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MESSAGE FROM THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

The Chairman of the Staff Committee has received a message from the Secretary-General on the subject of No. 1 of the Bulletin in which it is stated:

"Congratulations to you and your colleagues on your Bulletin, which is well got up and of attractive format.

I hope that this publication, devoted as it is to questions which concern us all, will facilitate relations between the Administration and the Headquarters staff, on the one hand, and the Geneva staff, on the other. By going thoroughly into vital questions, it will enable international officials generally to achieve a closer mutual understanding on common problems. In so far as the Bulletin fulfils that aim, it will contribute greatly towards the development of that corporate spirit which is the very breath of life of an organization".

HIGHLIGHTS OF STAFF COMMITTEE ACTIVITY

Short-term appointments

As previously reported, the Administration agreed to give regular appointments to all short-term, daily rate staff who had been in continuous employment for at least one year. When it came to implementing this decision, however, a number of unforeseen administrative difficulties arose, and further approaches were made to the Administration. After prolonged correspondence with Headquarters, we are glad to announce that agreement was finally reached in three out of four cases, and only one case remains for the present still unresolved. It is confidently hoped that, as a result of further representations, this case, too, will be satisfactorily settled.

Negotiations are now starting with a view to reducing the minimum period of six months before which leave can be granted to short-term staff.

Review of staff for permanent appointments

This year a review has to be made of staff who have completed two years' service and of those who were put on probation at the last review. After being informed that the Committee (headed by Dr. Kerno, former Assistant Secretary-General for Legal Affairs) would meet in Geneva in August, the Staff Committee pointed out that this was a very bad time of the year for such an important Committee to meet, since many people were likely to be away on holiday or else have their holiday plans seriously inconvenienced and suggested that the review be postponed to the month of September. The Administration agreed.

Another aspect which caused the Staff Committee grave concern is the question of the Review Committee's composition. Headquarters had suggested that, for the sake of uniformity and ensuring that the same standards and experience be applied

in all offices, the member appointed by the staff be the same as had sat at Headquarters, and who had also gone with the Committee to review ECLA and ECAFE staff. Though having absolutely nothing against the choice of Mr. Higgins (the person appointed by Headquarters Staff Council) the Staff Committee strongly preferred a member of its own choosing, who would have the confidence of the staff of the European Office because he was known to many of them, and who would be familiar with the conditions of work and the atmosphere of the various parts of this office. A compromise has now been reached, and we shall be allowed our representative (together with Mr. Higgins) for this year only. It is not certain that the same arrangement will apply next year, despite the Committee's efforts to ensure the necessary representation for the European Office. The Committee, in fact, is not satisfied with the position, and has no intention of letting the matter rest. Nor will it accept, without objection, the declared intention that the whole of the Review Committee should in future be composed of the same persons in all offices. In practice this would clearly mean a Headquarters Committee, without a single official of the European Office, of whatever rank or function.

Visit of the Secretary-General

During his brief visit to Geneva in May the Secretary-General accepted a lunch invitation offered by the Staff Committee. This afforded an opportunity for the members of the Committee to meet the Secretary-General and for the establishment of relations that were something less than formal. At the end of the luncheon, the Secretary-General spoke a few words on his plans for re-organization of the Secretariat and on personnel problems. (Each member of the Committee who attended paid a contribution towards the cost of the lunch).

In view of the Secretary-General's heavy programme and brief stay, it was not possible for him to grant the Committee an interview. He did, however, undertake to receive the officers in July, when he returned to Geneva for ECOSOC, and in the meantime, he was handed two aide-mémoires (see Annex) dealing with general policy issues that the Committee wished to draw to his attention.

Staff Subscription

The collection of the Staff subscription, which was decided on by referendum towards the end of last year, proved to be an outstanding success. Despite the fact that the subscription is a purely voluntary one, 94% of the total staff of 722 responded, 1% of the staff members were not available and will be approached in due course, while there were 5% who refused to participate. Collection receipts total about 2,800 francs. This splendid result is a tribute to the fine spirit of unity of the staff and a testimony of their support for the efforts put in by their elected Staff Committee on their behalf. Nor, of course, would the result have been achieved without the co-operation afforded by the various administrative assistants.

