

8 Nov. 1989

# Approval for 2,475 civil service posts

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THE creation of 2,475 new civil service posts has been approved by the Government during the first quarter of the current financial year.

It is not known whether these appointments, which represent an increase of 1.3 per cent on the present strength, will be retained under a scheme being proposed by the Finance Branch to limit growth in the public sector staff to two per cent for the next two financial years.

Under the current expansion, the Environment Protection Department will grow by the highest rate of 13 per cent, creating 70 new posts.

The Immigration Department will expand by 4.4 per cent, equivalent to 248 new jobs.

The growth rates of the Water Supplies Department, the Census and Statistics Department and the Correctional Services Department are all above two per cent.

The Water Supplies Department and the Correctional Services Department will fill 172 and 144 new posts respectively.

The police are able to recruit people for 286 new

posts which represents a growth rate of only 0.9 per cent over the total establishment of 33,283.

Despite involving additional expenditure, approval from the Legislative Council Finance Committee for creating these new posts is not required.

This is allowed under delegated powers in the Public Finance Ordinance.

Finance Branch officials are currently negotiating with various department heads on the impact of limiting growth for the next two financial years to two per cent.

It is learnt the two-per cent growth limit was adopted as a result of a review of present resource allocation procedures by Finance Branch officials.

It is understood that the officials find that if the current growth trend is to continue, the strength of the civil service could expand by a record 14 per cent by the end of the 1990-91 financial year.

This would bring the strength of the civil service from 149,100 at the end of August 1989 to 169,500 at the end of March 1991.

Under earlier approved estimates, a maximum of 6,000 new posts could be added to the establishment

of the civil service in the current financial year.

If left unchecked, according to Government projections, another 10,000 new posts could also be created in the 1990-91 year.

These Government statistics also reveal a big gap between establishment and strength.

Assistant Financial Secretary Brian Bresnihan said: "We've been watching the gap between establishment and strength, and we felt that there was too much fat and that we had to do something about it."

Given the substantial increase, Finance Branch officials maintain the trend should be reversed so as to keep reality in line with the objective of value for money, as recommended in the report of public sector reform.

It is understood the Government has decided that the expansion rate of the civil service should be contained at about two per cent at least in the current and 1990-91 financial year.

But taking into account that some departments are already committed to expanding, the policy allows for flexibility so some departments will not be affected under the new scheme.