

2A (a)

MR. TURNBULL

There is one, perhaps obvious, point which emerges from the recent papers and discussions on child benefit.

It is always a possibility that, in the course of annual PES negotiations, Ministers may invent new, or make small shifts in existing policy, in order to secure an agreement on funding for the next three years. Such policy shifts are at present agreed bilaterally of course between the Chief Secretary and the Ministers concerned.

There are at least two reasons why such agreements should be brought to the attention of other Ministers.

- (i) Other Ministerial interests may be affected indirectly.
- (ii) There are some issues which are so contentious and controversial that they ought to be brought to the attention of the Prime Minister and perhaps other senior Ministers.

One step for the future might be to require any such proposed policy changes to be brought to the attention of the Prime Minister before final bilateral agreement is made. That would hopefully avoid some of the difficulties we have faced over the last week.

Any merit in this idea?

BHP

(BARRY H. POTTER)

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