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CONFIDENTIAL FILING

DENTAL SCHOOLS

EDUCATION

JUNE 1988

Referred to	Date	Referred to	Date	Referred to	Date	Referred to	Date
6-7-88							
28-7-88							
2-8-88							
9-8-88							
PREM 19/2/14							



ST. ANDREW'S HOUSE
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ccp.

CONFIDENTIAL

Paul Gray Esq
Private Secretary
10 Downing Street
LONDON
SW1A 2AA

9 August 1988

Dear Mr Gray

10/8

DENTAL SCHOOLS

Tom Jeffery copied to Robin Weatherston his letter of 1 August to you. We note that Mr Baker will be consulting his colleagues soon about the handling of this issue, and Mr Rifkind will reserve substantive comment till then.

In the meantime, I might comment on three points in Tom Jeffery's letter. In Mr Rifkind's view, the methodology of this review was badly flawed: to say that it "attracted some criticism" does not do justice to the reservations that are widely held, including by members of the UGC's Main Committee.

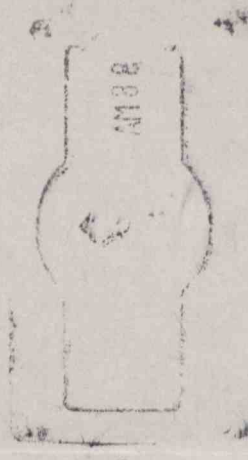
Nor does Mr Rifkind accept that the UGC's dental sub-committee fully reconsidered the matter: it met only once and it did not reassess any of the evidence used by the Working Party. In short, therefore, Mr Rifkind does not think that the report offers a satisfactory basis for reaching final decisions, and the UGC's unprecedented reference of this decision to Mr Baker should be seen in that light.

Finally, I would add that Mr Rifkind considers that report has advanced a very precise definition of what constitutes the minimum size for a viable dental school, which, in his view, does not do justice to the other factors which have to be taken into account.

Yours sincerely
Uriel Jamieson

URIEL JAMIESON
Assistant Private Secretary

EDUCATION: Dental School, June 88



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KK

to PC

10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

2 August 1988

DENTAL SCHOOLS

Thank you for your letter of 1 August to Paul about the handling of the UGC's review of dental education. I will show this to the Prime Minister on her return from Australia, but meanwhile would ask that you keep us in touch on your Secretary of State's consultation with Ministerial colleagues.

I am copying this letter to David Crawley (Scottish Office).

(P. A. BEARPARK)

Tom Jeffery, Esq.,
Department of Education and Science.

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ELIZABETH HOUSE
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01-934 9000

RA
✓ CCFV
Prime Minister²

I have asked that we
be included in X.

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Paul Gray Esq
Private Secretary
10 Downing Street
LONDON SW1A 2AA

Yes.

PSB
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The proposed procedure
sounds to have so many hidden
costs that I doubt the
wisdom of the UGC's
preliminary conclusions.
not

1 August 1988.

Dear Paul

DENTAL SCHOOLS

Thank you for your letter of 5 July about the handling of the UGC's review of dental education.

By way of background, the review was the inevitable consequence of a DHSS review which called for an urgent cut of 10% in dental school intakes to prevent significant and wasteful overprovision of dental practitioners in the future. The report of the UGC's original working party recommended that, on academic efficiency grounds, this reduction be achieved by closures rather than further across the board reductions in intakes and recommended University College, London and Dundee dental schools for closure.

X / The methodology of this report attracted some criticism and the UGC's dental sub-Committee reconsidered the matter but came to the same conclusion. The convention - thoroughly explored during the passage of the Education Reform Bill - is that the Government automatically accepts the UGC's recommendations. In this particular case, the UGC has explicitly referred its advice to my Secretary of State for decision. This reflects the unusual mix of academic and health service considerations, but also takes account of the political profile the case has taken on in Scotland. My Secretary of State is considering how best to move forward, and will be consulting Ministerial colleagues soon.

The particular questions you asked would probably best be considered against the background of that proposed strategy. You have, though, sought an urgent reply.

