

OCN/E/379/67

Memo No. 1748

Memo to Cabinet by the Honourable Prime Minister

Claim by Canon V. Azzopardi

On existing records Canon V. Azzopardi who served as Master at the Lyceum and was retired with effect from July, 1970, had been continuously in Government service since October, 1947 and his pension has been calculated accordingly. However, he claims that he had been continuously in Government service since October, 1946. The official records show that during scholastic year 1946/47, Canon Azzopardi who was employed on a part time basis worked 293 hours (red 12A) whereas the minimum number of hours which would allow the reckoning of service for pension purposes is 600. The maximum number of hours worked by a Master is slightly above 600 hours, about 624 hours. Canon Azzopardi admits that he worked in different schools. Allowing for daily travelling time between one school and another, it is improbable that he would have worked the required number of hours i.e. 600 hours.

Canon Azzopardi produced an affidavit and testimonials, certifying that in fact he had worked more than the normal hours during the year in question. When these testimonials were produced the views of the Accountant General were sought and he replied that 'when official records exist, no affidavits can be accepted'. (Red 9) Affidavits are normally accepted as proof of service rendered where official records were lost through enemy action during the war.

Following repeated requests made by Canon Azzopardi, the Auditor was requested to state whether it was possible that any records of the year in question could have been mislaid. The Auditor replied that the existing records show the number of hours worked by this Officer 'during each consecutive month of the year and consequently the question of lost records cannot possibly arise.' (Red 21)

Following Canon Azzopardi's appeal to the Honourable Prime Minister dated 25th January, 1971 the Auditor was again requested to verify his records. He replied that 'separate researches were made by three officers of his department working independently of each other and on different occasions and that the findings of these three officers tallied in all respects'. (Red 43) He recommended that if further researches were required these should be carried out by officers from the Department of Education. Researches previously made by officers from this Department showed that Canon Azzopardi had only worked 293 hours during 1946/47. (Red 12A).

The question is whether, where official records exist, affidavits and testimonials should be accepted as proof of service. In this connection it is pointed out

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that both affidavits and testimonials are based on memory in this case in respect of what happened 25 years ago. Human nature being what it is, it appears dangerous to establish a precedent where an affidavit is accepted as proof of service against official records.

Hon. Ministers are requested to state whether in this case Canon Azzopardi's affidavit and testimonials should be accepted as proof of service rendered.