

Confidential Filing

General Policy on Education

EDUCATION

In attached folders [Historic Working Group
 Modern Foreign Languages Working Group
 A Scrutiny of Education Support Grants and the
 Local Education Authority Training Grants Scheme]

Part 1: May 1979

Part 24: March 1990

Referred to	Date	Referred to	Date	Referred to	Date	Referred to	Date
5.3.90							
7.3.90							
9.3.90							
19.3.90							
26.3.90							
28.3.90							
<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; align-items: center;"> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p>PART ENDS</p> </div> <div style="font-size: 4em; font-weight: bold;"> PREM 19/2955 </div> </div>							

PART 24 ends:-

SS/DES to PG 30/3/90

PART 25 begins:-

PG to PM 2/4/90

SG5-21



ELIZABETH HOUSE
YORK ROAD
LONDON SE1 7PH
01-934 9000

ceps
Prime Minister
Contact with the
attached press
notice?

Paul Gray Esq
Private Secretary to the Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
London SW1

Feb 30/3
3 - March 1990

*No - he has told the
press on withdrawal of the
National Curriculum - every
page is linked with the
phrase 'the National
Curriculum' in
every para
not*

Dear Paul

HISTORY

Thank you for your letter of 28 March.

My Secretary of State proposes to publish the report of the History Working Group, on the basis agreed with the Prime Minister, next Tuesday, 3 April.

As you requested, I enclose a copy of a statement that he proposes to include in a Press Notice, to be issued on Tuesday morning.

A copy of this letter goes to Stephen Williams (Welsh Office).

*Yours sincerely
Stephen*

S T CROWNE
Private Secretary

DRAFT STATEMENT BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Peter Walker and I have now considered the final report from the National Curriculum History Working Group. We are most grateful to the Group and its Chairman for the hard work they have undertaken in completing their difficult task, and for the searching and comprehensive report they have produced.

STET. History is an important subject which arouses great passions among those involved. ~~Its place in schools will be substantially enhanced by the National Curriculum, but~~ its content, teaching and testing attracts much debate and controversy. It is vital to the successful inclusion of history within the National Curriculum that expressions of view are based on a thorough assimilation and consideration of the final report itself, *and the issues which it raises.*

We have therefore decided that it would be right to have a period of consultation to allow public reaction to the report and its recommendations for attainment targets and programmes of study, ~~before proceeding to make proposals for the statutory requirements for history in the National Curriculum.~~ To that end we are publishing the report today and I am inviting comment from a wide range of representative bodies. Schools, too, will have the opportunity to comment.

✓ *in the* As testing ~~will be~~ a very important element *of the National Curriculum* ~~in implementing the National Curriculum in history,~~ I am also writing to the Chairman of the Schools Examinations and Assessment Council (SEAC) to seek the Council's advice on whether the Group's proposals would secure the effective assessment of pupils' mastery of historical knowledge.

STET. ✓ After this initial consultation, and in the light of the comments and advice received, I shall make and publish proposals for attainment targets and programmes of study in history for pupils aged 5 to 16 in schools in England. These will be referred to the National Curriculum Council with a request to undertake the

for the

statutory consultations in England required by the Education Reform Act, ~~and to report to me in due course.~~

The Secretary of State for Wales will make and publish proposals applicable to schools in Wales after he has received and considered the final report of the History Committee for Wales, which is due to report in April.

EDUCATION Policy Pt 24





C:\WPDOCS\ECONOMIC\
CROWNE (GCL)

10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

28 March 1990

Dear Stephen,

HISTORY

The Prime Minister was most grateful for your Secretary of State's minute dated 26 March. She is content for him to proceed on the basis he now proposes. She would be grateful to see a draft of whatever public statement your Secretary of State now envisages.

I am copying this letter to Stephen Wall (Foreign and Commonwealth Office), Colin Walters (Home Office), Stephen Williams (Welsh Office), Robert Canniff (Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster's office), Jim Gallagher (Scottish Office), Stephen Leach (Northern Ireland Office), Clive Norris (Department of Employment) and Sonia Phippard (Cabinet Office).

*Yours,
Paul*

Paul Gray

Stephen Crowne, Esq.,
Department of Education and Science.

CONFIDENTIAL

cel.V.



Prime Minister

620
● I think he has really tried to meet us & he's not

This has come in late today and Brian Griffiths has not yet

PRIME MINISTER

straightaway. It seems to me to meet your points fully and means that key parts in the Working Group report can be agreed. Content to agree this approach?

