

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF INDIVIDUAL GRADES

2.1 During the year, we were invited by the Administration to advise on proposals to merge the Registrar of Trade Unions grade with the Labour Officer grade and to create two new ranks of Assistant Taxation Officer and Senior Taxation Officer in the Taxation Officer grade. These proposals and our deliberations thereon are summarised in the following paragraphs. The letters to the Governor conveying our advice are reproduced at Appendices D(i)-(ii). As at the end of the year, our advice on both issues was still under consideration by the Administration.

Merger of Registrar of Trade Unions Grade with Labour Officer Grade [Appendix D(i)]

2.2 The Registrar of Trade Unions grade forms the backbone of the Registry of Trade Unions. We were informed by the Administration that the functions of the Registry had changed over the years. As a result of such changes, the scope of work and the level of responsibility of the Registrar of Trade Unions grade had been enhanced. They were comparable to those of the Labour Officer grade. Succession and career development problems had emerged as the grade only had a small establishment of nine. To provide greater flexibility in the deployment of staff, improve operational efficiency and resolve the career development and succession problems, the Administration proposed to merge the Registrar of Trade Unions grade (a matriculation grade) with the Labour Officer grade (a degree grade) and to amalgamate the Registry of Trade Unions with the Labour Department.

2.3 We supported the proposed merger of the Registrar of Trade Unions grade with the Labour Officer grade having regard to the increase in the responsibilities of the Registrar of Trade Unions grade and the resultant flexibility in the deployment of staff and improved career prospect. The merger would also be in line with the established principle that, wherever possible, small grades should be merged with larger ones for better staff management and promotion opportunities. However, we were concerned that the amalgamation of the Registry of Trade Unions and the Labour Department might jeopardise the independent status of the Registry. We were assured by the Administration that the proposed amalgamation of the two departments would not lead to any changes in the mode of operation of the Registry and that the Registrar would continue to exercise his power under the Trade Unions Ordinance independently.

Creation of New Ranks in Taxation Officer Grade [Appendix D(ii)]

2.4 The Taxation Officer grade is a one-rank grade in the Inland Revenue Department. Taxation Officers perform tax-oriented duties including document processing, tax-related computer functions, assisting in tax-assessment and recovery and handling enquiries on taxation matters. Clerical Officers II and Senior Clerical Officers in the Department are also deployed on similar duties but at different levels of responsibility. The Administration has informed us that the situation was unsatisfactory from both the operational and staff management points of view. It restricted the Department's flexibility in the deployment of staff because the Clerical Officer grade was managed on a service-wide basis and for this reason its posting arrangements did not always meet the needs of the Department. Furthermore, Taxation Officers who were supervised by Senior Clerical Officers and supported by Clerical Officers II lacked a career structure. The Administration therefore proposed to create two new ranks of Assistant Taxation Officer (MPS 3-15) and Senior Taxation Officer (MPS 22-27) in the Taxation Officer grade to replace Clerical Officers II and Senior Clerical Officers engaged in taxation work.

2.5 In view of the specialised nature of taxation work, the staff management problems faced by the Inland Revenue Department and the need for a career structure in the Taxation Officer grade, we supported the Administration's proposal to create the two new ranks and advised the Governor accordingly.