Staff Counsellor

The question of the possible appointment of a Staff Counsellor (Welfare Officer) has now been raised with the Administration, and it has been agreed that a questionnaire is to be circulated among staff members, on a sampling basis, to find out whether an effective need for this appointment exists.

FICSA

FICSA matters were dealt with by the Staff Committee on several occasions, and the discussion on the report back by the Committee's representative at the April session of the FICSA Council provided the occasion for the airing of certain divergencies of view. Other aspects of the Federation's activities are at present being considered and will form the subject of decisions in view of the extraordinary session of the FICSA Council to be held in Paris in September.

PROGRESS REPORTS BY THE WORKING PARTIES

The Joint Working Party on the Purchase Group (UN, WHO, ICEM) has held a series of meetings for the purpose of studying a reorganization of supply arrangements. Staff members will shortly be informed by the Committee of the proposed new solution.

The Sub-Committee on Working Conditions and Contracts has given constant consideration to the question of the technicians. New approaches have been made to the Administration with a view to reaching a solution to this problem, which has been under discussion since 1947.

The Sub-Committee is re-examining the position of temporary staff employed at daily rates of pay, as well as questions concerning the working conditions of the cleaners. Various enquiries are in progress.

Consideration has also been given to the question of dangerous work carried out by certain services.

The Welfare Sub-Committee has been considering the possibility of effecting improvement to the Cafeteria. It noted that the present installations made the running of that service extremely difficult and that to effect any substantial improvement major alterations would have to be made to existing premises.

To enable the Benevolent Fund to continue its work on behalf of the staff, it was decided to issue a circular to staff members inviting them to take part in the collection in support of the Fund.

Finally, the Sub-Committee is already giving thought to the organization of this year's Staff Day, which will probably take place during United Nations week, in September.

The Housing Sub-Committee, in conjunction with the joint Housing Group set up by the international organizations, has invited local architects to submit tenders. The replies so far received have been somewhat disappointing. The present abnormal activity in the building trade no doubt explains why we are finding it so difficult to elicit tenders. Immediately it sees a possibility of doing so, the Sub-Committee will make a point of informing staff members of the result of its work.

COMMENTS ON THE CONCEPT OF "INTEGRITY"

The Staff Committee has unanimously adopted the following declaration, which it has transmitted for information to the Staff Committee at Headquarters, to Mr. Daniel Hogg, member of the Special Advisory Board (see Annex) and to the Chairman of the Executive Committee of FICSA for distribution to the member associations.

The declaration expresses the views of the Staff Committee on a concept recently incorporated in the Staff Regulations and will be of assistance in working out the definition to be attached to the term "integrity" in administrative matters. The Staff Committee at Headquarters has meanwhile distributed a copy of this declaration to all Staff members.

The Staff Committee of the European Office of the United Nations recalls that it unreservedly supported the comments to which the concept of "integrity" as it now appears in the Staff Regulations gave rise on the part of the members of the FICSA Council when they adopted the statement entitled "Principles governing the status of international civil servants". (See "Information Bulletin No. 1, Annex").

The Staff Committee considers it advisable to add in this connexion the following explanation relating to the interpretation which might be given to this concept by the Special Advisory Board.

This concept represents a sum of moral qualities which every administration is entitled to require of its officials and employees. The honesty, loyalty, discretion and conscientiousness they must display in the daily discharge of their duties are the surest guarantees that their experience and professional qualifications will be completely advantageous to the Administration.

Although the Administration may rightly expect all the persons employed by it to possess these qualities in the highest degree, it should not in seeking manifestations of those qualities go outside the sphere of professional activities. Only when the private life or outside activities of an official or employee would be likely to compromise or discredit the Organization which employed him would the Administration be justified in concerning itself with his conduct.

By acting otherwise, the Administration would cause the most regrettable confusion between professional activities, private life and political convictions - three areas which in the normal course of affairs should remain distinct. The result would sooner or later be the complete disappearance of all personal guarantees.

The values according to which private life and especially political convictions are judged not only vary very widely from one civilization to another but also evolve fairly rapidly.

Apart from extreme cases, it would therefore seem that only on the professional level should the concept of "integrity" be retained by the Special Advisory Board as a criterion of the value of an international civil servant.

