

MEMORANDUM FOR THE CABINET BY THE
HON. THE PRIME MINISTER

Parking Meters

A suggestion for the installation of parking meters in Valletta was made to the Traffic Control Board.

2. The views of the Board are as follows:-

"The installation of parking meters would definitely help to ease the parking situation, provided their proper use is regularly and consistently enforced, and their abuse promptly brought to book. In this respect, windscreen disc could also be very useful.

"Owing to the narrowness of the footways in Valletta, parking meters should be of the bracket rather than the pedestal type.

"It is difficult to forecast what the public reaction to parking meters would be, but in other countries they have proved popular with the short term parkers and unpopular with the long term parkers. They are generally disliked by frontagers but appreciated by shoppers. The essence of this problem lies in careful location and a suitable scale of charges and duration times.

"Financially, parking meters should not be considered as revenue earning. They just about pay for their enforcement and maintenance and eventual replacement."

3. The Commissioner of Police does not agree that parking meters would help to ease the parking position as in actual fact these instruments are designed to restrict parking.

4. The Director of Public Works is of opinion that the question of the introduction of parking meters cannot be considered in isolation but it should be examined vis-a-vis the general parking position in Valletta, as parking is both a factor in, and a function of, traffic flow. Parking meters are not as profitable as some people think they are, and maintenance costs may be quite high, particularly if there is evidence of vandalism. Annexed are notes on parking meters submitted by the Director of Public Works.

5. If it is considered that parking meters should be introduced in Valletta, a parking duration survey will have to be made to decide on types of meters, periods and number of metered bays that would be required.

6. As a counter proposal to the installation of parking meters, the Commissioner of Police suggests that ways and means should be devised to increase the parking capacity of Valletta. The Director of Public Works states in this regard that no attempt should be made to encroach further on the open spaces, urban amenities and historical heritage of the City. On the other hand he is of opinion that every opportunity should be taken for the provision of underground car parks and suggests that a two level car park under the Law Courts and in particular under the whole of the new development between the Cavaliers are opportunities which must be taken now, because if they are missed they will never occur again. Also the Palace Square should have an underground car park and the upper deck returned to its former urban role.

7. Hon. Ministers are asked whether they approve in principle that parking meters should be introduced in Valletta before the parking-duration survey referred to in paragraph 5 above be made, and to consider the proposals made by the Director of Public Works, and endorsed by the Hon. Minister of Works and Housing, regarding the construction of underground car parks.

23rd November, 1954

Notes on Parking Meters

Parking meters are normally introduced after a specialised form of parking survey and as part of a parking plan which in turn is part of a traffic plan. The objectives of a parking plan are given by the Ministry of Transport as:-

- a) to ensure that moving traffic can proceed freely and safely;
- b) to release kerb-side space when it is needed for loading and unloading goods and for picking up and setting down passengers;
- c) to indicate clearly and precisely when vehicles may or may not be parked, and
- d) to give priority as necessary to the short-term parker.

There are two broad ways of controlling short term parking: by discs and by meters. The discs are free or licensed and are displayed internally on the windscreen showing the time of parking and the time by which the vehicle must be removed. The meters are basically operated by a coin in a slot and are revenue earning. The pros and cons of discs vis-a-vis meters are given by Andrew in Traffic Engineering Practice as:

Advantages:

1. No expensive meter to install and maintain.
2. Footways uncluttered by unsightly posts.
3. Absence of marked meter bays and increased use of the designated kerb lengths by up to 30%.
4. Costs borne by the motorist confined to supervision only.

Disadvantages:

1. Absence of clearly defined parking bays, parking at intersections and other unsuitable places.
2. Greater onus on drivers to comply with regulations.
3. Necessity to check discs at fixed times of day.
4. Larger enforcement staff - up to three times as many as for a meter scheme.
5. No surplus revenue for off-street parks.
6. Cost of scheme (enforcement) borne by taxpayers generally.

On the Continent the general preference is for discs, in English Speaking countries for meters. Both discs and meters depend on 100% enforcement for their effectiveness.

Discs were introduced in the Paris Blue Zone in 1957, and about 3,000,000 tickets are issued every year by the Paris wardens for offences including non-display of discs, overstaying time limit, setting discs too fast or disc resetting. About 600 wardens are employed in Paris for the purpose.

Meters were introduced in the United States of America in 1935 and in London in 1958. They are of three types:

- a) Normal - operated by lever after insertion of coin;
- b) Semi-automatic - operated by mainspring which must be wound every week; and
- c) Automatic - operated by the energy of the forcible insertion of a coin against a spring.

Meters are available in single, twin or multiple head units and are generally of the pedestal type but can be of the bracket type. They can also be of the 'Cumulative' type in which unexpired time is added to the 'bought' time subject to the overall limit, or of the 'self-cancelling' type in which the dial is returned to zero. Most authorities favour the latter but allow free 'tag-end' parking. Meters are subject to damage through misuse or vandalism, and the manual type is particularly susceptible to damage to the lever. The automatic is also more easily damaged than the semi-automatic and its escapement is less easily repaired or replaced. Figures quoted by Tait in a paper on 'Prospects of Parking Meters in Scotland' give 1% per day as the average number of meters needing attention. Of 160 cases of vandalism, 136 were due to matchsticks, 11 to foreign coins, 6 to three penny bits and one each to other causes ranging from wire to chewing-gum and chocolate paper to wool.

Offences relating to parking meter usage include:

- a) failure to pay initial charge;
- b) overstaying bought time and incurring excess charge;
- c) gross overstaying of bought time and incurring penalty;
- d) meter 'feeding' (adding coins on expiration of bought time);
- e) "musical meters" (swopping pieces at intervals);
- f) parking outside bay or obstructing bays.

A single-head, semi-automatic meter costs about £35; a twin-head meter costs less than double. The useful life of a meter is 10 years and a meter should be tested for time-keeping and general operation once a month and withdrawn, stripped, overhauled, tested and replaced every year. Judging by Scottish experience it would need repairs 3 - 4 times a year, and its coin-box should be emptied every evening or otherwise it gets tampered with. At 6d per hour of bought time and operation between 8.00 a.m. and 6.00 p.m., on weekdays the average takings per meter in the United Kingdom are 20/- to 22/- per week or £50 - £60 per annum. In the Westminster parking meter scheme 1,822 meters distributed over 275 acres and employing 35 attendants and contract maintenance, the cost of

providing the meters (written off over 10 years) plus maintenance costs, road workings, and traffic wardens salaries, was estimated at £84,000 per annum. The takings amounted to £100,000 per annum plus £36,000 per annum in fines. In the United Kingdom all profits must, by law be devoted to the provision of off street parking facilities.
