SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER, MR LEE KUAN YEW, IN MOVING THE SECOND READING OF THE PARLIAMENTARY PENSIONS (AMENDMENT) BILL AT PARLIAMENT ON THURSDAY, 27TH MARCH, 1975

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I beg to move, "That the Bill be now read a Second time."

For officers in the public service, the Pensions Act sets out conditions under which pensions are withheld either wholly or partially. Section 5 lists offences for negligence, irregularity or misconduct. A disciplinary committee of inquiry will determine the degree of culpability.

In Section 14, pensions are withheld completely for any term of imprisonment for any crime or offence.

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It has taken the Government some time to decide how to modify these provisions to apply to Parliamentary Pensions under the different circumstances for Members of Parliament, Political Secretaries, Parliamentary Secretaries and Ministers. The Government decided that to withhold part of a MP's or

Minister's pension for any negligence, irregularity or misconduct was not practical. It would have to follow the findings of a disciplinary committee of fellow-Ministers and MP's. Nor was it appropriate since the careers and responsibilities of MP's and Ministers were different from those of public officers. Nor does imprisonment for any crime or offence unconnected with parliamentary or ministerial duties appear valid grounds for withholding of pensions.

But there can be no question that if any Minister, Parliamentary Secretary, Political Secretary or MP has been convicted under the Prevention of Corruption Act, or of any crime involving corruption under any other written law, even if he has only been fined and not imprisoned, then this warrants the withholding of the pension. The President, after consideration of the record of the proceedings of the Court, will decide whether the whole or a part of any pension should be withheld.

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Every Honourable Member knows that nothing is more likely to lower standards of integrity in the conduct of government than to have a member of the political leadership setting a bad example. All those who hold office must abide by strict standards of public and private conduct. It is not possible to enforce high standards of integrity in the civil service if the political leadership tolerates

any corrupt behaviour amongst its own ranks. A MP or a Minister must take the consequences of any corrupt act. Losing his pension is one of the least of the sanctions.

Sir, I beg to move.

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