right that Staff Association activities (such as participation in meetings between an Association and Government officials, the collection of dues, urgent telephone calls between association officials, and urgent discussions on association matters), should be permitted during office hours. In the event of difficulty the Head of Department should consult the Secretary for the Civil Service as in paragraph 3.

5. It is difficult to quantify "a limited amount of Staff Association work", but it is agreed that Council Members, other than the President and Secretary, should not normally need to spend more than the equivalent of half a day per week on such activities. This facility should be granted only to office bearers of Associations and to nominees of Associations serving on official committees such as the Quarters Allocation Committee. Formal meetings of executive councils, or other committees of individual Associations should, as a rule, be held outside office hours.

6. The implementation of these arrangements will sometimes be the subject of disagreement but I hope that Departments and Staff Associations alike will exercise mutual goodwill to ensure that the intentions of paragraphs 2, 3, 4 and 5 of this Circular are realised to the fullest reasonable extent. In particular, Departments are asked to do their utmost to ensure that Staff Side representatives are not prevented by their official duties from carrying out their Staff Side functions, provided this is without detriment to the public interest or to the officer's own career. Heads of Departments or their Deputies are requested to

deal personally with any difficulties arising. Staff Side representatives on the other hand should understand that the primary responsibility of the Head of Department is the efficiency of his Department, and they should accept when necessary, that the public interest and the efficient performance of their duties take precedence over Staff Side interests.

7. Paragraphs 7-10 of Establishment Circular 43/68 are superseded by this Circular.

8. The Staff Relations Officer, Colonial Secretariat (Tel. 5-95546) will be pleased to help on any connected problems or queries.

A.J. SCOTT  
Secretary for the Civil Service