I have reflected further on our discussion of last week about the report of the History Working Group.

Yes not
PRC6
27/3

I would be quite prepared to test public and professional opinion thoroughly before I proceed to the statutory stage of making proposals for attainment targets and programmes of study.

I believe that this can be justified publicly on the grounds that considerable controversy and divided views surround the teaching of history in schools, and that there is therefore a need for all sides to comment before I take the important step of putting proposals to the National Curriculum Council. I therefore intend to publish the report in the week starting 2 April inviting comment from a wide variety of interested bodies. In the light of reactions and my own further examination of the Group's recommendations I shall let you see revised proposals in June.

For the core subjects and technology we left public consultation to the National Curriculum Council as part of the statutory process. By consulting on the report before making proposals, I shall be acting differently in relation to history. We can reasonably justify this extra step in the interests of getting the proposals for history right.

I shall be meeting Michael Saunders-Watson and his Group on 2 April. The line that I shall take with them and in public should, I believe, emphasise the following points:

- the working group has produced a thorough and comprehensive report which offers a great deal towards raising the standards of history teaching in schools. They have done substantially what they were asked to do.

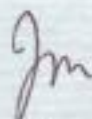
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

- However because of the importance of the subject and the degree of controversy about teaching methods and historical content, it would be right to test public reaction to the report before I committed myself to making statutory proposals.
- In particular, it seems right to seek views on the ^{time} programmes of study which are set out for the first/in the final report. We need to be sure that the balance of the programmes of study, the degree of detailed prescription that is involved, and their coverage are appropriate before embarking on the statutory process.
- I also wish to secure detailed advice from the School Examinations and Assessment Council that the essential factual knowledge included in the programmes of study can be fully reflected in the arrangements for testing. This is an integral part of the Working Group's recommendations and I must be quite certain that it can be realised in practice.

To enable me to take matters forward on the timetable I have described I should be grateful to know soon if you agree to my proposals.

I am copying this minute to Douglas Hurd, David Waddington, Peter Walker, Kenneth Baker, Malcolm Rifkind, Peter Brooke, Michael Howard and to Sir Robin Butler.


JM

26 March 1990

Recd 27/3
Pec.

CONFIDENTIAL

*me
at U*

10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

26 March 1990

NATIONAL CURRICULUM: HISTORY

Thank you for your letter of 21 March concerning the British history content within the national curriculum, which the Prime Minister has seen. She has asked me to let you have the further comments (attached) which the Policy Unit have prepared. The Prime Minister suggests that it might be sensible for the Policy Unit to discuss the position with the relevant officials in your Department.

PAUL GRAY

Stephen Crowne, Esq.,
Department of Education and Science.

CONFIDENTIAL

B

NATIONAL CURRICULUM: HISTORY

below

Stephen Crowne's letter of 21 March about British History content.

The note provided by the DES does not alter things. The basic position is that in the Working Group's proposed curriculum, British History will be struggling to reach 50%. Exactly how satisfactory some of that 50% would be is also open to question.

The DES concludes that, out of 25 History Study Units (HSU) from age 5-16, a minimum of 13½ are British. This includes 'personal and local British history' at KS1 (ages 5-7), and assumes that local history is to be fully equated with British history. The final tally of British History, it is argued, is likely to be somewhat higher because of the school designed units and British History elements in optional units.

KS1 should be omitted from the debate, thus giving a DES figure of 12½ out of 24. Our calculation, on the same basis as DES, is 11½ out of 24. The difference of 1 is explained by DES' assuming that, at KS4, 'Europe since 1948' and 'Indian and Pakistan 1930-1964' each contain ½ British History. That is splitting hairs. What we have is about half on British History as a minimum, assuming local history to be British history.

But this is subject to several important qualifications which, could easily reduce the tally to 'less than' half.

- it assumes that local history, at KS2, fully equates with British History. Historians would certainly argue about this. It is at least questionable how far the kind of local work which might be done at primary level really relates to the broad sweep of general national history. It would be easy for them not to relate. 1 or 2 units are at stake here;
- it assumes, also at KS2, that options on 'Castles and Cathedrals 1066-1500', or 'Culture and Society in Ireland up to the early 20th century' are British History. They probably are, but could easily be taught so that they were not. Opting for either of them would rule out some explicit British History options;
- DES argue that several optional units have 'strong links' with British History. This is questionable in some cases (see detailed comments) and is nowhere prescribed.
- the calculations do not take into account the perceived weakness of the KS4 '20th century Britain' unit. Here the issue is not the tally of units in a vacuum, but whether the unit as proposed satisfactorily covers the ground.

