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IN THE MATTER OF THE PUBLIC SERVICE
(PAPUA AND NEW GUINEA) ORDINANCE - 1963-1967.

AND IN THE MATTER OF AN APPEAL BY REUBEN TOMADE
AGAINST A DECISION OF THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH
UNDER SECTION 65 OF THE SAID ORDINANCE RECOMMENDING
THE DISMISSAL OF THE APPELLANT FROM THE PUBLIC SERVICE.

We, the members of the Appeal Board, constituted under the said Ordinance for the purpose of hearing and determining the said appeal, having considered the evidence before us and having considered the charge and the relevant circumstances and having heard what was alleged by the appellant, who appeared in person, now state our conclusion upon this appeal and our reasons :

CONCLUSION :

We find that the charge against the appellant has been established and that the recommendation of the Director was justified in the circumstances of the case. Nevertheless, we think that a rider should be added to that recommendation to the following effect :

" It is further recommended that before this officer is dismissed, enquiries should be made to ascertain whether there is some other appointment available in the Service to which the officer may be transferred and which should be more appropriate to his qualifications and experience."

REASONS :

We agree with the view of the Department of Public Health that the switchboard is "the central point of the hospital communications system and it is imperative that efficient and reliable staff attend to it."

We feel strongly that the salary rating which was apparently appropriate to the efficiency and capacity of the appellant was far too low to be appropriate for an officer having the capacity and efficiency necessary to fill this important post. Thus, we feel that the appellant was not entirely responsible for the result. However, since he did occupy the position, he was bound to carry out his duties as diligently as possible and this we think he clearly failed to do.

Looking at the situation in which the appellant was,

we find that there were several strong influences which would affect his efficiency. They may be tabulated as follows :

- (1) He has difficulty in expressing himself clearly in English and gives the impression that he might have similar difficulty even in his own native tongue.
- (2) He lives in the area and has a large family with consequential financial burdens.
- (3) He was trying to augment his income by operating a vehicle for the carriage of passengers and goods. These commercial activities appear to have deprived the appellant of adequate rest and to have caused him to pay inadequate attention to his official work.
- (4) The episode of taking two student nurses for a ride to Matupit may reflect an appetite for social activities, but we think that this has not been shown to be the case. It may be that he was operating his transport service to and from the hospital to fit in with his working hours.

Although we think it unlikely that the appellant would suddenly become highly diligent in some different position, we do think that having regard to his long term of service it would be appropriate for an enquiry to be made to ascertain whether there might be another position more suitable to his qualifications. We understand that the appellant is one of a number of Clerical Assistants employed at the hospital, but we are not much impressed by his apparent clerical ability. He is on a low salary rating and it is possible that a vacancy could be found for him as a Stores Assistant, or in some other position where his duty would be to fetch and carry and where he would be working under closer supervision without being left in a responsible position for long periods of time, and especially at night time.

We further recommend that the position formerly held by the appellant should now be reclassified. We suggest two possible approaches to this question :

- (a) The possibility of obtaining somebody of much greater maturity and social experience with a decided interest in doing this kind of work well. This kind of work is often performed adequately by a married woman of some experience and without

any particular personal problems. The position would require adequate fluency in English, Pidgin and Kuanua.

- (2) The possibility that all Clerical Assistants, or some other category of officer employed at the hospital, be trained to operate the switchboard and discharge this function on some kind of roster basis, so that nobody would be employed at the switchboard during any long, continuous period of time. This would achieve a pool of selected operators who could help each other in maintaining an efficient service.

In any event, we feel that the Public Service Commissioner should give consideration to the possibility of re-classifying the position formerly occupied by the appellant and of considering whether the equipment in use and the facilities provided are up-to-date, adequate and efficient.

We do not feel that the appellant should be blamed for the circumstance that at the time of his short-coming a patient happened to be losing blood. This was a circumstance far beyond the knowledge of the appellant and giving rise to responsibilities far beyond anything that the appellant could carry. The risk of this recurring may indicate the desirability of a more direct call system, such as may be found in a PABX telephone installation, or other available call service.

Taking into account the part played by the hospital at Nonga in the health service for the New Guinea Islands region, and the number of radio and other emergency calls which might be expected to and from islands and out-stations and under variable conditions, we feel that we should stress the importance of adequate equipment and services not only for communications between buildings, but also to enable immediate contact to be made with vehicles, such as ambulances, and key medical personnel who may be in transit or away from their usual location attending to their duties in some other part of the building.

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