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2838 2155

13 March 2003

EPI Grade Representatives of DCC &
The Chairman of EPIB,
33/F., Revenue Tower
Gloucester Road, Wanchai
Hong Kong

Dear Sirs,

EPI Grade and VR2

I refer to your letter of 28 February, which I received on 6 March 2003.

I am surprised at the contents of your letter, in which you suggest that the departmental management has not been keeping staff informed of developments concerning the VR2 Scheme. In this period of great uncertainty and change I have in fact made extra effort to ensure that staff have been kept informed of all important related developments. I have recently written three times to staff, on 7 October 2002, 28 January 2003 and 17 February 2003. In these letters I have kept staff informed of matters relating to the Efficiency Savings Programme, the Departmental Review and HRM studies and also the VR2 Scheme. I also held an interactive briefing session with staff representatives at a special Departmental Consultative Committee meeting on 20 December 2002, which you and several of your colleagues attended.

I have explained that the department will likely be required to delete something in excess of 200 posts from our establishment by 2006/07 as our contribution to the Efficiency Savings Programme. Thus, although the department may have very few surplus posts as a result of natural wastage, the 200 or so posts that must be deleted can be regarded as being "surplus" posts for the purposes of the VR2 Scheme. I have also indicated that our intention would be to treat all Grades and ranks equally in this exercise and that the number of posts to be deleted has therefore been calculated as a pro rata reduction in posts based on our present mix of Grades and ranks. As a result, virtually all Grades and ranks in the department will be affected by the need to delete posts and therefore virtually all Grades and ranks in the department (including the EPI Grade, which is our largest Grade) have been included in our returns for the VR2 Scheme.

I must stress that the VR2 Scheme is, as its name implies, strictly voluntary. No-one is being compelled to volunteer to retire.

In your letter you have said that after walking out of the DCC meeting you requested a meeting with me but no response was received. There has perhaps been some confusion. I understand that when you walked out of the DCC meeting on the morning of Friday, 28 February, a group of you immediately came to my office, which was directly across the corridor, to demand to see me. As you know, I was not in my office that morning and therefore obviously could not see you then. When I later learned of your visit I also learned that you had returned shortly afterwards to re-join the meeting, and I assumed that if you still wished to see me you would follow up on your request. I therefore told my secretary that should you follow up with a request to meet with me I would be happy to hold the meeting on the following Monday, when I had some free time. As you did not follow up your request I assumed you no longer felt the need to meet with me. However, if you do still wish to meet with me please make an appointment with my secretary and I would be happy to see you.

Yours sincerely,

(R.J.S. Law)

Director of Environmental Protection

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