

The Honourable Tam Yiu-chung, GBS, JP
Chairman, Legislative Council Panel
on Public Service
c/o Legislative Council Secretariat,
8 Jackson Road, Central ,
Hong Kong.

15 April 2000

Dear Mr. Tam,

Entry System and Fringe Benefits Package for Civil Service Recruits

In our letter dated 18 March 2000 on the subject “Update on Civil Service Reform”, we explicitly expressed to you the Staff Side’s grave reservations on, inter alia, the Entry System for new recruits proposed by the Secretary for the Civil Service (SCS). In fact, the Staff Side had previously raised the following strong objections to the SCS in a letter dated 13 December 1999, which we feel obliged to bring to the attention of your Panel at the meeting scheduled for 17 April 2000 :-

- (1) we consider the proposed 3-year agreement term appointment for recruits after completion of the probation period to be superfluous. It is our unanimous view that a 3-year probation period should be sufficiently long for assessing and ascertaining a recruit’s suitability for confirmation in a rank, subject to fully meeting the prescribed standards and service needs. As such, the successful probationers should be immediately eligible for continued service on permanent terms;
- (2) the 3-year agreement term appointment after probation would pose

uncertainty on the recruits' job security prospects since there is no guarantee as to whether they would be allowed to further their service 3 years later, either on agreement or permanent terms. In the circumstances, it would not be realistic to expect any sense of belonging and devotion from the recruits during the excessively long assessment period of 6 years. Moreover, the feeling of insecurity would probably hamper the efficiency of these recruits and prompt them to switch to alternative jobs in the private sector when such opportunities arise;

- (3) we strongly object to the exceptional variation in the basic entry arrangements proposed for the disciplined services. This significant difference in treatment between the disciplined services sector and the non-disciplined services sector of the Civil Service is extremely divisive. Over the years, we have observed that, the pay and fringe benefits for the disciplined services have been improved to acknowledge the uniqueness of the services. If the proposed discriminatory entry arrangements are imposed on recruits to the non-disciplined sector, the latter would be seen as "second-class" civil servants, and the state of inequity in status would be further aggravated. We are therefore of the view that, for both the disciplined services and the non-disciplined services staff, permanent terms should be offered after a satisfactory probation period.
- (4) regarding the proposed competitive appointment system, we must emphasize that its operation would affect the promotion prospects of the staff of any rank/grade who might no longer enjoy the priority of consideration for promotion to the higher ranks under the previous and existing promotion system. In-service appointment and/or outside recruitment for filling promotion posts in certain grades could still be considered as under the previous and existing system, if the departmental/grade management has ascertained that no eligible officer of the grade has been found suitable for promotion to such posts after going through the normal promotion procedures.

You may wish to note that the Staff Side received no further information from the SCS. However, we were suddenly informed on 7 April 2000 by the SCS that the extremely contentious Entry System and Fringe Benefits Package had already been endorsed by the Executive Council on 21 March 2000.

We strongly regret the Administration's deliberate tactic of bypassing the Staff Sides of the Central Consultative Councils and the Staff Side Representatives of the Working Group on the Entry System. Indeed, the same tactic was engaged in by the Administration in taking forward the Revised Disciplinary Mechanism for the Civil Service, which was endorsed by the Executive Council on 22 February 2000 but which the Staff Side was only informed of on 10 March 2000 when the Revised Mechanism was gazetted. We lodged our protest to the SCS on 14 March 2000. This most recent episode shows that the Administration is intent on ignoring the long-standing staff consultative machinery.

The Staff Side is obliged to point out that the way the Administration handles its Civil Service Reform has aggravated the already tense state in staff relations.

Yours sincerely,

(Dr LEUNG Chi-chiu)
Staff Side Chairman
Senior Civil Service Council