

SUBJECT MEETING RECORD
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From the Private Secretary

28 October 1988

Dear Tom,

PROGRESS ON IMPLEMENTATION OF EDUCATION REFORM

It may be helpful if I record the main points that your Secretary of State discussed with the Prime Minister when they met on 26 October. Professor Brian Griffiths was also present.

I should be grateful if you could limit circulation of this record to those with a direct operational interest.

Governing Bodies

Your Secretary of State reported that the previous week had seen the final date for the completion of the new elections for schools' governing bodies. He would be now carrying out a review of the results of those elections. Meantime, it was important to press ahead with the arrangements for providing training for new school governors on their duties.

Opting Out

Your Secretary of State said that there had been 400 enquiries about the possibilities of schools moving to grant-maintained status. Inevitably, it would take time for substantial numbers of schools to complete the opting out process, but he expected that perhaps ten to twenty might do so during the first year. Three ballots were already under way.

There was some discussion of the action taken by the local authority in Tameside apparently designed to obstruct the process of opting out through transferring the ownership of school property to a local authority company. Your Secretary of State thought that this was unlikely in practice to prove a significant obstacle but he would be keeping the position under review, and he did not rule out the possibility of having to take action to offset subsequent actions of this general sort by other local authorities.

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City Technology Colleges

Your Secretary of State said that the process of establishing the first few CTCs was proceeding very well. Kingshurst in Solihull had opened and promised to be a great success. Progress was in hand in Nottingham, Middlesbrough, Gateshead, Bradford and Derby. One interesting possibility was for existing school premises now in the voluntary sector to be purchased for conversion into CTCs. Another approach could be for certain Skillcentres to be acquired for the same purpose; discussions were under way with the Secretary of State for Employment about this.

Local Management of Schools

Your Secretary of State reported good progress also in this area. Circulars were being prepared explaining the implications of the move to local management. The intention was for responsibility for 80-90 per cent of budgets to be delegated; this could have a revolutionary impact on the running of schools. By 1991 it was hoped there would be a large number of delegated budgets in operation.

Polytechnics

Your Secretary of State said that Messrs Dearing and Stubbs were pushing ahead with many useful changes. Polytechnics were being required to bid for money from the PFC rather than having it allocated to them from the centre. The prospect was for half of the members of governing bodies to be local business people. And a number of interesting possibilities for rationalisation of polytechnics were under consideration.

Universities

It was noted that student loans were being considered at the meeting of E(EP) on the following day. In discussion, it was agreed that, when the Government's proposals for loans were published, it would be important not to rule out the possible introduction over time of some degree of charging of domestic students for their courses. This was not an approach that the Government itself should advocate; but there was increasing interest in it from some quarters in the university world, and if ideas were put forward the Government should be prepared positively to respond to them.

Clinical Research Centre

There was some discussion of the MRC proposal to relocate the centre from Northwick Park to Hammersmith. Your Secretary of State said that, in further discussions with the MRC, a revised proposal had emerged involving substantially lower costs than the original proposition; he was keen to pursue this, given that Hammersmith was a key centre of excellence. The Prime Minister said that she continued to have serious reservations about the proposal, but it was agreed that your Secretary of State was free to put forward to

her a revised proposal.

National Curriculum Issues

It was noted that your Secretary of State would be coming forward with a proposal on history in the next couple of weeks.

There was a brief discussion of the first report from the National Curriculum English Working Group and the draft proposals for statutory consultation attached to your Secretary of State's recent minute.

It was agreed that this draft needed to be strengthened, for example, to emphasise the importance of standard English and grammar. It was agreed that your Secretary of State should discuss this further with Professor Griffiths.

Teacher Training

The Prime Minister expressed concern about the HMI Report on Teacher Training published earlier in the week. Your Secretary of State said there were major difficulties in this area; he would be considering matters further at a major meeting the following week.

I am copying this letter to Richard Wilson (Cabinet Office).

Ye
Paul

PAUL GRAY

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