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From: [redacted] <[redacted]@afcd.gov.hk>

Date: 2002/05/25 Sat AM 10:25:14 CST

To: <jsscs@jsscs.gov.hk>

Subject: Comment on consultation paper

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Dear Sir,

We respond to the Consultation paper (Phase I study) on the "Review of civil service pay policy and system". We forward our comment at the attach paper. We wish that the Task Force accept our view and produce a fair and acceptable final report to civil servants.

[redacted]
[redacted]
Civil Servant

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Comments

1. The Task Force admits in the paper that the existing pay system has provided Hong Kong with a stable, clean and efficient civil service. It confirms that the existing pay system achieves the most important aims. In the report, it does not point out any great weakness in the present system that supports a great change to the existing pay system. On the other hand, the information concerning the new system does not convince us that it will be better than the present system. We do not know whether the new system will be simple and easy to administer. Whether it will keep our civil service stable, clean and efficient. Whether the new system will achieve its aims without creating side effects, such as social unrest. Under such uncertainty and in light of bad performance of the Administration in the recent years (such as education policy, housing policy, etc), how can we agree to changing to new system. (3.23(a) & 3.36(c))
2. If commercial type "performance-pay" is introduced in the pay system of the civil service, there must be an objective yardstick for measuring and quantifying "performance". Also this yardstick must be acceptable to the appraisee staff and the appraising staff and the public. Otherwise, it will create a lot of ill-effects, such as flattering culture in the civil service. The appraisee staff will not sound out opinion that is not appealing to the appraising officer. Appraisee staff are forced by the appraising staff to carry out task that are not in the public interest. Also it will lead to corruption and abuse of the superior position. In such circumstance, the Government cannot remain stable, clean and efficient. On the other hand, how can the staff performance be compared with other officers in the same rank but occupy different posts and even different work nature and area. We all know that different posts have different workload and work difficulties. We worry that in the new system, some officers will get better

pay increase than the other officers because they can achieve good performance in easy posts. It will create unfairness and damage staff morale. At that time, there will be more conflicts between the appraising staff and the appraisee. There will be more quarrel on pay increment and the Administration will have to deal with more appeal. It will create inefficiency and waste a lot of resource. More important, it does not contribute to good staff relationship and the staff morale. It does not work to the benefit of the public interest. (3.23(a), 3.36(c), 3.30 (c) & (d))

3. We agree to adhere to the principle of board comparability with the private sector and continue to conduct regular pay level, pay structure and pay trend surveys. This system has been used for many years and proved to be acceptable to the civil servants and the public. We cannot see strong reason to deviate from this principle. Some improvement of the present system can be considered, but replacement by new system which has no detail at present is not supported. (3.23 (d) & 3.36(a))
4. We strongly object to the idea of making the affordability to pay an over-riding consideration in pay adjustment. Normally, government should not have such a scenario that they cannot afford to pay their employee in the pay adjustment, especially when the private sector can afford to pay. Government should always have a good finance position and planning. (If it is not, the top government officers must have done something seriously wrong even under public checking.) If the government suffers from economic depression like the present situation, the private sector will cut the salary and the government follows. When the economic situation improves, the private sector grows and the government income increases. Then the government can adjust the salary upwards. So far as this principle is followed, we cannot see why the affordability to pay should become an over-riding factor to

consider in pay adjustment. If this idea is adopted, it will create political and social instability. Civil servant will become unstable and disloyal. Civil servant will lose confidence and respect to the government because the government makes serious mistake in their financial planning and control but let their employees suffer. Argentina is a very good and obvious example. (3.23 (e))

5. Flexible pay range will create a lot of problem, such as creating flattering culture, unfair treatment to the staff, corruption, etc. Objectivity must be ensured in the flexible pay range system but we cannot see that the present Administration can guarantee the objectivity be adopted in the 180,000s staff. If the Administration carries this out, that means there will be tremendous different objective yardsticks for different staff. The system will become complicated and is not simple and easy to administer. Therefore, we suggest that the flexible pay range be implemented in the directorate grade first. This has several advantages:

- a) The number of directorate grade officers is relatively small, thus it is easier and simple to implement.
 - b) Their performance can be easily judged by the public or by some relatively simple mechanism. An assessment panel formed by the member of public from different sectors can provide opinion.
 - c) If it is successful, it will provide a demonstration effect to the rest of the government. The experience gained will help to make it operational in other ranks.
- (3.30 (c) & (d))

6. Team based performance is a vague term. How the performance is measured? Who make the judgement for the performance? If it is adopted, different sections will

compete for good quality staff. It will create tension in the office as well as unnecessary and unproductive office politics and conflicts. (3.44(c))

7. The question whether decentralization of civil service pay administration be introduction is quite vague. We have to ask what sort of power should be decentralized? If it means that the department can solely decide the pay rise for the staff, including appeal system, we strongly object to this kind of decentralization. We can see that it will create a lot of problems and exacerbate the current problems in the department. As we all know, a lot of senior officers in the department have poor personnel management concept and even do not follow the CSB guideline or CSR in personnel management. How can we rely on these department staff for better personnel management if they are vested with more decentralized power? (3.51(a))

8. We agree that the simplification can be applied to some area in the government especially in the directorate grade officer. There are 8 ranks in directorate grade. We cannot see any reason why these 8 ranks cannot be trimmed down. (3.51e)

9. As a whole, we do not trust the Task Force. It is obvious that the Task Force has its hidden stance. The data are selectively and subjectively collected. They will make the interpretation of the data and the opinion collected with special intent. They will present the information in a special way to distort the picture. For instance, in the table "Brief overview of civil service pay arrangements in the five selected countries", the answers to "is ability to pay a primary factor for pay adjustment" are all simple "yes" for the five countries. However, an officer of Singapore Government reveals to us that the answer cannot be a simple yes. The system in the Singapore is complicated and other factors are more important than the ability to pay in the pay system. He points out that

the situation in Singapore is different from Hong Kong. It is not good to make a simple comparison. Lastly, we would like to remind that any reform cannot be successful if there is no real co-operation between the staff and the Administration. You cannot gain confidence and respect from your partner if you play tricks. The reform under such circumstance will create more trouble/problem/mess and alienation will be unavoidable.