

Memorandum submitted to Cabinet by the Hon. Minister of Labour, Employment and Welfare on the Closing on Sundays and Good Friday of butchers licensed to sell meat

Following the recent amendments to Act No XXIV of 1957 which provided for the closure on Sundays and Good Friday of grocery shops with the exception of two in every parish in Malta and two at the Valletta Market, which remain open up to 10.00 a.m., all the butchers licensed to sell meat from the stalls at the Valletta Market agreed among themselves not to open for business on Sundays. This arrangement has been into effect since the 1st February, 1970. Butchers in other parts of the Island have been likewise closing their shops on Sundays for quite a long time.

Such action on the part of the butchers may be detrimental to the public in general bearing in mind that not all the members of the community may own a refrigerator where meat for Sunday requirements of the household may be kept if bought on a Saturday, although, no complaints have been lodged against the butchers' action: people get used to new circumstances very soon.

At the request of the Commissioner of Police, the Senior Crown Counsel advised that although action could be taken against the butchers in respect of the contravention of regulations 10 and 23 of the Sale of Commodities (Control) Regulations 1952 and of the Agricultural Produce Regulations, 1952, respectively, no action be taken against them now because no action has been taken during the past years in respect of similar contraventions. He suggested however, that the matter be taken up at Ministerial level.

The "roster" system of Grocery Shops has now been six weeks in operation and it is known that few people are making use of these "emergency measures"; very soon complaints will probably be received from the owners of grocery shops who do practically no business at all on the particular Sunday when they are required to open.

Honourable/.....

Honourable Ministers are therefore invited to decide which procedure is best to be followed in regard to the closing of butchers' shops on Sundays and Good Friday viz:

- (1) Whether the closing of butcher shops be optional;
- (2) Whether all butcher shops be closed by law; or
- (3) Whether a roster system on the same lines as that applicable to grocery shops be introduced.

MLEW/26/70

12th March, 1970.