

Civil Service Conciliation and Arbitration Scheme

General Council Report 1352

(Meeting/s of 24 June 1998, 30 September 1998, 28 October 1998, 21 December 1998)

That the special sick leave arrangements which apply to the treatment of Tuberculosis be extended to staff suffering from cancer.

Civil Service Conciliation and Arbitration Scheme.

General Council Report No.1352

(Meetings of : 24th June 1998, 30 September 1998, 30 October 1998 and 21 December 1998).

Claim for an improvement in the sick leave arrangements for staff suffering from cancer.

1. The claim is that the special sick leave arrangements which apply to the treatment of tuberculosis be extended to staff suffering from cancer. These arrangements provide, in particular, for an additional six months paid sick leave at a rate of three quarters pay. This additional period of paid sick leave applies after an officer has been on sick leave for six months on full pay, in accordance with the normal sick leave regulations, and before the officer goes onto half pay for a further six months. The Staff Side said that it was reasonable to provide similar arrangements for staff suffering from cancer in view of the lengthy periods of time required for the treatment of the condition. The Staff Side emphasised that the special arrangements for dealing with actual or suspected cases of tuberculosis highlighted the importance of earlier diagnosis and treatment. In the case of officers suffering from cancer, the Staff Side pointed out that earlier diagnosis and treatment of the disease was also critical to their prospects of recovery.

2. The Official Side said that the sick leave and sick pay arrangements in the civil service were already very generous and they could not agree to improve on them for one particular form of illness. The exceptional arrangements for Tuberculosis were of very long standing, having been first introduced over fifty years ago, and were no longer of any particular significance having regard to the very small incidence of the disease. They were introduced in very particular circumstances of epidemic conditions of a highly infectious illness. The Official Side did not consider that there were

any grounds for applying such arrangements on a wider basis. They considered that it would be extremely difficult, if not impossible, to distinguish cancer from other serious health conditions requiring long term treatment or recuperation. and therefore concession of the claim could have significant cost increasing implications. Having regard to all the circumstances, they were not prepared to concede the claim.

3. The Staff Side expressed disappointment with the response from the Official Side. The Staff Side said that cancer can be - and is - differentiated from other illnesses. Its the only one they were aware of where the Official Side, at a sub-committee of General Council, agreed to get Departments/Offices to run an education programme by the Irish Cancer Society to increase awareness of cancer. The Official Side themselves had thereby differentiated cancer from other illnesses at that time. The Staff Side then asked that a report recording disagreement be drawn up.

4. This report, recording disagreement, was adopted on 12 April 1999.

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