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B-166960

FEB 9 - 1970

FEB 3 - [REDACTED]

Mr. T. C. Robinson
Authorized Certifying Officer
Forest Service
633 W. Wisconsin Avenue
Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53203

Dear Mr. Robinson:

We refer to your letter of December 23, 1969, reference 6540, with enclosures and voucher for \$3 in favor of Mr. Jerry Kladiva, requesting an advance decision as to whether you are authorized to certify reimbursement of luncheon fees arising from attendance at the annual meeting of the Shawnee Resource Conservation and Development Project.

The Division of Budget and Finance, per Mr. Arvin L. White, has stated "this is an example of a recurring problem. Your decision will serve as a precedent for other similar cases."

The facts of the case are presented by your letter as follows:

"Mr. Kladiva, stationed at Harrisburg, Illinois, attended on April 3, 1969, the annual meeting of the Shawnee Resource Conservation and Development Project at Marion, Illinois. He was designated the official Forest Service representative and participated in a panel discussion. He paid \$3 for his luncheon as part of the agenda. Although Marion is some distance from his official station, he was not in travel status long enough to be entitled to per diem.

"Mr. Kladiva's supervisor designated him to attend the meeting since it concerned a subject involving the Forest Service. Attendance at the meeting was in line with one of Mr. Kladiva's duties to coordinate Forest Service programs with other agencies and contributed to improved Forest Service participation in the project. Since the entire meeting was held in the motel including the luncheon, Mr. Kladiva was expected to attend the luncheon in order to participate fully; to have eaten elsewhere would have been unusual and somewhat limiting on his effectiveness as a Forest Service representative. We would consider the meal cost as a registration fee for attending the meeting."

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It has been held by this Office that registration fees for attendance at a conference which includes the cost of meals--no separate charge being made for meals--may be allowed. 38 Comp. Gen. 134. However, where the meal is not a part of a registration fee, such as in the instant case, we have held there must also be a showing that the particular meal was incidental to the meeting; that the attendance of the employee was necessary to full participation in the scheduled meeting; and that he was not free to partake of his meals elsewhere without having been absent from essential formal discussions, lectures or speeches concerning the purpose of the conference. B-154912, August 26, 1964.

If such a determination be made along the lines indicated above, we would have no objection to certification of the voucher for payment. The voucher is returned herewith for handling accordingly.

Sincerely yours,

R. F. KELLER

Assistant Comptroller General
of the United States

Enclosure