

MEMORANDUM FOR THE CABINET
BY THE HON. THE PRIME MINISTER

Fitting of taximeters to Gozo taxis

As Honourable Ministers are aware, taximeters have been fitted to all 199 taxis plying for hire in Malta. Indeed the only one not so fitted has been suspended from operating as from the 1st June, 1962.

2. There are 50 registered taxis in Gozo, of which only three have been fitted with a taximeter. The owners of the other 47 taxis have taken no action to comply with the law and Police action was suspended some time ago following a telephone call by the Hon. Mr N. Muscat, M.L.A. to the Commissioner for Gozo.

3. The Gozo Civic Council had, in February, 1961, supported the contention of the Gozo taxi-owners that they should be exempted from fitting meters to their vehicles. Briefly, the arguments put forward on behalf of the Gozo taxi-owners were:-

- (a) conditions in Gozo are different from those in Malta;
- (b) there are no Service personnel stationed in Gozo and the "tourist" demand for taxis is negligible;
- (c) Gozitans crossing from Malta rely mainly on the bus service and very rarely hire taxis;
- (d) visitors from Malta likewise either use the bus service or else bring their own cars over;
- (e) most Gozo taxi-owners have to do some other job besides taxi-driving in order to earn enough to live;
- (f) in view of their meagre earnings, Gozo taxi-drivers would suffer great hardship if they were forced to purchase and instal taximeters;
- (g) the allegation that Gozo taxi-drivers overcharge is unfounded; and finally
- (h) no trouble should arise from a discriminate application of the law in favour of Gozo taxi-owners, provided that they are not allowed to ply in Malta.

4. The representations of the Gozo taxi-owners were considered by the previous Administration and rejected on the ground that on such a matter there could not be two different sets of regulations, one for Malta and one for Gozo.

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5. In view of the impasse, the Commissioner of Police has recently represented to Government that the least that could be done in fairness to the law-abiding owners is to give them absolute priority over the others, i.e. whenever a taxi equipped with a taximeter is present it would have precedence in taking fare-paying passengers over taxis not so equipped even if the latter (non-meter) have been waiting longer at the stand.

6. The advice of Ministers is sought
- a) as to whether the law regarding the compulsory fitting of taximeters to taxis in Gozo should be enforced in the way as it was in Malta; and in the negative
 - b) as to whether taxis fitted with taximeters should be given absolute priority as suggested in para 5 above