

MEMORANDUM FOR SUBMISSION TO CABINET BY THE
HON. MINISTER OF WORKS AND HOUSING REGARDING
THE PROPOSED INTRODUCTION OF CONTROLS ON
THE IMPORTATION AND LOCAL MANUFACTURE OF
QUARRYING MACHINERY

An Advisory Board composed of representatives of the Mechanised Quarry Owners Union, the Building Contractors Union and the Government was set up on the 3rd March, 1961, with the following terms of reference:-

"to consider and advise the Commissioner of Police on the issue of permits to operate mechanized quarries. When tendering advice the Board would in addition to the technical matters involved in the application for permits to operate machinery and to generate electricity also have in mind the prosperity and well-being of the quarrying and building industries, and the conditions of the supply and demand of quarried stone."

This Board has been functioning to date.

The Board is at the moment doing its very best to help the quarry owners out of their present economic difficulties, which are mainly due to a falling demand for soft stone as a result of a decline in the construction industry. Since its setting up, the Board has consistently adopted a policy of not issuing new licences for the operation of soft stone quarrying machinery. This has been done to protect the "well being" and to ensure "the prosperity" of the quarrying industry after taking into consideration the conditions of demand and supply of soft stone over this period and the price fetched by this commodity which is considered fair and reasonable. Indeed the price of stone has been constantly falling since the Board came into operation, despite the policy adopted by Government on the advice of the Board, of restricting new licences.

The Board are well aware of the administrative difficulties which are being encountered by the Commissioner of Police who is responsible for the issue of licences for operating quarries, especially as various attempts are being made by existing quarry owners to proliferate the number of existing licences. The Board are reluctant to depart from the policy they have been following so far; however, they desire that Government should do its best to facilitate the implementation of their decisions and at the same time that the minimum of inconvenience be caused to applicants who may have to be refused a permit. The Board has taken into consideration the fact that persons applying for a permit to operate a mechanised soft stone quarry may complain of hardship with some justification, if the licence is refused after they will have been allowed to import or manufacture machinery without any hindrance whatsoever.

/The Board

The Board therefore suggests that preventive controls should be applied at source viz.

- a) at the stage of importation of the quarrying machinery; or
- b) at the stage of manufacture of such machinery when manufactured, adapted or assembled locally.

The Board consequently recommend that

(a) restrictions be imposed on the importation of machinery for the quarrying of soft stone. If their recommendations are accepted, the Director of Industrial Development would receive applications for the importation of soft stone quarrying machinery. The applications would then be referred to the Board for advice as to whether the requested import licence should be issued or not.

(b) Necessary measures, possibly including legislation, be introduced to prohibit the manufacture of soft stone quarrying machinery or the assembly or adaptation of same, except under licence, which shall be issued after the Quarries Advisory Board will have been duly consulted on the matter.

The above recommendations are considered to be justified in the present soft-stone situation of supply and demand and Hon. Ministers are asked to agree that these recommendations be approved.

10th June, 1963.

(MWH.60/62)