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CABINET

THE COST OF PARLIAMENT

Memorandum by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster

1. Following our discussion in Cabinet on the cost of Parliament (C(80) 28 and CC(80) 20th Conclusions, Minute 4), I held a private meeting with members of the House of Commons Commission on 7 July.
2. The Commission considered a paper which I had prepared on the control of Parliamentary expenditure. It was decided that the Speaker should seek the advice of Sir Robert Speed (Speakers Counsel) on a change in the Instruments of Delegation to ensure that the Commission have a more direct control over staff increases in the House, and it was also agreed that an Inspector of Staffing should be appointed.
3. On financial expenditure, the Commission decided that in order to have a greater control in the various departments of the House there should be a small number of Members of Parliament selected to supervise administration of all departments other than the Library and Refreshment Departments, where such bodies already existed. A member of the Commission should be the Chairman of each of these supervisory bodies. The Commission decided against referring proposals involving significant increases in expenditure to the Government, as they felt that the Government's view could be adequately expressed by the Leader of the House.
4. It was decided that the Commission could not agree to Government cash limits being imposed on the House, but that the Commission itself would undertake to impose its own cash limits when it had a complete picture of the financial expenditure of individual departments.
5. The Commission decided that a further report should be obtained on the proposal that printing should no longer be paid for out of departmental votes, but should be met from the House of Parliament Vote on a repayment basis.
6. At this stage, the Commission are not proposing to disclose their conclusions to the House as a whole, but will maintain confidentiality until the timing and form of an announcement can be considered. The record of the private meeting is being circulated to the Commission as a formal paper on 15 July.

N St J S

Privy Council Office

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