SUPERVISORS' DISCUSSION GROUP

Following the expressed desire of a number of staff members, a group was formed in the early part of this year of about ten "supervisors" whose functions were mainly administrative and who were drawn from all services in the European Office. The group met during the luncheon hour at intervals from February to June 1954 to discuss "supervisory practices and techniques in a number of different aspects". According to the definition given by the group itself, a "supervisor" is a person who has officials working under him and who organizes and directs the work of a unit.

Several subjects were discussed. Each was introduced by one of the supervisors. It is impossible to give anything but a very brief outline of some of the subjects discussed and in particular of the points raised which may be of general interest since they are met in everyday office life.

The members of the group had had no particular aim in mind when they gathered to discuss these various subjects but felt, at the end of the series of talks, that in discussing the imperfections in the running of the organization they had been able to discover some of their own mistakes and thus improve their methods.

Job training

The relation between possibilities of advancement, security of tenure and job training were stressed. No staff member would be particularly anxious to work harder and to improve his work if he were not convinced that his efforts would be rewarded or his post maintained.

It was pointed out that there were no uniform methods for training new recruits. Indeed, in certain Divisions there was no training at all. The new recruit was plunged into his job, sometimes without even being introduced to his colleagues. He learnt everything unsystematically as he went along and this resulted in waste and inconvenience.

Certain speakers thought that the difficulty of transferring a person from one post to another and particularly from one category to another, e.g. from G to P, the lack of opportunity and promotion were at the root of many problems which arise. Since efficiency is directly related to the interest taken in one's work, people who consider their work to be mere drudgery may often tend to slacken off with resulting poor output or low standard of performance.

Planning

The rapporteur who opened the discussion thought that as a rule insufficient attention was given to the subject of planning. Staff did their best to solve problems as they came up and only thought afterwards, if ever, of what might have been the best method of dealing with them. Other speakers thought that it was perhaps impossible in an organization like the United Nations to have uniform methods of planning, but that nevertheless conceptions varied too much from Division to Division.

The importance of acquainting one's subordinates with one's plans and with the methods proposed for achieving the aims pursued was repeatedly stressed. There was a sharp difference of opinion as to whether a chief should go into great detail and follow up the work of each member of his staff, or whether he should limit himself to dealing with the important issues, leaving supervision of the work to his immediate subordinates. Several speakers said that chiefs who went into too much detail were unable to see the wood for the trees. A chief should plan his work and then trust his subordinates to carry it out. Other members of the group thought that it was difficult to define exactly what the important issues were, since vital issues could be thwarted because a detail had been neglected.

Direction

The rapporteur analysed certain methods of direction. It should, he said, never be a maxim that the existing method of work was the only one. Among other things a good supervisor entrusted to his subordinates tasks corresponding as far as possible to their aptitudes. He did not waste their energy by keeping them on tenterhooks hour after hour, by interrupting them constantly to pass them work which might be given to them at one go and by presenting each piece of work as very urgent and very important. He did not forget to give them honest praise at the appropriate moment, and should be even more careful in the matter of criticism. He should avoid both irony and anger, and be firm and benevolent.

Communication

It was stressed that the flow of information to employees would develop a sense of belonging to their organization. They were, however, often uninformed because of the natural secretiveness of persons in the higher supervisory levels, who might assume that what they knew must be common knowledge or might deliberately sift the information because they considered it unnecessary for their staff to be acquainted with all of it.

It was pointed out that insufficient information gave rise to false rumours which has an adverse effect on efficiency and output by creating, for instance, a sense of insecurity.

Should a staff member short-circuit his supervisor? It was agreed that a distinction should be made between service and personal matters, and that short-circuiting should on the whole be avoided in the former case, but when it did occur, the supervisor should be informed at the first opportunity.

Performance evaluation

To what extent did supervisors recruiting a new staff member bear in mind the standards covered in the periodical report or inform him of their existence? Was he told how his performance would be evaluated? It was generally agreed that for various reasons this was very often not the case. Some members of the group were disturbed by the fact that periodical reports had to be shown to the person concerned, since many staff members found criticism even on minor points unbearable. It had an unsettling effect and in consequence their output dropped. The general opinion was that very much depended on how the criticism was made, but that the staff member should be told of his deficiency even at the risk of causing resentment. The advantages of showing the periodical reports to the persons concerned were emphasized by speakers who considered that this procedure was a guarantee against arbitrary treatment and afforded an opportunity for drawing the staff member's attention to his shortcomings as well as for giving him the necessary encouragement and showing appreciation of his good points. Periodical reports should be based on performance throughout the year.