So it is not hard to nudge downwards a figure which is already no better than 'about half'. Some schools will certainly go well above half, but others will not find it hard to fall below.

The crucial point is that they will find it fairly easy to turn aside from the broad sweep of British History in

favour of more marginal topics whether at local or world level.

Some specific comments on DES' note are attached.

Way Forward

A detailed response at this stage is not essential, and may be best avoided. But, if the Prime Minister remains concerned, as we believe she should be, this continued concern does need to be conveyed to DES. The issue will have to be considered in the round when John MacGregor puts forward his further advice on handling the Report.

Brian Griffiths

BRIAN GRIFFITHS

John Mills

JOHN MILLS

HISTORY WORKING GROUP'S FINAL REPORT: BRITISH HISTORY

Comments on DES' note

CORE HSUs

- (para 2) KS1 (aged 5-7) is best left out of this argument. It may involve history in Britain but at this level will hardly be 'British History'.

One is left with 7 out of 11 core units in KS2-4 which are British. That is reasonable. The problem arises on the options and school designed units.

- (para 3) HSU7 'Exploration and Encounters 1450-1550' does not, as proposed, have 'strong links with British History'. Britain gets no mention in either the essential or exemplary information, but 'Aztec' is mentioned 8 times.

HSU33 'The Second World War'. It is reasonable to regard this as 50% British (though teachers could easily get away with less).

OPTIONAL HSUs

- (para 5) 3 out of the 6 KS2 options are quoted as having 'explicit links' with British History. But none need be chosen. While some British History is likely to be covered in the required 2 options at this stage, this could easily be disregarded, or be of little consequence. 'Roman Roads' for instance could be centred on British examples,

but the links with 'British History' would be fairly tenuous.

- (para 6) The first list of KS3 options has two fairly marginal British Subjects - 'Castles and Cathedrals 1066/1500' and 'Culture and Society in Ireland up to the early 20th century'. Opting for either of these means that the more explicit British subjects (Imperialism and the First World War) cannot be covered too.

None of the other KS3 options with 'important elements' of British History need be chosen.

- (para 7) Neither of the 2 examples cited as having 'strong elements' of British History need be chosen. The British angle to 'Europe 1948 to the present day' is fairly tenuous. However the British element in 'India and Pakistan 1930/64' is more reasonable.

SCHOOL DESIGNED UNITS

- (para 8) It is true, in one sense, that local history is British History, but the point should not perhaps be pushed too far. Much local history (especially at primary school level) can be very compartmentalised and far removed from the broad sweep of general history.

PRIME MINISTER

NATIONAL CURRICULUM : HISTORY

Following your talk with John MacGregor earlier this week, he is now considering how best to proceed in handling the Working Group Report on History.

Meantime, he has sent in a note (Flag A) responding to the point you raised about the proportion of the proposed curriculum devoted to British history. This note seeks to argue that the position is not as bad as implied by the earlier Policy Unit calculations.

The Policy Unit have provided a further note on this at Flag B. The essence of their message is that the emphasis on British history ought still to be increased.

You will want to consider whether to let John MacGregor have any further reaction on this particular point now. The Policy Unit suggests that your continuing concerns should be conveyed to John MacGregor straightaway. But my inclination would be simply to note the DES material at this stage and await the further report on handling which John MacGregor will be sending to you.

(i) Content simply to note at this stage?

OR

(ii) Do you want me to minute straight back with the essence of the Policy Unit's points?

Paul G.

PAUL GRAY
23 March 1990

*I think the reply
should go - the Policy
Unit have spent a long
time on it*

mt

A

HISTORY WORKING GROUPS' FINAL REPORT: BRITISH HISTORY

1. The Group recommends that 25 history study units should be studied during the four key stages. Of these 12 are core and have to be taught to all pupils; 8 are options to be selected from a list of units designed by the Group; and the remaining 5 are for design by schools themselves.

