

MEMORANDUM FOR CABINET

BY THE HON. MINISTER OF TRADE, INDUSTRY AND
AGRICULTURE

REGISTRAR OF CO-OPERATIVES

Ordinance No. XXXIV of 1946 inter alia provides for a Registrar who is to perform the duties assigned to him by the Ordinance.

In 1946 the office of Co-operatives was therefore set up and a Registrar of Co-operatives appointed. Subsequently, this Office and that of the Trade Development were merged.

In 1954 the Farmers' Central Co-operative Society, the largest co-operative, addressed the Prime Minister with a view to transferring the Co-operatives either to the Department of Agriculture or to that of the Principal Government Statistician, where Mr. Paris, the first Registrar, was in charge.

It is presumed that the reason which prompted this move was the fact that they wanted a Registrar who understood agricultural as distinct from trade activities.

Co-operatives were therefore eventually transferred to the Department of Agriculture rather than to the Office of the Principal Government Statistician.

This arrangement did not last long either. It is true that the Registrar of Co-operatives remained the Director of Agriculture but a Chief Executive Officer was added to the staff of the Department of Agriculture in the Estimates of 1958/59, and administratively it was arranged that he should take the Co-operatives in hand and be responsible not to the Registrar of Co-operatives but to the Minister direct. No legal amendment was carried out as doubts were very aforesaid that this arrangement might not work after all.

In fact, neither this set up worked and in 1960 the Registrar of Co-operatives was again told to assume full responsibility and the Chief Executive Officer was transferred to the Department of Labour and became its Assistant Director of Labour.

In 1964, F.A.O. were asked by the Malta Government to send an expert to advice on this question and he having examined it wrote:-

"In more than one instance I was asked to agree that the Registrar of Co-operatives should be a separate Government Department and not included in the Agriculture Minister's portfolio. The chief reason seemed to be a feeling that the Department of Agriculture has certain responsibilities respecting the marketing of agricultural produce in general which create conflicting loyalties where co-operatives are concerned. I pointed out that a

separate Department would cost Government more (it was objected that it would only be a little extra) and that it would have to be attached to some Ministry. So long as all the Co-operatives are agricultural in character, as at present, I see no good reason for a change. When other types of society come into being, such as housing co-operatives, credit unions, workers' co-operatives, etc. there might be a case for having the Government co-operative staff attached to the Ministry of Social Welfare".

Though the character of the Co-operatives is not going to be changed materially by the prospective Wine Co-operative at Burmarrad and the Provender Mill at the Marsa Industrial Estates, still it appears that another cycle has come and another arrangement is rather desirable.

It is, therefore, proposed to adjust the Ordinance as to bring it in line with the Commercial Partnerships Ordinance 1962 so that the post of Registrar of Co-operatives be filled by a person other than the Director of Agriculture, Co-operatives remaining however integrated in the Department of Agriculture in the same way as the Registrar of Partnerships is incorporated in that of the Department of Trade.

Such a step would go a long way to meeting the recommendations of a Council appointed in 1964 to examine the Co-operative Societies ordinance and Regulations 1946 and to suggest amendments that are deemed necessary for the development of co-operative Societies.

Hon. Ministers are asked to agree in principle to this new arrangement in order that the necessary amendment to the ordinance may be prepared by the Crown Advocate General and submitted to the House for enactment.

MAPC 364/62

25th October 1968