

MEMORANDUM FOR THE C. SIDET  
BY THE HONOURABLE PRIME MINISTER

Disturbance Allowance

For some time the General Workers' Union has been pressing for various improvements to be made in the conditions of Service of certain employees in the Milk Marketing Undertaking.

2. One of these claims is a disturbance allowance to all employees who are conditioned to a time-table which does not comply exactly with the ordinary time-table in the Government service. When negotiating this claim with the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Agriculture, the Union's claims were as follows:-

- (a) £1.10s.0d per week for all those employees who are requested to work on a shift system starting before 6.00 a.m.;
- (b) £1.7s.6d per week for all those employees requested to work on a shift system starting after 6.00 a.m.;
- (c) a proportional allowance for those employees requested to perform work in any of the shifts mentioned in (a) or (b).

3. This claim was discussed in Cabinet and it was decided that the Secretary, Ministry of Trade, Industry and Agriculture should inform the Union that they may go to arbitration on this claim. The Union thereupon altered its claim to:-

- (a) £2.7s.6d per week to all employees who are required to work between 00.01 hours and 04.00 hours;
- (b) £1.15s. 0d per week to all employees who are required to work between 04.01 hours and 06.00 hours;
- (c) £1.7s.6d per week to all employees who are required to work at any time between 06.01 hours and 24.00 hours,

and insisted that the Terms of Remit, besides the above should include the condition that "these allowances should be paid from the 1st April, 1966", but that "in the case of those employees who by their action were against the policy of the Union on the 10th September, 1968, the award shall be effective from the date of the award". The employees referred to here are those who did not go on strike.

4. This condition could not be accepted by the Official Side, and, on the advice of the Crown Advocate General, the Union was informed that the Government could not accept the inclusion of the said condition as the Government would be made to appear to be violating the principles embodied in the Constitution, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Trade Unions and Trade Disputes Ordinance.

5. During a meeting held on the 16th December, 1968, the Union representatives were informed that if they accepted to go to arbitration on the disturbance rates only, then the Government would be prepared to give an assurance in writing stating that, in this case, any award by the Arbitration Tribunal would be made effective from the 1st April, 1966. The Union representatives were also told that perhaps both sides might wish to meet again with a view to coming to an agreement on the rates of allowance without going to arbitration at all.

6. The payment of a Disturbance Allowance has therefore been accepted in principle.

7. The financial implications of this allowance are worthy of serious consideration. The Union asserted, during the meeting of the 16th December, 1968, that it involved only some 20 or 30 employees in the Milk Marketing Undertaking. In actual fact the number of employees affected is known to be over 120. The delegates themselves did not deny that this is the thin end of the wedge, and that claims in respect of other departments will no doubt follow. Assuming, for the purpose of illustration, that 20/- per week is allowed to about 1500 Government employees, the recurrent cost per year would work out to £78,000. This excludes the Police Corps.

8. Some of these 1500 workers are being employed on shift unnecessarily, e.g. engine drivers employed on shift to "drive" motors which go on and off automatically as necessary. Even in the case of the Milk Marketing Undertaking, the Methods Branch of the Establishments Division had, some months ago, given advice to the Management how to economise on the existing system. Unfortunately, this advice has never been acted upon. However, now that the principle of a disturbance allowance has been won by the workers, Hon. Ministers are asked to consider whether this is not the time to give effect to a retrenchment policy designed to economise on unnecessary expenditure, such as emergency work left purposely for week-ends, shift workers which need not necessarily be on shift, etc.

9. As an illustration of what is happening elsewhere, the Drydocks workers receive £1.7s.6d per week, whilst those of the Malta Electricity Board receive 14/- per week.

10. As the General Workers' Union is now pressing for an early resumption of the negotiations, Ministers are requested to state:-

- (a) whether the Official Side should be authorised to inform the Union that, in agreeing to the introduction of a disturbance allowance, the Government intends to begin a retrenchment exercise designed to reduce extra and/or abnormal attendance; and
- (b) what is the maximum amount per man per week beyond which the Official Side should not go in the forthcoming negotiations.

27th January, 1969.