Core History Study Units

2. Of the 12 units, 8 are specifically about the history of Britain:

Key Stage 1 (single core history study unit)

HSU1: based on pupils' own personal histories and that of their localities and the adults around them

Key Stage 2 (3 British core history study units out of 5)

HSU2 Invaders and settlers: the Romans, Anglo-Saxons and Vikings in Britain;

HSU3 Life in Tudor and Stuart times;

A choice of either HSU4 Victorian Britain
or HSU5 Life in Britain since 1930

Key Stage 3 (3 British core history study units out of 4)

HSU14 Medieval realms: c1066 to c1500

HSU15 The making of the United Kingdom: c1500 to c1750

HSU16 Expansion, trade and industry: Britain c1750 to c1900

Key Stage 4 (1 British core history study unit out of 2)

HSU32 Britain in the twentieth century

At each key stage therefore a minimum of 50% British history has to be taught to all pupils in the core part of the course. (

3. Of the remaining 4 core units 2 overlap and have strong links with British history:

HSU7 Exploration and encounters: c1450 to c1550 deals with Spanish and Portuguese voyages of exploration. Complement study of British navigators and explorers and links with Britain's growth as a colonial and imperial power

HSU33 The era of the Second World War: 1933 to 1948 links together British, European and World history. Looking at the "essential historical information" which is to be mastered, it is reasonable to regard this core history study unit as 50% British history.

Optional History Study Units

4. There is also a substantial amount of British history in the optional units:

Key Stage 2

Schools can choose 2 from 6 units each of which is certain to contain elements of British history.

5. 3 of the optional units are explicitly linked to and put in the context of British history by their general definition and by the stated "essential historical information":

HSU10 Houses and places of worship through history

HSU12 Land transport through history

HSU13 Domestic life, families and childhood in Roman and Victorian times.

All 6 optional units are designed to reflect current practice in schools, where the resources available eg. books are predominantly centred on British history.

Key Stage 3

6. Schools choose 4 units, each one from a list of options. The first list is entirely British history. The other three lists each contain units with important elements of British history.

Key Stage 4

7. Schools choose 2 units, one from each of two lists. None are specifically British history but some include strong elements of it, for example

HSU34 East and West: Europe 1948 to the present day

HSU37 India and Pakistan 1930 to 1964

School Designed History Study Units

8. At Key Stage 2 at least 1 of 3 school designed units must be local and therefore British history. Another can be local history. There is also a strong steer towards making the third school unit the 1 British unit not already taken up in the core (see paragraph 2 above). It is likely that most schools will in practice choose to do at least 2 British units out of the 3. At Key Stage 3 there is 1 school designed unit which must be British social history. At Key Stage 4 there is also only 1 school unit which must be British history.

Summary

9. Key Stage 1: all personal and local British history

Key Stage 2: out of the 10 units 4 are entirely British while the content of the remaining 6 are in practice likely to include the equivalent of 3 more units of British history and at a minimum the equivalent of 1 more British unit.

Key Stage 3: of 9 units, 5 must be British while some of the others are very likely to include substantial elements of British history.

Key Stage 4: of 5 units, 2 must be British. One must be the era of the Second World War - estimated to be 50% British history - while one or both of the others may contain substantial elements of British history.



EDUCATION
Gen Policy
Pt 24

CONFIDENTIAL

cdh

JL11/14



ELIZABETH HOUSE
YORK ROAD
LONDON SE1 7PH
01-934 9000

Paul Gray Esq
Private Secretary
No 10 Downing Street
LONDON SW1

21 March 1990

Dear Paul

NATIONAL CURRICULUM : HISTORY

I understand that the Prime Minister expressed further concern to Mr MacGregor, when they met Monday, *to spend* about the amount of British History that would be required by the recommendations in the History Working Group report.

My Secretary of State was troubled by this, because he had raised the matter with the Working Group following the interim report, and was content with the response in the final report.

I attach a note describing in detail how the recommendations in the report would effectively require all pupils at all the key stages to spend at least half of their time studying British History; and over the whole curriculum most will study a significantly higher proportion.

An important point is that British History will be delivered not only through the History Study Units including Britain in the title, but in many others - for example "The Era of the Second World War: 1933-48".

