

Original filed Nat. Health (July 79)

PRIME MINISTER

and 2
Education

Statements in the House

Mr. Jenkin's statement on Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham (Flag A) went off surprisingly peacefully today. Mr. Orme asked a number of detailed questions about the status of decisions that had been taken by the Commissioners and demanded adequate Parliamentary time for discussion of the Validation Bill. He said it would have been better for Mr. Jenkin to offer his apology last week rather than today. Mr. Mellish said that it was "a sad, sorry and abject story". Christopher Price said that Mr. Jenkin had been warned on the day of his announcement last August that his action was illegal.

Mr. Jenkin said that he had not decided last week whether to appeal so that an apology then would not have been appropriate. He said that many of the questions which had been asked would be resolved by his Bill. As far as the two hospitals which had been closed were concerned, their future would be for the new authority to decide. The important thing was that the new authority had undertaken to reach decisions within its cash limit.

Eric Heffer erupted with cries of "resign" from time to time and Bob Cryer reminded Mr. Jenkin of Criche! Down. Apart from these sustained calls for his resignation, there was less pressure on Mr. Jenkin than might have been expected. He replied quietly and with some dignity, and on the whole did pretty well.

Education

Mr. Carlisle's statement on Warnock (Flag B) went off very quietly. He said that his White Paper would be published in the early summer and referred all detailed questions to decisions to be announced then. Nothing very sensational was raised from either side of the House.

MS

3 March 1980

cc. M. Patton.
MONDAY 3 MARCH 1980

STATEMENT ON THE WARNOCK REPORT

MR MARK CARLISLE

WITH PERMISSION, MR SPEAKER, I WISH TO MAKE A STATEMENT ON THE WARNOCK REPORT.

THE COMMITTEE UNDER THE CHAIRMANSHIP OF MRS WARNOCK PRESENTED ITS REPORT IN MARCH 1978. SHORTLY AFTERWARDS A CONSULTATION DOCUMENT WAS ISSUED TO SEEK THE VIEWS OF THE MANY ORGANISATIONS CONCERNED WITH THE EDUCATION, HEALTH AND WELFARE OF THE HANDICAPPED. THEIR RESPONSES WERE ALMOST WHOLLY FAVOURABLE. IN ADDITION A THOROUGH INTER-DEPARTMENTAL STUDY OF THE REPORT'S RECOMMENDATIONS HAS NOW BEEN MADE AND COMPLETED WITHIN GOVERNMENT. IN VIEW OF THE ANXIETIES EXPRESSED ON BOTH SIDES OF THE HOUSE DURING DISCUSSION OF THE PROVISIONS OF CLAUSE 9 OF THE EDUCATION (No 2) BILL WE HAVE DECIDED THAT IT WOULD BE RIGHT TO ANNOUNCE AT ONCE THE GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSE TO THE REPORT. MY RT HON FRIEND THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR SCOTLAND WILL BE DEALING SEPARATELY WITH THE APPLICATION TO SCOTLAND.

THE CENTRAL RECOMMENDATION OF THE REPORT WAS THAT, IN THE LIGHT OF THE EXPERIENCE GAINED SINCE THE PASSING OF THE EDUCATION ACT 1944, THE CONCEPT OF SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL TREATMENT APPROPRIATE TO DEFINED CATEGORIES OF BODILY OR MENTAL HANDICAP SHOULD BE REPLACED BY THAT OF THE SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS OF INDIVIDUAL CHILDREN. SUCH A CHANGE, WHICH WOULD REFLECT

ENLIGHTENED CURRENT PRACTICE, WAS WELCOMED BY THE BODIES WE CONSULTED. THE GOVERNMENT ACCEPT THE ARGUMENTS IN THE REPORT FOR CHANGES IN THE CURRENT STATUTORY PROVISIONS RELATING TO SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL TREATMENT AND INTEND TO INTRODUCE EARLY LEGISLATION TO ENACT A NEW FRAMEWORK SUBSTANTIALLY ON LINES RECOMMENDED IN THE REPORT. THE NEW LEGISLATION WILL INCORPORATE PROVISIONS DESIGNED TO SAFEGUARD THE INTERESTS OF CHILDREN WITH SEVERE OR COMPLEX SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS, INCLUDING ARRANGEMENTS FOR MORE WIDELY BASED ASSESSMENT AND FOR THE RECORDING OF INDIVIDUAL NEEDS.

THE LEGISLATION WILL ALSO DEFINE AND PROTECT THE RIGHTS OF PARENTS TO ADEQUATE INFORMATION AND CONSULTATION ABOUT THE EDUCATION OFFERED FOR THEIR CHILDREN TAKING ACCOUNT OF THE RELEVANT RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE REPORT AND IN THE SPIRIT OF THE PROVISIONS ABOUT INFORMATION AND PARENTAL PREFERENCE EMBODIED IN THE EDUCATION (NO 2) BILL.

MANY OF THE OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS IN THE WARNOCK REPORT WERE NOT ADDRESSED DIRECTLY TO GOVERNMENT, BUT TO THOSE CONCERNED WITH THE LOCAL PROVISION OF EDUCATION, HEALTH AND WELFARE SERVICES. SOME RECOMMENDATIONS, FOR EXAMPLE THOSE RELATING TO NURSERY EDUCATION, TEACHER TRAINING AND FURTHER AND HIGHER EDUCATION, HAVE MAJOR IMPLICATIONS FOR CENTRAL AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURE AND THEIR IMPLEMENTATION MUST BE CONSIDERED IN THE LIGHT OF THE ECONOMIC SITUATION AND THE NEED FOR RESTRAINT WHICH IT ENTAILS. THE GOVERNMENT'S CURRENT EXPENDITURE PLANS PROVIDE FOR THE MAINTENANCE OF EXPENDITURE ON SPECIAL EDUCATION AT ITS PRESENT LEVEL DESPITE THE FALL IN THE SIZE OF THE RELEVANT AGE GROUPS.

WE PROPOSE TO LAY BEFORE PARLIAMENT IN DUE COURSE A WHITE PAPER OUTLINING THE FORM THE NEW LEGISLATION MIGHT TAKE AND DEALING WITH OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS MADE BY THE WARNOCK COMMITTEE.

IN CONCLUSION I WOULD LIKE TO CONGRATULATE MRS WARNOCK AND THE MEMBERS OF HER COMMITTEE FOR THEIR CAREFULLY PRESENTED CONSIDERATION OF THE MANY ISSUES SURROUNDING THE EDUCATION OF HANDICAPPED CHILDREN AND YOUNG PERSONS. THEIR REPORT WILL I AM SURE BE A CONSTANT SOURCE OF REFERENCE FOR MANY YEARS TO COME FOR ALL WITH AN INTEREST IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF SPECIAL EDUCATION.