Qualities of a good supervisor

In his introductory note, the rapporteur enumerated the various personal qualities requisite for a good supervisor, including among them imagination which one of the speakers described as part of one's professional background. The same speaker thought that most of the work performed in the various services of the European Office gave very little scope for imagination, and that experience had shown that in some quarters too much imagination was used with the result that the work done bore no relation to any concrete problem. Only certain senior officials who had to interpret facts, draw conclusions and determine trends in order to be able to look into the future had to possess imagination and use it. Other speakers thought on the contrary that imagination was essential even in the most prosaic jobs.

Was it good or bad for the staff's morale if the chief conceded that he has taken a wrong decision? It was generally felt, although the speakers were not agreed on this conclusion, that since there was no such thing as a chief who never

made a mistake and since nobody was sufficiently naive to believe that there was, the staff did not lose its respect for a chief who had the fundamental quality of recognizing his own mistakes, the courage to admit them and the will to make the effort to correct them.

Organization

The rapporteur outlined the objectives of good organization (to provide a clear-cut definition of responsibilities, to avoid conflicts of authority, to facilitate smooth-running operation, etc.), analysed methods of achieving it and concluded by reading "ten commandments" of good organization. As on earlier occasions, the various speakers referred to the great difference in the practice followed by the various Divisions. In some Divisions, for instance, responsibility was very limited indeed.

There was considerable discussion of one of the commandments which specified that criticism of a subordinate should be made to him in private. It was objected that it was often impossible for a chief to call in each one of his staff separately in order to criticize his work. Another speaker retorted that to do otherwise could not possibly be considered as good administration, and that no supervisor should be so overloaded as to make it impossible for him to talk to his staff in private on delicate points.

DRAFT RULES FOR THE FUNCTIONING OF THE APPOINTMENT AND PROMOTIONS
BOARD AND DRAFT INSTRUCTIONS TO THE CHAIRMAN OF THE REVIEW BOARD

Through the good offices of the Headquarters Staff Committee, which sent a copy of the draft as soon as it officially received one, the Committee of this office was able to send to the Bureau of Personnel its observations on the draft rules for the appointment and selection board. Unfortunately, very little time was available for comment, which had to be restricted to essentials, without there having been an opportunity for thorough study.

The draft rules seem on the whole to be little different from current practice, and the Committee used the opportunity to reiterate its views on the need for a proper promotion policy, which would in particular give full opportunity to staff of this office to apply for vacancies elsewhere in the United Nations and would facilitate a comprehensive and equitable policy as regards transfers.

On particular paragraphs of the draft the Committee:

- (1) emphasized that standards of selection should be applied as strictly in general service appointments as in professional appointments;
- (2) suggested that geographical distribution should be a less important factor for promotions than for initial appointments;
- (3) proposed that Grades G6 and G7 be treated in the same way as the senior general service grade at New York (i.e., be considered "semi-professional");
- (4) expressed the hope that there would be a greater interchange and more possibilities of promotion between units and departments than there have been in the past.

The draft instructions to the Chairman of the Review Board (Kerno Committee) did not call for much comment. The Committee only considered it necessary to point out that a bad sick leave record must be interpreted in the light of the Medical Adviser's opinion as to whether it is likely to continue.

Support was given to the view of the Headquarters Staff Committee that too much emphasis was being placed on the five-year review of permanent appointments, and that this might lead to their having little more value than five-year fixed-term ones. Indeed, as the draft stands, there appears to be no great difference between the main review after two years' service and the subsequent periodic five-year ones.

LIST OF CLUBS AND ORGANIZATIONS

Corrigendum and Addendum

GENEVA CRICKET CLUB (Inter-organization)

Mr. Steel (Secretary), Finance Division, Tel. 2262

SATURDAY SPORTS SOCIETY (Inter-organization)

(miniature golf, volley ball, table tennis, basket ball, sailing, photography etc.)

Mr. R. Poget (Secretary), ILO.

