

MEMORANDUM to Cabinet by the  
Hon. Minister of Education, Culture  
and Tourism

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This Ministry has long felt the need of improving the lending service of the Public Libraries. Apart from lack of adequate funds, one of the main obstacles in the way of effectively carrying out such improvement has been the non-availability of suitable accommodation wherein to set up the proper functioning of such service. This Ministry, has, indeed, been endeavouring for some time to find such accommodation but until now with negative results.

It has now come to the knowledge of this Ministry that the house at No. 2 Castillo Place (corner with St. Ursula Street in Valletta), which until recently was used as Royal Air Force Officers Mess and quarters, is being surrendered by the Services to the Maltese Government. The main part of this building is of historical importance as it originally belonged to Fra Girolamo Caraffa, Prior of Barletta, who in 1599 donated this house to the Langue of Italy on condition, inter alia, that it was to be enjoyed by the senior Italian knight, present in the Convent, capable of succeeding to a Commandery.

This building appears to be ideal for setting up in it an efficient Public Lending Library Service, which would incorporate a well-stocked Juvenile Library and would be equipped with Mobile Libraries or Bookmobiles operating from a central book-stock housed in this building and feeding books to the outlying zones of the Island, thus supplementing and to some extent supplanting the District Libraries.

It should be emphasized that the immediate availability of such a building is an absolute must for eventually rendering operative a very important project concerning the aforementioned Library Service, which has been submitted by this Ministry for consideration under the Third Five Year Development Plan. The Public Library Development Scheme is being sponsored by the British Council and it is envisaged that over the period of five years 1969 - 1974 the total sum of £28,000 will be contributed towards the implementation of the Scheme from Commonwealth Public Library Development funds. But it has been made very clear that unless suitable premises are readily available for the eventual functioning

of the project this aid from British sources will not be placed at our disposal - indeed, the offer will be withdrawn.

These facts, consequently, make it more than evident that it is extremely important and urgent for this Ministry to obtain possession of the aforementioned building.

29th April, 1969.

L-ARKIVJI NAZZJONALI TA' MALTA