Your first question related to the comparative economy of closures as against intake reductions. The UGC has accepted the case on academic grounds that the minimum annual intake of a

school should be 50 undergraduates. Given the required 10% reduction in intakes, this made closures inevitable. The relationship between the size of a school and its running costs is not direct, but across the board cuts in intake would seem bound to increase unit costs as well as taking some schools below the academic viability threshold.

Similarly, the comparative costs involved in closing particular schools are difficult to describe. They will depend on several factors associated with the university, notably premature retirement payments, transfers of staff to other institutions, and the marginal cost of increasing student intakes elsewhere. In addition, because dental school clinical teaching takes place in dental hospitals, and dental academics undertake patient care as well as teaching and research, there will be associated costs for the health service. The UGC did not attempt explicit costings of the various closure options. Its proposals are based essentially on academic and health service considerations.

As to the recommendation to increase the undergraduate course to five years, the Committee has deferred a decision but endorsed the recommendation that one year of post-graduate vocational training should be mandatory, and that it should be extended to two years as soon as possible.

I am copying this letter to David Crawley.

Yours,
Tom.

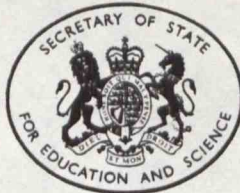
T B JEFFERY
Private Secretary

EDUCATION: Dental Schools

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cc/o

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David Crawley Esq
Private Secretary
Secretary of State for Scotland
Dover House
Whitehall
LONDON SW1

28th July 1988

Dear David

REVIEW OF DENTAL EDUCATION

As you know, my Secretary of State met Ernie Ross MP and John McAllian MP at their request on Wednesday 20 July to discuss the UGC's Review of Dental Education and, in particular, the proposed closure of the Dundee Dental School.

Mr Ross said that he foresaw three possible outcomes to the UGC's Review: the Dundee Dental School might be closed while a new dental hospital was built in Edinburgh; there might be a reduction in dental student numbers spread across all providing universities, with both Dundee and Edinburgh schools thereby retained; or a compromise might be reached where a new dental hospital was built in Edinburgh, while the Dundee school remained in being.

Mr Ross dwelt in some detail on the third scenario which he felt properly reflected Dundee's superior academic provision and premises. The intended new building for the Edinburgh Dental School would not, he suggested, be of sufficient size to accommodate the now required intake of at least 50 undergraduate students. If Edinburgh were to retain a Dental School on a viable basis, it would therefore be necessary to erect a larger building. Mr Ross foresaw planning permission difficulties here. In any event, there could be funding problems. The earmarked £5m at 1986 prices would no longer be sufficient for even the intended building. And Sir Peter Swinnerton-Dyer had already indicated that the UGC could not commit more than its earmarked share of £0.5m.

Mr Ross recognised that Mr Rifkind was committed to the development of a new dental hospital in Edinburgh. He suggested that a solution might be to build the dental hospital as presently proposed for clinical work. That hospital might also

serve as postgraduate centre and could be used for some modular courses for undergraduate students. It might, at the same time, serve as a headquarters for the Royal College of Surgeons. Undergraduate provision could thereby be retained at Dundee and Glasgow, while Mr Rifkind's commitment to a hospital in Edinburgh would be met.

My Secretary of State spoke of the overwhelming need, with which the dental profession concurred, to reduce the current oversupply of expensive dental graduates. The UGC had established a review group which had selected the dental schools at University College, London and Dundee for closure. When this decision was challenged, the UGC's Dental Sub-Committee met to reconsider the matter. Using different criteria, they reached the same conclusions. The UGC had now endorsed that view. Mr Baker said that such a decision on the part of the UGC would normally have settled the matter. Ministers had traditionally distanced themselves from the recommendations of the UGC, for good reasons as explored during the passage of the Education Reform Bill. Ministers' intervention would be equivalent to a direction which was unprecedented.

However, the present issue related to health service as well as academic matters. The UGC had asked my Secretary of State to consider their recommendations with particular consideration to the former. He would do so over the coming months, consulting Mr Rifkind and other colleagues as necessary, and would take into account what Mr Ross and Mr McAllian had said.