Yours sincerely

STEPHEN CROWNE
Private Secretary

CONFIDENTIAL

EDM 5 : RELIGIOUS CONSCIENCE AND THE NATIONAL CURRICULUMSpeaking note

Teaching children about information technology and its applications is a vital part of preparing them for adult life. It should be a requirement, not an option, under the National Curriculum

Background note

1. The Exclusive Brethren have religious objections to various elements of the secular curriculum. These include, in particular, the use of information technology. The Brethren mostly send their children to maintained schools, many of which have until now allowed them to be withdrawn from lessons which involved IT.
2. As the National Curriculum comes into effect, this will no longer be possible. The new statutory requirements require schools to teach all topics covered by the National Curriculum, including IT, without exception. The Brethren have therefore mounted a well orchestrated campaign for a parental right of withdrawal from aspects of the National Curriculum to which they object on grounds of conscience.
3. The Education Reform Act maintains the right of parents to withdraw their children from religious education and collective worship. It does not, however, establish any right of withdrawal from the National Curriculum. The Education Secretary could use his powers to create a right of withdrawal on conscience grounds but he has decided against it for two main reasons
 - i) that it is essential to ensure that all pupils in state schools understand how IT and its applications work because of the fundamental and increasingly important role IT plays in all aspects of modern life
 - ii) allowing the Brethren a right of withdrawal on conscience grounds would set a precedent. It would make it impossible to resist calls by other religious groups for exemption from other aspects of the National Curriculum. This would undermine the fundamental objective of ensuring that all pupils are fully prepared for adult life and work.
4. Some correspondents have invoked Article 2 of the First Protocol to the European Convention of Human Rights. Our legal advice is that this gives parents the right to have their children taught by whatever means of instruction are available at the time. The State does not, however, have to provide schools offering teaching in accordance with particular religious convictions.
5. Parents are not required to send their children to maintained schools. If they have religious or philosophical objections to any aspect of the National Curriculum they can choose to send their children to independent schools, or to educate them otherwise (eg at home), where the National Curriculum requirements do not apply.



file

ed

bcc BG

10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

21 March 1990

TEACHING OF SCIENCE AND HISTORY

The Prime Minister has asked me to draw to your Secretary of State's attention the enclosed letter from Mr. F.J. Marsden on science at Tonbridge School and the attachments. She thinks that these papers reinforce the points that came up in the recent discussion about history.

Paul Gray

Stephen Crowne, Esq.,
Department of Education and Science.

CONFIDENTIAL AND PERSONAL

MEM

PRIME MINISTER

Pine Minute 2

(i) Do you want me to send him to John McGregor's office in your name?
Yes

20 March 1990

(ii) or Peter Ryan to show it to him more informally?

SCIENCE AND GCSE

Rec 6
20/3

I have just received the enclosed letter and note from the Head of Science at Tonbridge School. It is a protest against a proposal from SEAC to abandon teaching science in separate subjects (chemistry, physics and biology) and replace it by Integrated Science.

The petition i It is supported by some very good people and there are doubtless many more heads of science in state schools around the country who would be sympathetic to the views expressed.

Regrettably it is yet another example of the way the HMI/NCC/SEAC are attacking traditional standards in the name of progress.

Recommendation

I believe it would be useful if you were able to bring it to John McGregor's attention - it would reinforce the points you made about the History proposals.

✓
ms

Brian Griffiths

BRIAN GRIFFITHS

CONFIDENTIAL



*Mr [unclear]
CEU*

10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

SUBJECT CC MASTER

19 March 1990

NATIONAL CURRICULUM: HISTORY WORKING GROUP FINAL REPORT

The Prime Minister discussed with your Secretary of State this afternoon his minute of 5 March and the enclosed final report by the History Working Group.

The Prime Minister said that she was most concerned about the content of the Report. It suffered from three basic weaknesses. First, it set out much too detailed a prescription for the teaching of history, which would place teachers in an unacceptable straitjacket. Although for the core subjects in the national curriculum a fairly detailed approach might be needed, for non-core subjects like history a much less prescriptive approach was appropriate. Second, the range of subjects of study set out in the Report would not provide pupils with any feeling for the broad sweep of history, and seemed likely to give them a far better assessment of overseas history than of British history. Third, and most important, she was distressed that there had been a drift away from an emphasis on a firm base of knowledge and in favour of broad concepts. It was crucial that the teaching of history involved a firm grasp of historical fact, and that this was reflected in the arrangements for testing.

Your Secretary of State said that there must be a return to greater rigour in the teaching of history; he was firmly opposed to the empathy approach. But he considered that this was the broad approach that ~~it~~ had ^{been} set out by the Working Group, and it should be recognised that there would be many who would criticise the Report as having moved too far in the direction of greater rigour. A firm base of historical fact was included in the programmes of study recommended in the Report, and it was questionable whether it was necessary in addition to place heavy emphasis on historical fact in the attainment tests.

Continuing, your Secretary of State said that, under the terms of the Education Act, he was now obliged to take action on the Working Group Report. As a minimum he would need to go to consultation and to put to the National Curriculum Council either the approach set out in the Report or a specified alternative.