PENSION BOARD AND GENEVA STAFF COMMITTEE'S PROPOSALS

Proposed investments in housing loans

The following extracts from the seventh annual report of the Investments Committee of the Joint Staff Pension Board answers specific questions raised on behalf of the Staff Committee by its representatives on the Board:

"... The greater need for housing, according to the data submitted, appears to exist in Italy and in Geneva and perhaps some other places in Europe. In the opinion of your Committee it would be both unwise and imprudent for a fund established for the purpose of providing pensions for its employees to undertake the financing of housing developments. This is a highly specialized business requiring much experience to assure sound handling. It is unlikely that the needs of the situations would be sufficiently great to justify the expense of an organization with experienced personnel to handle it. In any case it would be very difficult, even under the best of conditions, to handle such an operation at widely spread locations. Your Committee believes the single purpose of your Fund is to safeguard the interest of the participants by investing only in the soundest securities available to the Fund. It also feels the investments should be maintained only in currencies in which the Fund has liability in order that the risks of exchange fluctuations may be avoided. It would be difficult, even impossible, to maintain a position in housing loans consistent with these principles and if any considerable part of the Fund available in a given currency were so invested, the commitments in that currency would be in very unliquid form.

"It has occurred to your Committee that if the need of housing in any particular locations is so acute as to justify unusual measures by the United Nations designed to solve such conditions, it might be possible to organize either separately in each country where such a need exists, or perhaps in the case of the United Nations, one international organization to be operated more or less along the lines of the American Building and Loan Associations, large numbers of which have been functioning very successfully

over a period of many years... Such an institution could be carefully planned for whatever needs may be in this respect and with some support from the United Nations should be able to borrow for the purpose of making mortgage loans in anticipation of the accumulation of saving deposits by those participating for that purpose. In the opinion of your Committee, the needs for housing loans could better be met through an institution organized for the particular purpose than by attempts to use the Pension Fund..."

* * *

Proposals to consider investment of assets in localities
other than North America

"... The Committee has carefully considered this suggestion which it understands was made primarily for the purpose of distributing the investment risk. At the present time, all investments of the Fund are made in securities payable in either United States dollars or Canadian dollars, the proportions invested following closely the obligations assumed by the Pension Fund in the currencies of these two countries. At the inception of the Fund, a rule was adopted primarily with a view to reducing the risk of fluctuations in currency exchange rates which provided that investments should be made in each currency in which obligations were assumed substantially equal to such liabilities. Thus far obligations have been assumed only in United States dollars and Canadian dollars..."

"Under the rules as they now exist, it would appear to be impossible to make investments in any currency other than United States dollars and Canadian dollars unless contributions should be made in such other currency. The Committee would point out that both the United States and Canada are very large countries geographically and that many of the American corporations whose obligations and stocks are now held in this Fund operate on a nationwide basis and also in many different countries, quite a number of them on a worldwide basis, thus affording to that extent considerable diversification of risk.

"It should also be noted that a review of alternative investments indicates that the area in which satisfactory investments might be obtained is comparatively narrow. There is at present only one country where some degree of exchange regulation is not imposed, namely Switzerland. Your Committee believes there are many sound investments available in Switzerland, but it would point out that there are practically no debt obligations other than the bonds of the Swiss Government itself and its separate cantons and that the current rates of interest available on these investments are very low. While there are believed to be a number of good industrial concerns whose stock might afford a satisfactory investment, the Fund is not equipped readily to make a selection of such stocks which would involve an appraisal of their relative values..."

ANNEX

Memoranda submitted to the Secretary-General

On the occasion of the Secretary-General's recent visit to Geneva, the Staff Committee presented him with various memoranda, of which the following are the main points:

I. Special Advisory Board

The amended Staff Regulations provide, under the Rules, for the inclusion of four members appointed by the Secretary-General in agreement with the Staff Council at Headquarters in the newly established Special Advisory Board to advise the Secretary-General in cases where the question arises of the possible termination of staff members on account of failure to meet the required standards of integrity or the coming to light of facts anterior to the appointment of a staff member and relevant to his suitability which, had they been known at the time of appointment, should have precluded his appointment.

It is pointed out that no provision has been made in practice for the inclusion in this Board of members of staffs of offices away from Headquarters.

This procedure does not conform with that adopted by the Secretary-General in respect of the Appointment and Promotions Board and the Review Board - in respect of which it is expressly stated that instructions will be issued concerning the organization of the work of the Boards in relation to the staff of offices away from Headquarters.