In further discussion, my Secretary of State said he had to recognise Mr Ross's point that there had already been some degree of Ministerial involvement through the undertaking sought and obtained by Mr Rifkind concerning the new dental hospital in Edinburgh. Mr Ross thought it clear that, if Edinburgh had not been put off limits in consequence, the UGC would have identified the Edinburgh School for closure. While Mr Ross understood Mr Baker's reluctance to countermand the UGC's recommendation, he considered that the wider implications of the Review for the Health Service and Mr Rifkind's intervention marked out the present case as materially different from standard practice in the Government's relation to the UGC. Mr Ross said that Mr Bill Walker MP shared his view.

Both Mr Ross and Mr McAllian said they were glad to have been able to register their real concerns about the need for the outcome of the UGC's review to be seen as thoroughly defensible and above board. They would be giving no publicity to the present meeting.

I am copying this letter to Paul Gray and Geoffrey Podger.

Yours,
Tom

T B JEFFERY
Private Secretary



NB

PRG

6/7

cc TBG

SCOTTISH OFFICE
WHITEHALL, LONDON SW1A 2AU

Tom Jeffery Esq
Private Secretary
Department of Education and Science
Elizabeth House
York Road
LONDON
SE1 7PH

6 July 1988

Dear Tom,

DENTAL SCHOOLS

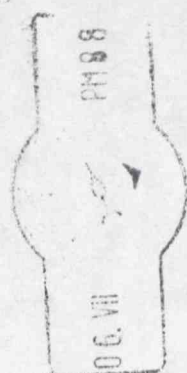
My Secretary of State has seen Paul Gray's letter of 5 July recording the Prime Minister's comments on the UGC Dental Review.

As you know, Mr Rifkind has argued very strongly that the UGC Report is flawed and inadequate in its treatment of both academic and Health Service issues. Neither does it deal satisfactorily with the issues referred to by the Prime Minister of net comparative costs of closures versus shared reductions. It is, therefore, an unsafe basis for a decision by the UGC - or indeed, by Ministers.

So, if, as we gather is now expected, the UGC decide tomorrow to refer the matter to Ministers, Mr Rifkind believes that officials should look very critically at the adequacy of both the evidence and the argumentation the Working Party directed towards the Dundee issue before advising Ministers on the UGC recommendation. Certainly he has seen no convincing rebuttal from UGC sources of the arguments against the Working Party recommendations which have been deployed by the Dundee interests, and they need to be looked at on their merits.

I am copying this letter to Paul Gray.

David Crawley
PRG
DAVID CRAWLEY
Private Secretary



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10 DOWNING STREET

LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

5 July 1988

DENTAL SCHOOLS

The Prime Minister understands that consideration is currently being given to the February report of the UGC Dental Review Working Party which, inter alia, recommended the withdrawal of dental schools funding from Dundee and University College London, and the extension of the dental undergraduate course to a total of five years.

The Prime Minister assumes that consideration has been given to whether it would be more economical to make reductions in the intake of a number of existing dental schools rather than to close complete schools; and that, if closures are thought to be the better approach, the relative costs of different options have been explored. She also wonders whether, rather than extending the undergraduate course length to five years, consideration has been given to the alternative of a four year undergraduate course followed by a one year pre-registration programme.

I am copying this letter to David Crawley (Scottish Office).

Paul Gray

Tom Jeffery, Esq.,
Department of Education and Science.

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Prime Minister

Doya want to intervene
in this issue on the lines
suggested by the Policy Unit.

PRIME MINISTER

29 June 1988

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(1 think points 1 2 & 1/2
(last page) are very worth
making. No 3. could be
misinterpreted
mb

DENTAL SCHOOL CLOSURES - AN ALTERNATIVE STRATEGY

On 7th July, the University Grants Committee (UGC) will finally decide (subject to ratification by Kenneth Baker) whether to close two of the 16 dental schools, and will also examine additional proposals. It is my view that an alternative strategy should be considered to reflect the changing needs of dental care.

