

CHAPTER 5

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Modifications to Dependant Pension Benefits and Pension Arrangements

5.1 In April, 1991, the Administration sought our advice on proposals to introduce changes to the dependant pension benefits and pensions arrangements. The proposed changes included conversion of the Widows and Orphans Pension Scheme (WOPS) and the Widows' and Children's Pension Scheme (WCPS) into voluntary schemes, extension of the WCPS to cover staff who were hitherto not eligible to join, making pension adjustment a statutory right, and other modifications to provide greater flexibility and remove anomalies.

5.2 Having regard to present day needs, we supported conversion of the Widows and Orphans Pension Scheme and the Widows' and Children's Pension Scheme into voluntary schemes. Furthermore, on grounds of equity, we supported the proposal to extend the WCPS to other staff.

5.3 We gave very careful consideration to the proposal to make pension adjustment a statutory right. Since our views were evenly divided, we did not consider it appropriate to tender definite advice on this and suggested that the Administration should take our views into account in deciding on whether the proposal should be taken forward.

5.4 As to the rest of the Administration's proposals, we noted that they were mainly technical in nature and aimed at slightly improving existing provisions, allowing for greater flexibility and removing anomalies. They did not involve any major departure from the basic principles and the additional costs incurred were insignificant. We supported the proposals.

5.5 Our letter of 27 May 1991 tendering advice to the Governor on the proposed modifications to dependant pension benefits and pension arrangements is reproduced at Appendix H.

Performance-Related Long Service Award Scheme

5.6 In the First Report on the 1989 Salary Structure Review (Report No. 23), we proposed that the Administration should examine the possibility of introducing a performance-related award scheme into the civil service. Following the Government's acceptance of the recommendation, the Administration issued a circular to the staff and departmental management soliciting views on the proposed award scheme. Taking into account the comments received, the Administration formulated some preliminary proposals for an experimental scheme. In January 1991, the preliminary proposals were forwarded to us for information.

5.7 We noted that the Administration's preliminary proposals were generally in line with the Commission's recommendations. There were, however, a few significant modifications confining the experimental scheme to a more limited basis. We made a number of observations for further consideration by the Administration.

Shadow Promotion Scheme for Civil Servants Working under Hospital Authority and Vocational Training Council

5.8 In January 1991, the Administration informed us of its proposal for a Shadow Promotion Scheme for civil servants working under the Hospital Authority and the Vocational Training Council.

5.9 We were advised by the Administration that staff who were transferred to the Hospital Authority (HA) and the Vocational Training Council (VTC) were allowed to retain their civil service status and would have equal opportunities of promotion vis-a-vis those who were under the HA and VTC employment. As these staff were in fact civil servants and occupied posts in the civil service establishment, some special administrative arrangement had to be instituted to cater for their promotion. The Shadow Promotion Scheme was, therefore, a technical device to accommodate these staff. Although some of the shadow posts created might not have equivalent civil service ranks or the salary scales might be different from comparable ranks in the civil service, this would not have any impact on the pay and structure of the civil service. Furthermore, the fringe benefits associated with the shadow posts would be determined by prevailing civil service policies.

5.10 We expressed concern about the possibility of these bodies devising a salary structure different from the civil service and its impact on comparable grades working for these bodies and the Government. The Administration reassured the Commission that before either of these bodies

introduced any changes to the salary structure of its staff, the impact on the civil service would be carefully examined by the Administration.

Study of Job Evaluation

5.11 In the course of the 1989 Salary Structure Review of the non-Directorate civil service, we identified for further examination the subject of job evaluation. As a first preparatory step toward further study of the subject, we asked the Pay Survey and Research Unit in May 1991 to conduct an in-house study on the subject. The objective of the study was to examine the feasibility and viability of introducing job evaluation to determine the job-weight and pay for the non-Directorate grades in the Hong Kong civil service.

5.12 The study was scheduled to be carried out in two stages. The first involved mainly fact-finding and research work. In the second stage, the information obtained would be analysed to identify the issues that would be involved and to consider the feasibility and viability of introducing job evaluation in the Hong Kong civil service.

5.13 The Unit started the study in late May 1991 and presented us with its first report in November 1991. The study should be completed in early 1992.

Review of Leave Passage Arrangements

5.14 We received a submission from the Administration seeking our advice on proposals to introduce greater flexibility for passage arrangements and started work to review the issue in February 1991. We invited the Senior Civil Service Council and the Model Scale 1 Staff Consultative Council to give their comments. However, in March 1991, we were advised by the Administration that it had received a proposal from another airline on Government-sponsored travel which would have implications on the review of the existing British Airways Agreement and it would take a fresh look on the whole issue. In the circumstance, we decided to suspend the review until the Administration has completed its deliberations.

Review of Sea Passage Arrangements

5.15 In May 1991, the Administration sought our views on whether the provision of sea passages to eligible overseas officers should be withdrawn. The Administration considered that sea passages should be abolished and proposed various options for compensation.

5.16 We agreed that sea passages should be withdrawn as soon as practicable having regard to the fact that the provision was outdated and there was no doubt that a trip on the Canberra was a luxury cruise. As regards the options for compensation, it would be up to the Administration to decide after consultation with staff but the total cost to the Government should not be greater than the cost for maintaining the status quo. Our views have been conveyed to the Administration for further consideration.