

MEMORANDUM TO CABINET BY THE HON. MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE,
POWER AND COMMUNICATIONS REGARDING THE GOZO ICE MAKING PLANT

L-Arkivji Nazzjonali ta' Malta

In 1935, following disagreement between Mr. Portelli who owned the ice plant in Gozo and the Government, it was decided to take over the plant. As it was run by electricity, the Electricity Section of the Water & Electricity Department took it over. This was done for lack of a more appropriate undertaking. In 1953, the plant was giving considerable trouble and as Government did not wish the service to cease it was replaced by a new one.

In 1962, when the present administration took office, steps were being taken to call for tenders for disposal of the plant with the condition that the successful tenderer would continue to meet local demands. However, as it was considered that no acceptable offer would come forward under these conditions, the call for tenders was suspended. Meanwhile, both before and after the creation of the Malta Electricity Board, Government has been pressed to relieve the Electricity Undertaking of the Ice Plant which is run at a loss of over £300 annually.

The demand for ice in Gozo comes mainly from fishermen particularly during the lampuki season. Besides, there is also a demand from confectioners and other customers. As fishermen may require supplies also at night, the plant has to be open on a 24-hour basis. As it is not required for the Board's function of supply electricity the plant did not form part of those assets which the Board took over from Government and it has continued to run it pending a Government decision on its disposal. Lately, the Board decided to suspend sales of ice after working hours and these sales were resumed only after the Board was assured that Government would refund overtime costs.

It is hoped that Hon. Ministers will agree that the Gozo Ice Plant must remain in operation and that consequently Government will have to subsidise it.

Moreover, Hon. Ministers are requested to advise on the most suitable undertaking (M.M.U., Agric. & Fisheries, Civic Council, Water Works) which should operate the plant and to recommend the allocation of funds to cover the subsidy.

1st October, 1965.