

MEMO FOR CABINET BY THE  
HON. MINISTER OF LABOUR & SOCIAL WELFARE.

Proposed Amendment of the Bakers  
(Weekly Rest) Regulations.

On the 21st November, 1963, the General Secretary of the General Retailers Union communicated to the Hon. Minister of Industrial Development and Tourism that at a General Meeting of the Bakers and Breadsellers Section of the Union, it was decided by an "overwhelming majority" that the present rest days contemplated by the regulations be amended to read:

- (1) There shall be no distribution of any kind of bread on Mondays;
- (2) that there shall be no distribution of any kind of bread on the day following a holiday of obligation that falls between Tuesdays and Fridays both days inclusive.

On the 4th February, 1964, the Hon. Minister of Industrial Development and Tourism referred this decision to the Hon. Minister of Labour and Social Welfare for any action that would be deemed appropriate.

On the 22nd February, 1964, the Director of Emigration, Labour and Social Welfare met a delegation of the General Retailers' Union made up of Mr Rausi, Mr Eminyan and Mr Tonna Barthet, Union officials, and Mr Carmel Xerri, Mr George Bugeja, Mr George Cutajar and Mr Joseph Bugeja, all bakers from Qormi.

Their main requests were:

- (a) a day of rest applicable to all bakeries alike;
- (b) the sale of bread of all types, on a day following a day of rest, to be prohibited by law.

As the regulations stood before they were suspended in October, 1951, the hours of rest in bakeries were laid down but bakeries could observe a different day of rest starting and ending twelve hours before the stipulated time.

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The law did not apply to fancy type bread, rolls etc., and the sale of bread on the day following the day of rest was never prohibited.

Regulations published by Government Notice No.230 of 30th May, 1951, were amended by Government Notice No.280 of 28th June, 1951. Government Notice No.444 of 18th September, 1951, repealed both Government Notices 230 and 280.

The rapidity with which one amendment followed the other speaks for itself. Each amendment brought about such confusion and so many complaints that to cut matters short Government had to suspend the regulations by Government Notice No.517 of 26th October, 1951. Since then we have had peace in the bakeries.

For the last thirteen years, therefore, there have been no regulations in force, and some abuses and infringements mentioned by the Bakers and Breadsellers Union, such as the increase of clientele to the detriment of the law-abiding bakers and breadsellers, are purely imaginary.

There are at present 296 bakeries in Malta whereof 127 are without employees and 169 with employees. According to information received from the General Retailers Union 232 bakers are breadsellers and members of the Union but they have no statistics as to how many of them are only bakers. One has, therefore, before considering the proposed amendments, to group the bakers and breadsellers into three classes namely:- (1) Bakers, (2) Breadsellers, (3) Bakers and Breadsellers.

So far I have received no complaints or suggestions from the second category and any decision that has to be taken should in no way have an ill effect on that category that are presumably pleased with things as they exist today.

The introduction of one day of rest common for all the island would be a departure from the regulations which have been dormant with evident beneficial result for over twelve years. Under the regulations bakers could always opt to observe a different day of rest from

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that laid down and as bakers work at night they are most difficult to control and enforcement is almost hopeless. Moreover the introduction of a day of rest will start the former trouble as to whether rolls and fancy bread would come under the regulations or not.

If the proposed amendments were accepted it would mean that no fresh bread of any sort would be available for hotels, restaurants and households on all Mondays and part of Tuesdays and, workmen taking their mid-day lunch with them on Tuesdays morning would have to be content with stale bread, delivered on the previous Sunday.

The request made by the Union, no doubt, stems from the fact that more modern and better equipped bakers are turning out a better product which is available at all hours of the day and some bakers fear they might lose customers. Whereas the hours of work in bakeries may be said to be the concern of the Labour Department, the prohibition of the sale of bread on certain days is definitely not, and fancy bread and rolls are made from flour purchased at a higher rate than that issued for ration bread and to impose restriction on the sale of bread would be out of place.

Hon. Ministers are asked to consider whether the proposed suggestions are to be implemented and if so, a way must be found to ensure that breadsellers are not in any way adversely affected and that at the same time the tourist drive be not in any way badly hit.

Hon. Ministers are also asked to consider whether they are justified in acceding to the requests which although made by a section of a Union might not represent the opinion of the "overwhelming" majority of the bakers in Malta.

6th April, 1964.