As far as Geneva is concerned, it is difficult to see what the procedure will be in respect of non-Headquarters staff members whose cases may be submitted to the Special Advisory Board. It would seem appropriate for it, when dealing with staff members stationed at an office away from Headquarters, to include members appointed by the Secretary-General in agreement with the Staff Committee of that Office. A possible procedure, in this case, might be to follow the precedent established by the Walters Committee, where the Chairman remained the same but the other members consisted of staff members from the duty station concerned, and where the local Staff Committees were duly consulted. Alternatively, staff members of the UN office concerned might be co-opted on to the Board on an ad hoc basis.

In the absence of any suitable provision, non-Headquarters staff members coming before the Special Advisory Board may be handicapped unless arrangements are made both for Geneva representation on the Board and for the holding of Board hearings either at the Office concerned or at some other agreed centre.

II. General Machinery for Consultation

The present machinery does not provide for continuous contact between staff and the Secretary-General such as exists for the Staff Council at Headquarters.

Whenever the New York Staff Council is consulted by the Secretary-General on matters relating to UN staff generally, it would seem appropriate that the same communication should also be sent to the Geneva Staff Committee through administrative channels so that its view could also be taken into account. Unless such continuous contact is ensured, the staff at the European Office will continue to be at a disadvantage as compared with their New York colleagues.

III. Rationalization and Reorganization

While it is clear that the Secretary-General's rationalization and reorganization proposals will affect the staff of the European Office, the latter has no means of knowing what the exact implications will be, and would like to feel that it will be given equal facilities with the New York Staff Council as regards consultation wherever necessary.

IV. Parity of Grading with New York

Unequal treatment as compared with New York is unfortunately still in evidence in respect of grading. For the same work, certain classes of official at the European Office continue to be graded lower than their New York colleagues.

V. Cost-of-living Adjustments and Differentials

Current claims for further cost-of-living allowances, at Headquarters and ECAFE, and recent decisions concerning ECLA, have again brought to the fore the problem of cost-of-living adjustments.

It is urged that no final decision be taken at the ACC at its present session, since in our very firm view the question has by no means been adequately aired.

While the report of the special committee appointed by the ACC contains several proposals which would no doubt meet with general approval, there are others which do not seem to clarify the issue. When the General Assembly agreed to the cost-of-living adjustment for Headquarters staff, it made an ad hoc decision, even though that decision was largely based on and taken in the light of Mr. Lie's proposals. (As if to emphasize that the decision implied no regular and fixed policy, the Assembly declined to accept the rest of Mr. Lie's proposals and in particular took no action on his suggestions of a sliding scale.) We have the distinct impression, nevertheless, that both the Special Committee and others have sought to put unwarranted interpretations on the Assembly decision, and in so doing have introduced new elements of confusion. Thus, for example a $7\frac{1}{2}$ per cent adjustment intended to compensate for a 10 per cent rise in living costs (and clearly understood in that way at the time) now comes to be interpreted as a 10 per cent adjustment on three-quarters of the salary.

VI. General Service Scales

When the General Service scales were fixed in 1950, Headquarters instructed that there should be an absolute ceiling for base pay plus non-resident and similar allowances of Fr. 19,260 net per year. When, in 1952, the 5 per cent cost-of-living adjustment was granted, it was made subject not only to a maximum amount, but also to the same provision that the total emoluments should still not exceed the old figure of Fr. 19,260. This has led in a number of cases to unfortunate anomalies that have created misunderstandings and much irritation on the part of staff members affected. Staff members at the top of the scale who have also reached almost to the top of their salary level find that the award of a further increment, whether in the form of language allowance or other, brings them no additional financial benefit, and, on account of rounding in pension fund calculations, often causes them a slight loss in take-home pay. This is because they are "frozen" at the pre-cost-of-living adjustment ceiling, with the result that what they gain on the swings of a step increment they lose on the roundabout of a reduction in their cost-of-living adjustment. It is suggested that administrative anomalies of this sort create unnecessary and undesirable irritation that could be removed at no real cost.

VII. Sick Leave

It is with much regret that we note no improvement in the new Staff Rules as regards sick leave. There is much evidence to show that if the rules were made as generous as they are in the ILO, there would be no additional financial or other burden on the Organization and that such modifications would be in its own interest.