



PRIME MINISTER

PRESS STATEMENT NO. 22,2

10 April 1974

PROVISION OF ASSISTANCE TO PARTIES IN PRICES JUSTIFICATION TRIBUNAL INQUIRIES

For some time now it has been apparent that provision should be made to assist in the presentation of cases in the consumer interest at Prices Justification Tribunal inquiries. It is important that adequate presentations be made to the Tribunal so that it will have all relevant aspects of the matter before it during its deliberations. I pay tribute to the quality of the Tribunal's past reports and do not in any way question the ability of the Tribunal to take full account of the public interest in all its inquiries. The arrangements that will now take effect are intended solely to assist the Tribunal in this onerous task.

In the first place, the Government will, in approved circumstances, provide assistance in the form of information and advice to parties making a general public interest case to the Tribunal. Requests for such assistance should be forwarded to the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, which will make any necessary inquiries from other Government agencies and communicate as appropriate with the party concerned. In addition to this, the Government will, in appropriate cases, provide assistance with the cost of preparation and presentation of submissions to the Tribunal. In this respect the following arrangements will now operate:

- (a) A prerequisite for assistance is that the applicant has been granted leave by the Tribunal under Section 20 of the Prices Justification Act to take part as a party in an inquiry.
- (b) Applications may be made on the following grounds:
 - (i) that the applicant represents the interests of a substantial number of consumers;
 - (ii) that the applicant is capable of effectively representing the interests of consumers before the Tribunal;

- (iii) that it is desirable that the applicant take part in the inquiry in order that the interests of consumers will be adequately and effectively represented before the Tribunal;
 - (iv) that the cost to the applicant of taking part in the inquiry would impose a burden on it that it ought not fairly be required to bear;
- and
- (v) that in all the circumstances it is reasonable that assistance be granted.
- (c) Any assistance may include financial assistance. A determination will be made of the contribution to be made towards the applicant's costs of the inquiry and the extent of the costs that the applicant should be left to bear. Assistance may be granted either unconditionally or subject to conditions.
- (d) The determination whether assistance is to be granted, and if so, the amount of such assistance will be made by the Prime Minister or by a Minister designated by him. A person or organisation desiring assistance should make application to the Prime Minister setting out the following information:
- (i) an indication of intention to apply for leave to take part in an inquiry;
 - (ii) if an organisation, particulars of the organisation and the nature of its membership;
 - (iii) a statement of financial capacity;
 - (iv) a short statement of the purpose of intervention in the inquiry;
 - (v) an estimate of the costs likely to be incurred in the inquiry; and
 - (vi) a request for a stated contribution towards costs with reasons for that request.
- (e) An application will finally be determined once the applicant obtains the leave of the Tribunal to take part in the inquiry. Applications in relation to participation in past as well as current or future inquiries by the Prices Justification Tribunal will be considered on the same basis.