



10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

17 July 1979

Dear General,

Thank you for your letter of 30 June enclosing correspondence, from Mr. D.P. Sidelmann, an official of the Institution of Professional Civil Servants (IPCS), Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and Welsh Office Agriculture Department Branches. Mr. Sidelmann wrote to comment on the pay negotiations for Civil Service Scientists, Technologists and related grades.

I would agree with Mr. Sidelmann about the value of the work done by the scientific and technical staff in the Ministry of Agriculture, the Welsh Office and indeed elsewhere in the Civil Service. Certainly we must ensure that we pay the right rates and attract our fair share of recruits to the Civil Service. However, I cannot agree with Mr. Sidelmann that the Government has broken agreements with the union representing these staff (the IPCS) or overturned established practices for determining their pay.

I am pleased to say that the Civil Service Department and the IPCS have now reached agreement on scientists' pay for 1979. Because there was some misunderstanding about the basis of this year's pay settlement for scientists, as a gesture of goodwill the Minister of State in the Civil Service Department offered the IPCS exactly what they wanted - the pay link with the administrative Civil Service to which Mr. Sidelmann refers in

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his letter. This was subject to both sides reaching an agreement to avoid future misunderstandings and repercussions. Such an agreement has now been reached and detailed pay scales agreed.

Like most of the Civil Service, the pay of the Professional and Technology Group (P & T Group) is determined on the basis of fair comparisons applied through pay research, which provides details of the pay received by staff employed outside the Civil Service on work broadly comparable to that done outside the Civil Service. The Civil Service Department has made an offer to the IPCS for the P & T Group based on exactly the same interpretation of the outside evidence as offers made to and accepted by unions on behalf of other civil servants. This offer is firmly founded on the Pay Agreements and the Priestley principles of fair comparison which has been the basis for determining Civil Service pay since 1956. I could not accept, therefore, that there is anything novel or unprecedented about the Civil Service Department's offer. It is true that the IPCS claim that, historically, they have justified settlements higher than the average outside pay because of a number of "special factors", to which they have drawn attention, but in CSD's judgement, there is nothing in these "special factors" to justify more than the average pay received outside by comparable staff. If the IPCS cannot accept this judgement, the way is clear for them to refer their claim to the independent Civil Service Arbitration Tribunal, whose findings the Government will accept. This is precisely what the IPCS did in 1974, when the issues were largely the same.

I regret very much that the IPCS have not followed the well established practices leading to arbitration and, instead, have resorted to strike and other disruptive action. Certainly given the existence of the independent Civil Service Arbitration

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Tribunal, I can see no justification for such action.

Mr. Sidelmann also mentions the 9 per cent and 5 per cent stages agreed with the rest of the Civil Service. For scientists and professional staff, as for all other civil servants, the Civil Service Department has followed the normal practice of refusing to pay out any money on account while there remains a significant dispute about the substantive pay of the grades concerned. In the case of the scientists, agreement has been reached and payment of these stages has been authorised. For the P & T Group, as soon as the IPCS refer their claim to arbitration, which I hope they will do soon, we can authorise payment of the first stages of the 1979 pay settlement.

I hope that what I have said in this letter and the fact that we have reached agreement on scientists will reassure you and your constituent that the Government has not broken any agreement or overturned previously accepted practice, but is determined to treat its staff, whether specialist or administrative, fairly and consistently.

Yours sincerely

Geraint Morgan

Geraint Morgan, Esq., QC, MP.