

MEMORANDUM FOR THE CABINET
BY THE HON. MINISTER OF HEALTH

Appointment of Officer i/c Supplies in the
Medical and Health Department

The Medical Board appointed to examine Mr Erin Serracino Inglott, the Administrative Officer in charge of the Supplies Section of this Department, who has been on continuous sick leave since the 2nd January, 1962, have declared him to be unfit for future service on account of ill health.

With Mr Serracino Inglott's retirement from the service the matter of the appointment of an administrative officer of the required qualifications and experience to take charge of the Supplies Section again arises. During 1961, Professor Coleiro had on more than one occasion called the attention of the Government to the unsatisfactory state of affairs in the most important section of the Department. Unfortunately no effective action was taken to stop the continued and prolonged absences for one reason or another from the Section of the Administrative Officer.

The Section is responsible for the purchase, the issue, the control and the accounting (including payments), of all provisions and domestic stores and as a result of its activities it is directly responsible for the transactions involving an average of £453,503 per annum.

Since Chev. Edgar Cassar left the Section on the 8th November, 1955, when he was promoted Administrative Secretary of this Department, the administrative officer in charge of this Section had to be changed too often or insufficient attention was paid to choose the person with the right attitude - including that of being able to put considerable energy in the discharge of his duties - with the inevitable result that the brunt of the work in the branch has, of necessity, fallen on Mr Bertram Padovani, the Higher Executive Officer, who has been in the Section since 1948.

It is apposite to quote Captain Stone, an eminent authority on hospital administration, whose work "Hospital Organisation & Management" is an acknowledged text-book on the subject.

Captain Stone wrote as follows:-

"The problem of purchasing, storing, and issuing the many kinds of supplies used in a hospital is one of the most difficult of those always confronting the officials of hospitals. No other of the perplexing duties possesses the same ramifications that are present in this instance; no other offers the same opportunities

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for financial loss or wastage of funds on the one hand, or for saving money and the exercise of economy on the other. Efficiency of management will be vitally affected by the manner in which control is instituted and maintained in this section of activities; any lack of efficiency here will readily be reflected in any one or more of the various departments of the hospital, for their proper functioning depends to a very large extent upon the availability of materials and supplies in proper quantity and right quality."

It will be appreciated that the knowledge to obtain the results mentioned by Captain Stone cannot be possessed in the required degree by any officer of the general service unless this officer will have served for a number of years in a Supplies Section. Considering the activities of the Government Departments it is well nigh difficult to find the officer with the required qualifications as no other Department spends so much as this Department on foodstuffs alone (£214,000 in 1961-62). To acquire the necessary knowledge and experience it would take at least two or three years for an officer to run the Section with a degree of efficiency.

Although appointments and promotions in the general service are part of the duties of the Establishment Section of the Office of the Prime Minister, it should be kept in mind very much that the responsibility for the proper running of a Department, including proper accounting and control of expenditure, lies with the Head of the Departments. Even in the smaller Departments the Head must of necessity delegate the various duties to his subordinates. In such a Department as this - with so many widely differing activities - the running of the various sections must absolutely devolve on the various assistant heads and their subordinates, the general supervision and the policy making being by themselves of a sufficient entity to keep the Head more than fully occupied. For the reason mentioned in this paragraph it is considered that the Head of Department should be afforded the fullest opportunity in expressing his views before the appointment of an administrative officer - one of the senior lay appointment in the Department is finally made - in order to ensure that the person appointed is fully qualified for the post and in order to avoid the serious inconveniences which the particular Section has suffered during the last two years or so.

On the basis of what has been stated in the preceding paragraphs it is suggested that very earnest consideration be given to appointing Mr Padovani to be in charge of the Section, because apart from the merits of other persons belonging to the general service, the C.G.M.O. is sincerely convinced that he fully possesses the necessary

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qualifications, experience and merit to discharge most efficiently the duties required in the Section.

Mr Padovani has been in the Section since 1948 and it is through his own personal efforts - at the cost of sacrificing for months on end all his leisure time - that the Section has been able to carry out its activities with the necessary efficiency notwithstanding the serious handicap of its being understaffed. Mr Padovani has been instrumental in introducing measures which have brought about improvements - at times with savings - in the diet of the patients in Government hospitals, such as the introduction of foreign eggs and foreign chickens which have ensured a supply of a superior product, and recently the introduction of boneless beef which, without any appreciable additional expenditure, has made possible the issue of a better meat ration. His experience and initiative in dealing with the problems of short supply of items of provisions has contributed to the smooth daily supply of provisions and relieved the higher officials with having to deal themselves with these problems.

It may be pointed out that officers are expected to act as stand in for their seniors and this point has been fully kept in mind in submitting these views but such contingencies are only expected to meet normal office occurrences such as vacation leave or other short periods of absence. Unfortunately it is not so in the case under consideration and in view of the very considerable period either officially or unofficially, during which Mr Padovani has been required, in the interest of the Section in particular and of the Department in general, to be in effective charge of the Section, I strongly feel that Mr Padovani deserves special consideration especially in the light of Art. 12 of the Malta (Constitution) Order in Council 1959 which lays down that in making recommendations for the appointment or promotion of officers in the public service the Public Service Commission shall have regard to the maintenance of the high standard of efficiency necessary in the public service and shall give due consideration to serving qualified officers and shall take into account qualification, experience and merit before seniority in the service.

L-Arkivji Nazzjonali ta' Malta