

MEMORANDUM FOR CABINET BY THE  
HON. MINISTER OF TRADE, INDUSTRY AND AGRICULTURE

Expected Industrial Unrest at the Ports

At a meeting held on the 11th October the Chamber of Commerce and the Federation of Malta Industries expressed serious misgivings at the way the industrial unrest at the Port is being handled. The position was that the work to be done was being resorted to by the delivery clerks has given cause to the port carriers (burdnara) to refuse to work under the prevailing conditions with the result that merchandise is piling up in the sheds to the disappointment and frustration of the business community. The representatives of these two bodies were of the view that Government's intervention in such cases was often too late and at a time when the damage had already been done. They also complained that there appeared to be a serious lack of concerted action between the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry responsible for the Ports with the result that confusion was being caused in the minds of the importing sector besides making communications between the parties concerned extremely cumbersome.

The information was also disclosed that there were already indications that another strike by cement carriers was scheduled for the beginning of November when another shipment of cement was expected to reach the Island in which event the Chamber was not prepared to give in as they felt that the settlement which, they claim, was imposed upon them in the case of the last strike in which cement carriers were involved went heavily against them. They opined that Government should initiate negotiations in anticipation of the strike thus avoiding the hardships resulting from industrial action.

This suggestion falls in line with that made at the Cabinet meeting at which the Milk Marketing Undertaking strike was discussed. It had been decided that as soon as there was an indication of strike action Government should decide on which items it was prepared to give in thus enabling Government to be prepared to make counter offers and to negotiate before strike action is resorted to.

Ministers may wish to consider the strike proposed by the cement carriers in order that action may be taken now to prevent another stoppage in Port activities.

MTIA/772/68

23rd October, 1968.