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10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

Personal Minute

No. M9/88

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

When we recently discussed progress in implementing the Education Act, you raised the issues of teacher training and universities. I have been giving some further thought to these matters.

Teacher Training

The state of teacher training indicated by the HMI Report on the New Teacher in School is deeply worrying - witness the low academic quality of those who enter B Ed courses, the alarming degree of incompetence amongst newly qualified teachers, the inadequate training which they receive in teacher training institutions, the politicisation of courses, and the failure to attract students to teach certain subjects and in certain areas.

This is the more disturbing when so many people who enter teaching do so from a sense of vocation and with high ideals. First-class teachers are absolutely essential if we are to raise standards through the introduction of the National Curriculum.

In reviewing this area, I believe we need to focus in particular on two points. First, is the training being given to new entrants what teachers really need? Second, how do we attract into the profession the many trained teachers currently outside the education system, together with other talented professionals, such as retired military personnel,

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private sector scientists and engineers? If we were able to devise first-class part-time courses as alternative ways of entering the profession, then I believe we may be able to tap a large number of good people.

Universities

We have successfully abolished tenure and replaced the UGC by the UFC. We have now to decide the criteria by which the UFC will allocate funds to individual universities - these must strengthen rather than blunt incentives for attracting private funding and first-class teaching. We must also consider how to ensure that funds follow the student in higher education, so that we work with the grain of student choice rather than create obstacles to it.

Given the importance of these issues for the future of education, I should be grateful if you would prepare papers outlining the policy options, for discussion at E(EP) in the New Year.

Raymond Staiter

28 November 1988

PRIME MINISTER

TEACHER TRAINING AND UNIVERSITIES

When you saw Brian Griffiths this morning you said you wanted to send Kenneth Baker a personal minute asking him to put in hand further work on teacher training and universities, with a view to discussion at E(EP) early next year.

I have informally warned Kenneth Baker's office to expect such a minute. My impression is that he would quite welcome a push on teacher training - discussions within the Department have not got very far. On universities, I think DES have done more work on the ideas you discussed with Brian; and here too Kenneth Baker would not be unhappy to receive a request for a paper.

I now attach a personal minute for you to send which Brian and I have put together.

Content to sign?

Yes - Charleston
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Becc.

PAUL GRAY

25 November 1988