

CHAPTER 5

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Review of Accommodation Allowance

5.1 The Administration sought our advice on a proposal to review annually the rates of Accommodation Allowance which had not been revised since its introduction in October 1990. As it was the Government's established policy to review and to revise the rates of Private Tenancy Allowance annually having regard to rental movements, the Administration proposed that the rates of Accommodation Allowance should be reviewed annually and revised on the same basis as the family rates of the Private Tenancy Allowance.

5.2 We support the Administration's proposals. We would also like to point out that in endorsing the Administration's proposal to introduce an Accommodation Allowance in 1990, we recommended that the rates of the allowance should be kept under review to take account of changes in the level of rent and of any emerging recruitment difficulties of overseas officers attributable to housing provision. As regards the review methodology, while we support the Administration's proposal of revising the rates of Accommodation Allowance in accordance with the family rates of Private Tenancy Allowance, we recommended that the methodology of reviewing the rates of Private Tenancy Allowance and Accommodation Allowance should be re-examined in future having regard to changing trends.

5.3 Our letter of 4 March 1992 to the Governor tendering advice on the review of accommodation allowance is reproduced at Appendix I.

Review of Education Allowance and School Passage Schemes

5.4 The Administration sought our advice on proposals for introducing a new Education Allowance Scheme and a new School Passage Scheme. We gave some preliminary views on the proposals and requested additional information. We will deliberate further on these subjects when such information is available.

Review of Leave Arrangements

5.5 The Administration sought our views on a number of proposals for revising leave arrangements in the civil service. We indicated that while we would welcome any attempt to simplify the administration of leave, we were unable to support some of the proposals because they would not resolve the fundamental problems. We suggested that the Administration should carry out a comprehensive review of leave arrangements having regard to private sector practices.

Study on Job Evaluation

5.6 In the course of the 1989 Salary Structure Review, we identified for further examination the use of job evaluation in the civil service. In May 1991, we asked the Pay Survey and Research Unit to conduct an in-house study to examine the feasibility and viability of introducing job evaluation as a means of determining job-weight and pay for the non-Directorate grades in the civil service.

5.7 The Unit presented us with its first report in November 1991 and its second and final report in September 1992. The two reports cover the functions, scope and methods of job evaluation and its use in the private sector in Hong Kong and in the civil service of USA, UK, Canada, Australia, Singapore and Japan. They analyse the pay policy and mechanism for determining pay relativities in the non-Directorate civil service in Hong Kong and examine whether the existing system should be replaced. The system now in use in Hong Kong bears close resemblance to the non-analytical method of job evaluation. Although the trend in the six civil services studied is to replace non-analytical with analytical methods, there is as yet insufficient evidence that the latter is more effective. There are also practical constraints in revising the system currently in use in Hong Kong. The reports concluded that it would not be desirable to replace the present system with another at this stage.

5.8 We agree with the conclusion of the reports. However, since there is a growing tendency to adopt analytical methods of job evaluation and such methods evolve in the course of time, we asked the Unit to carry out a short study of the development of job evaluation in the six countries in three years. In the light of the findings, we will decide whether a further study on private sector practices is necessary.

Survey on Pay and Conditions of Service
for Model Scale 1 Jobs in the Private Sector

5.9 As part of the 1989 Salary Structure Review, we invited the Pay Survey and Research Unit to carry out a series of Pay Comparison Surveys, including one on the salaries and fringe benefits of private sector jobs which were similar to the Model Scale 1 grades in the civil service. In May 1992, the Administration requested us to conduct a further survey to establish the current pattern and whether any significant changes had taken place since the last survey.

5.10 We agreed that the survey should be carried out by the Pay Survey and Research Unit in conjunction with the 1992/93 Pay Trend Survey, adopting similar methodology to that of the 1989 survey.

Informal Discussions with Major Staff Associations

5.11 To enable us to stay in touch with service-wide issues of concern to the majority of civil servants, during the year we held four informal discussions with the major staff groups, namely the Staff Side of the Model Scale 1 Staff Consultative Council, the Association of Expatriate Civil Servants of Hong Kong, the Senior Non-Expatriate Officers Association and the Hong Kong Chinese Civil Servants' Association. We found these discussions most useful and would wish to repeat them from time to time.