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Double Pay For One Job

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11.1 Double Pay For One Job

On realizing that most District Assemblies could not fund their projects, the government made funds available and issued warrants to Assemblies concerned to pay contractrors from that vote. The Government's decision and intervention came after our Assembly had paid its contractor through locally mobilized funds. The political head of the Assembly saw this as an opportunity for him to enrich himself. His idea was to collude with a contractor who had executed work which had been paid for from the Assembly's coffers. With this end in view, he discussed and agreed with the contractor to put in a claim for payment again so that he could give it to him later to "help" him. He sensed that the District Coordinating Director (DCD) and the District Finance Officer would be stumbling blocks in his way. He, accordingly, arranged an "official trip" for the two of them to go to Accra. Conscious of his hidden agenda, he immediately approved all their T & T claims and imprest for the "official" trip. To facilitate their early and immediate departure, he voluntarily and eagerly released his own official car for the trip. He asked the DCD to officially hand over the administration of the district to me as the second in comman (2IC) (I was only two years old in the service — virtually with no experience on the job.)

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As soon as they took off, the contractor appeared with his claim for payment. The boss came with him to my office to explain the need for me to sign the cheques to effect payment.

I became suspicious about the whole thing. I pleaded with my boss to give me time to study the case before I could take action. I noticed instantly that my boss was not happy nor satisfied with my reaction. He counteracted by trying to bully me. He said to me, *"I* did not know that you are incompetent to handle the district in the absence of your boss (the DCD). I may have to look for a more efficient and effective 2IC". He banged the door and left.

Perhaps he thought he could capitalize on my level as a cadet administrator to cow me into submission. He went to his office expecting that I would follow him to say I was prepared to raise and sign the cheque. I stood my ground.

I took my time to study the documents, to get confirmation that the contractor had already been paid by the Assembly. With this sure knowledge, I walked to my boss's office and gently explained to him that it was wrong for us to issue that cheque since the contractor had been paid. He listened attentively to my explanation. But because he needed the money badly, he was adamant. All he said to me was, "youngman, you are new in the system; act as directed; your share is intact." I excused myself and went to my office and self-diagnosed the issue critically. A sober reflection convinced me that it was wrong for us to issue the cheque.

I invited the contractor to my office for discussion. I asked him to think of the future repercurssions of the contemplated action. I drew his attention to some loopholes which could lead to the detection of the deal in the near future. And that a detection might lead to his firm being blacklisted. The contractor agreed with me. The problem now was how to handle the boss. I advised the contractor to go to him and ask him to abandon the idea. I suggested that a different approach would be for my boss to award more and more jobs to him which can attract the proverbial 10% to him free of tax. He did that and my boss appeared to have been satisfied. Not long after the episode, a circular was received from the central government asking some districts, including ours not to spend those monies as available records had revealed that we had already paid our contractors. Thereafter, I became "the darling boy" of my political boss. After reading the circular, he called me and said, "youngman, you have saved me from losing my job. Keep it up".

Questions which may be useful for discussion

1
2. Where were you reminded of things in your own experience?
What qualities did the administrator display in handling his political boss? When asked by your supervisor to do what is illegal what would you do?
3. The alternative suggestion made to the political boss is an invitation to corruption — discuss.
4 What title would you give to this reading?