

Civil Service Conciliation and Arbitration Scheme

General Council Report 1269

(Meeting/s of 27 January 1993, 24 February 1993, 28 April 1993, 2 June 1993, 27 April 1994)

Reorganisation of Government Departments/Offices.

1. The Staff Side expressed concern about reports in newspapers and elsewhere about the intentions of members of the Government in relation to the introduction of advisory and other personnel from outside the civil service into their Departments. Their particular concerns were the effect which the introduction of staff of the kind mentioned into the civil service on any permanent basis might have on the career prospects of their members. They were also concerned about the role of the proposed Programme Managers and the manner in which these would interact with, or supplant, the normal internal working arrangements applying in the civil service.

2. The Official Side indicated that what was envisaged by the Government conformed to the practice which had been followed by previous Governments. Ministers and Ministers of State would be enabled to appoint a specified number of personnel to their Private Offices. Where an appointee to one of these posts was drawn from outside the civil service, the appointment would be made under Excluding Order and governed by a contract which related the appointment specifically to the term of office of the appointing Minister or Minister of State. There was no suggestion of permanent appointments.

3. The Staff Side welcomed this general assurance and sought details of the number and nature of the appointments envisaged.

4. The Official Side outlined the arrangements in relation to the numbers and grading of "external" staff in the Private offices of Ministers and Ministers of State which had been agreed by the incoming Government. Each member of the Government and each Minister of State would be permitted to appoint:-

- A Special Adviser
- A Personal Assistant
- A Personal Secretary

5. In addition to the staff specified, each member of the Government would be entitled to appoint a Partnership Programme Manager on salary terms identical to those of a Special Adviser. These posts are designed to assist Ministers in managing and progressing the partnership programme for Government in the next few years but their role and function is quite distinct from that of Departmental Secretaries and senior line managers who will continue to have responsibility for the development of policy proposals, the overall management of schemes and programmes and have charge of their Departments/Offices generally.

6. It was emphasised that the facility of appointing staff in the categories mentioned other than the Partnership Programme Managers has been available to members of the Government and junior Ministers for more than a decade.

7. During the course of the discussions, the Official Side indicated that civil servants could also be appointed as Special Advisers. It was stated that, in general, thinking had not favoured the appointment of civil servants as Special Advisors but the option to make such appointments had been left open. Some pragmatic practices had developed but these had not given rise to major problems. The Staff Side expressed concern that a temporary assignment of this kind could result in a civil servant gaining a permanent advantage in terms of pay and grading over her or his colleagues. The Official Side explained that where a civil servant was selected for such a post any change in that civil servant's remuneration would apply only for so long as she or he held that particular appointment. Such a civil servant would retain his or her substantive grading in the Department from whence they he or she came and would on termination of appointment return to that Department and grade. It was also stated that such civil servants would not be promoted out of customary course during or at the end of their appointments. Where a civil servant was appointed as a Special adviser, the post vacated would be treated as a normal vacancy.

8. The Staff Side drew attention to suggestions that some, at least, of the Partnership Programme Manager posts would also be filled by civil servants. The Official Side confirmed that this was likely in some Departments and that arrangements in relation to tenure, substantive grading and promotion out of the customary course which applied to Special Advisers would also apply to Programme Managers.

9. Finally, the Staff Side also asked whether the salary costs of additional Special advisers etc would be carried on the existing Administrative Budgets and stated that they would be concerned if budgets were not adjusted to take account of such additional costs which might otherwise have to be borne by the staff of departments. The Official Side pointed out that staff in most of the categories involved had been on the payrolls of Departments for several years past and their costs already formed part of the administrative budgets and for most Departments, the additions were unlikely to be of such significance as to require adjustments to allocations of which staffing costs formed only one component.

10. This report was adopted on 12 May 1994.

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