

APPENDIX

Answers to Parliamentary Questions (Extracts from Hansard, House of Commons)

13 JUNE 1977 (col. 26)

26 **Mr. Lawrence** asked the Attorney-General what steps have been taken to implement recommendations 48, 49, and 53 of the Renton Report on the preparation of legislation dealing with consolidation.

The Solicitor-General: Draftsmen with the necessary aptitudes though without previous experience in the drafting of current legislation in the United Kingdom have been and continue to be employed on consolidation work. Their output has included some of the consolidation Acts passed in 1975 and 1976, as well as some consolidation Bills yet to be introduced.

With regard to recommendation 49, I understand that the Joint Committee on Consolidation Bills is ready and able to sit in two divisions should the need arise. Recently however, the volume of consolidation legislation has not necessitated this. On the general progress of consolidation work—recommendation 53—the Government accept in principle that the pace of consolidation should be accelerated. But the scope for such acceleration is limited by competing demands on draftsmen and lawyers in Government Departments. The need for economies in public expenditure necessarily affects recruitment of draftsmen by the Law Commission and the Parliamentary Counsel Office. It has, however, been possible this Session for draftsmen in the Parliamentary Counsel Office to give additional help in the preparation of consolidating Bills.

Mr. Lawrence: Is the Solicitor-General aware that it is now two years since the Renton Committee reported and that it is not immediately obvious that the pace of consolidation of statutes has increased markedly? I thank the right hon. and learned Gentleman for indication that there has been some small increase in consolidation, but is it not important that the rate of consolidation should be substantially increased? If it means that more parliamentary draftsmen should be employed, should not the Government give important priority to that?

The Solicitor-General: That accords ill with some of the comments that we have heard from the Opposition about the limitation on public expenditure. Another limiting factor is parliamentary time.

14 NOVEMBER 1977 (col. 10)

Mr. Lawrence asked the Prime Minister what steps have been taken to implement recommendations 1, 2, 4, 5 and 6 of the Report of the Renton Committee on the Preparation of Legislation: what is the present strength of the Parliamentary Counsel Office compared with a year ago: how many newly recruited lawyers are at present under training there: and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Foot: I have been asked to reply.

There are currently 20 full-time draftsmen in the Parliamentary Counsel Office. This compares with 22 on 1st of November 1976. The number on loan to the Law Commission is now seven compared with five on 1st of November 1976.

Consideration has been given to various possibilities for training draftsmen, but there is no present intention to set up a course in legislative drafting. Special attention is paid to letting newly recruited lawyers gain the experience which is essential to their training

The staffing levels in the Parliamentary Counsel Office are kept under careful consideration and two new recruits were added just over a year ago to another two appointed somewhat earlier.

Consultation on draft Bills with persons outside the Government services occurs frequently and those consulted include specialists on the relevant branches of the law.

15 DECEMBER 1977 (col. 329)

60. **Mr Carlisle** asked the Lord President of the Council which of those recommendations involving change put forward in the Report of the Renton Committee on the Preparation of Legislation have so far been implemented: and which others the Government intend to implement and not to implement respectively

61. **Mr. David Walder** asked the Lord President of the Council why the Statute Law Committee has not yet announced its decision on the report of its Sub Committee on recommendations 108 and 109 of the Renton Committee on Legislation: and when an announcement will be made.

Mr. Foot: The Renton Report contained 121 separate recommendations.

As regards those recommendations which related to the staffing of the Parliamentary Counsel Office, I would refer to the reply which I gave to the hon. Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) on 14th November— [*Official Report*, Vol. 939, c. 10]. With regard to those relating to consolidation legislation, I refer to the oral answer which my right hon. Friend the Solicitor-General gave to the same hon. Member on 13th June— [*Official Report*, Vol. 933, c. 26]. The Government have decided, after very full and careful consideration, not to implement recommendations 108 and 109, which concern proposals for the regular review of legislation by the Statute Law Committee. The majority of the Committee's other recommendations relate to detailed matters of drafting practice. As previously indicated, the Government regard these recommendations as a comprehensive and valuable summary of the best drafting practice, and they are being taken into account in the drafting of all current Government legislation. It is considered essential, however, that parliamentary draftsmen should retain discretion to apply the recommendations in accordance with the requirements of particular legislation.

13 JULY 1978 (Col. 704)

Mr. Lawrence asked the Lord President of the Council whether, in the interests of the better drafting of legislation, he will consider allowing parliamentary draftsmen to have consultations with responsible representative groups of those organisations affected by proposed legislation.

Mr Foot: Consultations with representative groups affected by proposed legislation are normally undertaken by the Department promoting the legislation. Any specialist advice received is made available to the Government draftsmen, who are free to seek any further advice they may require.

Mr. Lawrence asked the Lord President of the Council (1) if he will list the recommendations of the Renton Report on the preparation of legislation which have so far been implemented; (2) what further steps he is proposing to take to implement the recommendations of the Renton Report on the preparation of

Mr. Foot: I would refer the hon. Member to the reply which I gave to the hon. and learned Member for Runcorn (Mr. Carlisle) on 15th December 1977—[Vol. 941, c. 329]. The recommendations made in the Renton report are already taken fully into account in the drafting of all new legislation