

MEMORANDUM FOR CABINET BY THE HON. M.T.I.A.
FREE INSTALLATION OF HOUSE WATER SERVICE

On the 16th September, 1966, the Ministry of Trade, Industry, and Agriculture asked for the concurrence of the Ministry of Finance, Customs and Port for the utilization of a sum of not more than £500 from the provision of Extension of Service Mains to meet the cost of providing free water services to deserving cases, particularly those living entirely on Social Service assistance. To date, after the lapse of more than one year and after repeated reminders from the Ministry, a decision is still awaited.

In terms of the Water Supply Regulations, house services (i.e. the service pipe connecting the house to the street water mains) are laid down by the Water Works Department at the expense of the applicant.

As Ministers are aware, the water Works Department has constantly been endeavouring to close down all standpipes as permanent water mains are laid. The department's efforts have met with little success as the families affected by the removal of standpipes are in most cases unable financially to bear the cost of a house service installation. In such cases there is no alternative but the provision of such services at public expense.

The provision of such free services will be made conditional to the removal of standpipes. It is estimated that the average yearly consumption from the existing standpipes is approximately 7,200,000 gallons and more than half of that amount is either wasted or taken free for other than domestic purposes. The Water Works Department is not sparing any effort to reduce unnecessary water waste, and has very rightly recommended the removal of all standpipes. This is in consonance with the conclusions reached by the Joint Mission for Malta on the subject of water conservancy. Chapter 23 of the report states "The Mission recommends that further positive action should be taken to conserve every available drop of water..... As more houses are supplied with a metered service, the number of standpipes offering

unlimited supplies of free water should be reduced".

Ministers are aware of the critical water situation in which we found ourselves this summer; demand outstripped supply on various occasions and an appreciable inroad was made on our water reserves. With the anticipated increase in demand, the position will definitely not improve next summer, even though it is hoped the installed distiller will be giving maximum output. One need not therefore elaborate on the paramount importance of tapping and utilizing fully all available sources of water conservancy.

Besides the aspect of water conservancy, which the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Agriculture considers of vital and primary importance, it must be pointed out that the revenue that will eventually be collected for consumption of water and meter rent will in the long run more than compensate for the capital contribution. This proposal will be more attractive from a Finance point of view when it is further considered that the distributed water costs of the water that is now going to waste will be saved.

In the view of the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Agriculture, the installation of free water services to needy families is a social measure that merits earnest consideration. Apart from the hygienic value of having a piped service, the availability of water at one's residence, when this can be carried out at little expense to the exchequer, is a desideratum in present living conditions.

The 200 standpipes that are still in existence scattered in various villages throughout Malta and Gozo are as unsightly as they are unhygienic. Now that we are in the process of taking positive action to clean our streets of litter, it will certainly be commendable to remove these standpipes which has invariably proved to be the cause of dirty run off water and consequent infection.

In view of the foregoing, Ministers are requested to agree that authority be given for the free installation of house water service to deserving cases such as

families who are destitute and/or who produce evidence that they are living entirely on Social Service Assistance. Funds for the purpose may be made available from the provision of Extension of Service Mains under Capital Expenditure.

November, 1967.

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