CONFIDENTIAL

Following discussion, the Prime Minister said that she did not consider it was appropriate to seek to impose the approach in the Report. She recognised that your Secretary of State needed to put the Report out to consultation, but he should consider carefully the minimum action he was required to take at this stage. The best approach might be to go to consultation without issuing any guidance. The Report would subsequently be available as a possible source of guidance to teachers, but not as the sole prescription. Your Secretary of State said he would consider how best to handle the Report in the light of the Prime Minister's comments and of the need to ensure that sufficient rigour was brought to bear on the teaching of history.

I am copying this letter to Stephen Williams (Welsh Office), Jim Gallagher (Scottish Office), Stephen Leach (Northern Ireland Office), Stephen Wall (Foreign and Commonwealth Office), Colin Walters (Home Office), Clive Norris (Department of Employment), Robert Canniff (Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster's Office) and Sonia Phippard (Cabinet Office).

PAUL GRAY

Stephen Crowne, Esq.,
Department of Education and Science.

History curriculum 'should emphasise need to learn facts'

A GROUP of eminent historians is pressing the Government to require schools to test children on their factual knowledge as part of the national curriculum in history.

The History Curriculum Association was launched yesterday with the aim of making the need to learn facts a central part of teaching the subject and challenging a trend in schools to emphasise the skills of collecting and evaluating evidence.

It comes as the Government is about to publish the report from the working group set up to devise the content of school history. The association fears that the report does not advocate that children should be tested on historical facts.

John MacGregor, the Secretary of State for Education, asked the group last year to consider including an attainment target on historical knowledge, but it is widely believed that the working group has not complied with this request.

The prime movers in the association are known for their misgivings about "new history". They include Chris McGovern and Dr Tony Freeman, two Sussex teachers who publicly criticised GCSE history and later lost their jobs

By Geraldine Hackett

teaching the subject, and Professor Robert Skidelsky, of the University of Warwick, who has been scathing about "exotic" syllabuses such as the history of medicine.

Historians on the advisory council include three influential Conservative peers: Lord Beloff; Lord Blake, the author of histories of the Conservative Party; and Lord Thomas of Swynnerton, who has acted as an adviser to the Government.

According to Mr McGovern, who is retraining to teach in primary schools, the group believes that there is a crisis in the teaching of history. He says the model devised for tests in the national curriculum — attainment targets that are graded from 1 to 10 — is not suitable for history.

"We think history is defined by its content — a search for knowledge of the past — and the model does not allow for that.

"There is a very real danger that a generation of teachers and children will come to regard historical knowledge as being of secondary importance. If we emphasise skills over knowledge we are greatly reducing the importance of the na-

tional memory, what makes Britain British." The association's fears are not shared by the Historical Association, the leading organisation representing history teachers.

Martin Roberts, chairman of its education committee, said: "This is a return to old battles.

"The crucial thing is to link knowledge and understanding. The danger in having a knowledge attainment target is that children will find themselves learning dates without understanding the significance of those dates.

"Rote learning of lists of prime ministers, kings and queens or trade union leaders is of no use unless children understand the influences that explain why they acted in particular ways."

Mr MacGregor is expected to publish the final report from the history group within the next 10 days. A member of the group said yesterday that he believed the report steered a course that went some way towards reconciling the differences between those who emphasised skills and those who emphasised content.

"We have set an attainment target which can only be achieved by children who have acquired the factual knowledge," he said.

cc Back-up

PRIME MINISTER

16 March 1990

NATIONAL CURRICULUM: HISTORY

You are seeing John MacGregor on Monday.

We attach a note which sets out our major concerns about the Working Group's Final Report. It also sets out a suggested way forward, which involves:

- ① (i) replacing Attainment Target 1 'Understanding History in its Setting' by 'Knowledge of the Past';
- (ii) modify the TGAT structure so that the Attainment Target should not be designed to test progress through levels, but simply knowledge of the period studied;
- ② (iii) certain programmes of study need to be modified (but this has limits, otherwise we will be accused of government interference in setting the curriculum);
- ③ (iv) the programmes of study should not be statutory but advisory, and individual schools free to choose different packages (some reflecting a more traditional approach but within guidelines set down (eg minimum of 60% British history)).
- ④

We believe this is a realistic approach. It will also attract much support from mainstream professional historians. It will meet with enormous hostility from the proponents of the 'New History', the HMI etc. If it succeeds, it will represent a major freeing up of the national curriculum.

