

CHAPTER 6

RIGHT OF ASSOCIATION

THE RIGHT of staff associations to present claims on behalf of their members has been generally recognised in the Civil Service. When an association can show that it has in its membership a substantial proportion of the total strength of any grade, it may be officially 'recognised' as representing that grade.

This means that Government will normally consult the association before introducing any appreciable change in the conditions of service of the grade, so that the association can say what the staff are likely to think about the change; as far as possible changes will be made by agreement with the association.

You are not only allowed but indeed encouraged to belong to a staff association. Besides it being a good thing for the individual civil servant to belong to an association, which can support his reasonable claims and put his point of view before the authorities on all kinds of questions affecting his conditions of service, it is also a good thing for the Civil Service as a whole that civil servants should be organised in representative bodies. It is only commonsense to meet the wishes of the civil servant about his conditions of service as far as possible, for a contented staff will work much more efficiently than a staff which feels that its interests are being completely ignored by the 'management'. But it is hopeless to try to find out the wishes of a scattered unorganised body of individual civil servants each of whom may express a different view. When they get together in representative associations, their collective wish can be democratically determined and passed on to the 'management' with real force and agreement behind it; the 'management' know where they stand and can act accordingly.

So join an association and do your bit to see that it is a 'live' and really representative one.

Besides the method of negotiation through separate staff associations for different grades, there is in the Civil Services of many countries now another method known as the Whitley system. This was introduced into the United Kingdom as a result of recommendations made in 1917 and 1918 by a committee under the chairmanship of the Right Honourable J. H. Whitley, M.P. This development is still in its infancy in Singapore and is likely to develop in strength in coming years.

A Whitley Council in the Civil Service is a joint body consisting of representatives of the 'Official Side', i.e. the Chief Secretary, Heads of Departments and other senior civil servants who are part of the 'management', and the 'Staff Side' i.e. the principal staff associations representing the rank and file of the staff. There is a Whitley Council