

Memorandum to Cabinet by the Hon. Minister of Public  
Building and Works regarding the Committees  
of Inquiry Act.

Earlier this year a number of cracks developed in the arches on the Strait Street side of the New Law Courts Building.

In order to satisfy public opinion and to learn from an independent body the cause of the failure of the arches a proposal to set up a Committee of Inquiry in terms of Act IV of 1948 was made. This proposal could not be implemented as the Crown Advocate General advised that the above quoted Act simply empowers the Minister of Justice and Parliamentary Affairs to authorise the administration of oaths by a member of a Board or committee "appointed to inquire into the conduct of any officer or employee... or into the conduct or management of any department of the said public service" and empowers the chairman of "any such Board or Committee as aforesaid" to summon witnesses. The C.A.G. adds that the provisions of this Act may not be extended to a Committee appointed with the terms of reference intended and that there is no law in terms of which such a Committee could be given powers to summon witnesses and to administer the oath.

In view of this the C.A.G. has drafted a bill amending the Committees of Inquiry Act, 1948. The aim of the amendment is to extend the Act to cover also any matter falling under the responsibility of any Department.

Hon. Ministers are solicited to approve the draft bill.

30th December, 1966.