Since our meeting we have also learnt that a group of eminent professional historians have launched the Historical Curriculum

Association to tackle exactly the same concerns which you have expressed. This is led by Professor Robert Skidelsky of Warwick University (biographer of Keynes) and includes for example Robert Blake. This is excellent news and will strengthen your hand considerably. We have discussed all this at length with Skidelsky, who is 100% behind us.

We have also attached some key material prepared by Skidelsky for this new Association. (Appendices A & B). This is well worth reading, because it makes your case with professional eloquence. You should in particular note what is said about the research on primary school children in London. This found that 80% of 11 year olds were able to score Grade F in GCSE (designed for 16 year olds) on "skills-based" exams, when they had not been taught the relevant content. This is frankly staggering.

I gather from Robert Skidelsky that he put in a lengthy critical comment on the Working Group's Interim Report. This, by its very cogency, caused consternation among the 'New History' supporters on the Working Group. The result was a clearly orchestrated stream of comments in favour of the Interim Report which have enabled the Group to claim, in their Final Report, that the overwhelming majority of comments rejected a content-led approach to attainment targets. This shows the measure of those with whom we are dealing.

Brian Griffiths

BRIAN GRIFFITHS

JOHN MILLS

HISTORY WORKING GROUP: FINAL REPORT

There are four major areas of concern:

1. The omission of basic historical facts from the attainment targets

This omission is of critical importance. It means that pupils will not be tested rigorously on their knowledge of what happened in the past, and it will entrench skills-led rather than knowledge-led assessment in GCSE History.

This will simply reinforce the 'New History' approach - viz that history is about skills, method and interpretation rather than primarily an account of what happened in the past. It will negate the fundamental point that history is a knowledge-based subject, and that knowledge of facts is the spine on which everything else is constructed. It will cause despair among many eminent professional historians and good teachers of history, and frustration among good pupils.

This aspect of the Report is intellectually confused in that it identifies 'facts' with 'places, names and dates' and consequently rejects the testing of facts on the grounds that measuring dates etc is 'meaningless'. And so it is. But facts are assertions of what happened. Knowing them is already to understand certain contexts and to know certain contents. Knowledge correctly interpreted includes knowledge of what happened, of chronology and sequences, and knowledge of causes or possible causes. It is all this which really matters in learning history.

Recommendation

The acquisition of basic historical information must be included in the attainment targets. Attainment target 1 ('Understanding

history in its setting') is frankly meaningless and should be replaced by something like 'Knowledge of the past', related specifically to the programme of study leading up to the relevant assessment test.

This would be accommodated by modifying the TGAT assessment system for history in the National Curriculum.

2. TGAT is too rigid a framework for history

The TGAT framework was established to test pupils' progress in mastering the National Curriculum. The danger we face is that instead of TGAT being the servant of the National Curriculum it has become its master. A major reason given by the Working Party for not having one of the attainment targets being used to test historical knowledge is that it would not fit the TGAT system of testing for progress through 10 different levels. This is an absurd position.

Recommendation

The TGAT framework must be changed for history so as to allow children to be tested on their knowledge of historical facts.

3. The balance between political/economic and social/cultural history is wrong

50% of each History Study Unit is devoted to social, religious, cultural and aesthetic subjects. This is excessive, especially given how little time there is in the curriculum for history at all. A good deal of the 'essential information' (which must be taught) on social and cultural themes is, on any realistic criteria, less important than major political and economic material. For example, in the 2nd World War core unit for GCSE, essential material includes 'painting, posters'

... War films, and ... Entertainment'. This is a useful adjunct to studying the war, but a diversion from the main issues. But these items would require 10%+ of the time spent on the whole unit.

Recommendations

While social/cultural history is important, it should account for 30% of teaching time at most, enabling greater time to be spent on political/economic subjects. This is especially important at Key Stage 4 (GCSE).

4. The overall emphasis on British History remains barely sufficient: at Key Stage 4 (GCSE) it is insufficient

Between the ages of 7-16, the most which can be spent on British History is $\frac{1}{3}$ of available time for history - 9 or 10 terms out of 29. (See Appendix D). From about age 13, the only core material on Britain would be

- (a) a one-term gallop through the period 1750-1900 (with a social and economic emphasis); and
- (b) a term spent on 3 short periods of the 20th century (27 years in all): only for 1906-1914 would there be a political emphasis).

This compares unfavourably with, for example, GCSE options on either Russia or the USA in the 20th century, both of which would provide the kind of broad sweep lacking for Britain.

