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## Collective Responsibility

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The general doctrine is conveniently stated in the words used by Lord Salisbury in 1878:

"For all that passes in Cabinet each member of it who does not resign is absolutely and irretrievably responsible, and has no right afterwards to say that he agreed in one case to compromise, while in another he was persuaded by his colleagues..... It is only on the principle that absolute responsibility is undertaken by every member of the Cabinet who, after a decision is arrived at, remains a member of it, that the joint responsibility of Ministers to Parliament can be upheld, and one of the most essential principles of parliamentary responsibility established".

Ministers of Cabinet Rank who are not members of the Cabinet share in the collective responsibility for the Cabinet's decisions. Collective responsibility is preserved in three ways:-

(a) The minutes and (with some exceptions) the memoranda of the Cabinet are circulated to all Ministers of Cabinet Rank; and any Minister of Cabinet Rank has a right to submit suggestions to the Cabinet on any matter.

(b) A Minister who is not a member of the Cabinet is invariably summoned to attend Cabinet when questions affecting his Departmental interests are to be discussed.

(c) Ministers who are not members of the Cabinet play an important part in the work of Cabinet Committees, through which they make their contribution towards the formulation of Government policy.

See Jennings, pp. 217-227; Anson, Vol II (1), pp. 117-119, 144.

On the term "Ministers of Cabinet Rank" see para. 7 below.

For general discussion of the doctrine of collective responsibility and the application of the doctrine during the period of the War Cabinet in the First and Second World Wars see M.G. (42) 5 and 7. For the view taken by Sir M. Hankey as regards the War Cabinet of 1916-1919 see file CAB/A/32.

On the "agreement to differ" of 1932 see Cab7(32) and Jennings, pp. 219-220. For the text of the official communique see Part II, para. 44. See also the debates on Cabinet responsibility, Hansard, House of Commons, 8th February, 1932.

On voting by Ministers in Parliament on issues of conscience, etc. see Part II, para. 44.

On voting in Cabinet meetings see para. 35.

On dissent from Cabinet Conclusions see para. 43.