Dental Evaluation

Two developments are disputed by no-one:

- The incidence of dental decay is declining. A greater proportion of the population will keep their teeth for life. Yet, for this very reason, the presence of gum disease and tooth wear will get worse.
- There is therefore a need for fewer, better qualified graduates with a broader skill base, particularly in the areas of preventative care and orthodontics.

Background to the UGC review

In February this year a UGC Dental Review Working Party (DRWP) made three main recommendations to the UGC.

- Total UK undergraduate intake should be reduced by 10% focussed on two schools. UGC dental school funding should be withdrawn from Dundee and University College London (UCL).

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- The dental undergraduate course should be extended by two terms to a total of 5 years.
- One year of mandatory vocational training should be introduced immediately, and 2 years as soon as possible. 7 yrs.

Following objections by Malcolm Rifkind, a UGC dental sub-committee was asked to review the proposals, in particular the closure of Dundee, and also to reexamine the rationale for extending the undergraduate teaching programme. The UGC will make a final decision on 7th July.

A critique of the UGC review

Political issues appear to be interfering with the conclusions of what should be a serious dental review.

The decision to close Dundee and rebuild Edinburgh are difficult to reconcile. Edinburgh has been "ring-fenced" against any cut in view of an earlier decision to build a new hospital and dental clinic. The dental clinic will cost about £5.7 million. Yet this cost could more than double if the UGC accept the recommendation that the new clinic should incorporate a new dental school. Dundee, however, is a relatively modern (1967) dental school and clinic while Edinburgh is housed in a 19th century building.

Incidentally, the DRWP gave the lowest performance grading to both Edinburgh and Dundee alongside 4 other dental schools.

A 10% cut in undergraduate intake is inadequate. In 1987, the DHSS estimated that a 10% reduction would still result in an increase in registered dentists from 24,500 in 1985 up to 28,000 in 1995 and over 30,000 by 2005. A 40-50% phased reduction would be more appropriate.

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An Alternative Approach

One way of achieving cuts without closing down an increasing number of dental schools may be to enforce an across-the-board cut weighted towards the larger schools. By way of example, UCL believes it can run a high quality viable dental school with a 50% cut in intake from 50 to 25 students. The DRWP rejected this viewpoint because of their perceived need to maintain an optimal intake level of 50 students per school. Yet an authoritative Nuffield Inquiry in 1980 recommended that wholesale closures would not be appropriate on the basis that most dental schools have too many students for the resources available to them. Another key point is that some resources could be shifted from undergraduate teaching to mandatory vocational training and perhaps to 'chargeable' continuing professional education.

The DRWP proposed that the undergraduate course length should be extended from the current period of 4.33 years up to 5 years. They indicated that the extension would enable dental schools to expand the "preclinical study" period, which would provide undergraduates with a stronger basic scientific background. Yet a number of academics have proposed a shortening of the course to 4 years. After all, as undergraduate intake levels fall, the average quality should rise.

A 4 year undergraduate course followed by a 1 year pre-registration programme may be the solution. This strategy, combined with mandatory vocational training under the supervision of the dental schools would undoubtedly improve the quality of dental care and at the same time utilise some of the resources available after undergraduate cuts. The increased cost of education for the remaining undergraduates would be partially offset by lower NHS costs

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because of the delay in joining the profession. That would cause no hardship. Graduates can earn up to £35,000 after one year and £50,000 within two years.

Conclusion

I have discussed this note with Brian Griffiths and John O'Sullivan. We suggest that you write a short note to Kenneth Baker raising the following points:

- 1 ✓ - How can the closure of Dundee be reconciled to the rebuilding of Edinburgh?
- 2 ✓ - Could the concept of extending the undergraduate course be replaced by a 1 year pre-registration programme?
- 3 - Should not further consideration be given to increasing the cuts above 10% of undergraduate intake?
- 4 ✓ - Could not the cuts be spread among the existing dental schools as University College argues with considerable force?

Ian Whitehead

IAN WHITEHEAD

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