



PRIME MINISTER

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PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE REPORTS

Mr. Speaker, I ask leave of the House to make a brief statement concerning the reports of Parliamentary Committees.

Mr. Speaker, all honourable members will recognize that a great deal of most valuable work is done by committees of this Parliament. It is important that the reports of these committees, many of which reflect considerable thought, effort and often insight, received full and careful attention by Ministers.

It is equally desirable that a procedure be established to make sure that Parliament is aware of the decisions which the Government takes in connection with such reports. In some instances, such a procedure is already in operation.

As Honourable Members will know, Department of Finance minutes are provided to the Public Accounts Committee in respect of each of its reports. Similarly, the Government has been careful to see that its decisions in relation to each of the Expenditure Committee's reports have been announced to this House.

The Government has now decided to apply this principle to all Parliamentary Committee reports. Henceforth, within six months of the tabling of a Committee report, the responsible Minister will make a statement in the Parliament outlining the action the Government proposes to take in relation to the report. If the six month period expires during a Parliamentary recess, the Ministerial Statement will be made at the earliest opportunity in the next Parliamentary sitting.

As Honourable Members will appreciate, there will be some Committee reports which will not be appropriate to the procedure I have outlined. Among these are reports of the Committees relating to House Management, the Public Works Committee, and the Committee on the New and Permanent Parliament House. The present procedure relating to the Public Accounts Committee will, of course, continue to operate.

There have been a number of reports tabled since the Government took office on which the Government's attitude has not yet been announced.

I have asked Ministers to inform the Cabinet of action taken or proposed to be taken in relation to them and where appropriate, the Parliament will be informed in these cases, too. The procedure I have outlined reflects this Government's firm

intention to see that the excellent work of Parliamentary Committees does not pass unheeded.

We need to use to the full the talents and resources available in this House and the Senate. One important way in which this can be achieved is the further development and enhancement of the Parliamentary Committee and I shall be making a further statement on that subject in a few days.

Mr. Speaker, I believe the arrangements I have announced represent a further strengthening of the role of Parliament in our system of Government.

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