This will not achieve the Working Group's stated purpose of giving pupils at Key Stage 4 "an insight into the recent history of Britain". GCSE pupils in the late 1990s would, rather, all too likely have a disjointed view of Britain in this century

with (probably) most effort expended on social and cultural topics in the 1960s.

Recommendation

Britain in the 20th century is a valuable subject for study at GCSE level, but the Programme of Study needs to be more rigorously constructed so that pupils can learn about, and be assessed on, all major events and issues this century.

5. The study of history has to be selective, but the proposed programmes of study, especially at Key Stages 3 and 4, are far too rigid

Some of the proposed Study Units are excellent; others less so. But given all the points raised above, there is a danger that making all these, but only these, the statutory basis for history teaching will lead to a structure both too rigid and too limited. Good teachers and good pupils alike will be frustrated. There is a real likelihood of creating a straitjacket which entrenches detailed but relatively marginal subjects which have to be studied, crowding out others which parents, as well as pupils, might well regard as more worthwhile. This will just bring the national curriculum into disrepute.

Examples:

The key course in GCSE on Britain is 20th century British History. That is fine, but it will not be possible to study, for example,

- the First World War
 - Britain in the 20s, the late 40s or 50s
 - anything in British History beyond 1969 (NB the first exam would not be set until 1996)
-

On the other hand, every pupil will have to study, for example

- either - family life in Eastern and Western Europe;
- or - ethnic diversity in the Soviet Union;
- or - the export of American culture;

- and, either - education in India and Pakistan 1930-1964;
- or - African cultural identity, in traditional and new forms;
- or - Japanese economy under the Shoguns;
- or - Chinese revolutionary art and propaganda

None of these subjects should be denigrated, but in the limited time available for history in the whole curriculum, parents may be entitled to expect rather more attention to be paid to crucial events that have shaped our own recent history, and whose consequences still confront Britain today. All history may be 'relevant', but in the real world of a finite school day rigorous selection cannot be avoided. What is proposed for GCSE will entrench subjects which are frankly marginal to British experience, at the expense of many crucial ones which are central.

One other telling example from Key Stage 3: here there will be an obligatory option on a 'non-Western culture from its own perspective'. This is not matched by anything comparable on Europe. For example, one option is Islamic civilisation up to the 16th century. But pupils will not be able to look at the broad sweep of medieval Europe.

Recommendations

A rigid curriculum which entrenches marginal subjects will frustrate good teachers and good pupils and bring the National

Curriculum into disrepute. There is a real danger of this from what is being proposed.

- (a) Ways must be found to ensure not only that the Programmes of Study can be reviewed and revised but also that schools are not prevented from developing more of their own (subject to strict criteria on scope and content).

This raises the question whether the Programmes of Study should be given statutory force, or remain advisory.

- (b) Programme of study should remain advisory. Different curriculum groups should be allowed to develop their own contents, within general guidelines, allowing schools to choose.

Such guidelines would, for example, specify simply that British History had to be 50% or 60% of contents, and that social/cultural topics no more than 30%. It is intrinsically more attractive, in a subject offering so much choice on history, to offer produce competition rather than only one package for all.

The Way Forward

Following from the above, the proposals put to the NCC by the Secretary of State should not be the Working Group's Report in its entirety, but modified as follows:

1. Attainment Target 1 to be replaced by 'Knowledge of the Past'.
2. TGAT to be modified to make this possible. This should be in terms that one of the Attainment Targets should not be designed to test progress through levels, but simply knowledge of the period studied.

3. The Programme of Study should not be statutory, but have advisory status only. There should be a choice of packages, based on broadly-specified criteria eg 50-60% of content to be British History, not more than 30% to be social/cultural/religious/aesthetic. Tests of knowledge would be constructed accordingly. This would fit in with general statements already now being made that there must be more flexibility in non-core subjects.

APPENDIX A:

A

THE HISTORY CURRICULUM ASSOCIATION

The History Curriculum Association (HCA) has been formed in order to provide professional historians who share the aims and principles below to influence the development of history as a school subject. The HCA has already been given the statutory right to be consulted about the Final Report of the History Working Group.

The AIM of the HCA is to protect the integrity of history as a subject in relation to its teaching and assessment in schools.

Its PRINCIPLES are as follows:

1. History is an account of what happened in the past.
2. Knowledge of what happened in the past is, in principle, attainable and is, in practice, often attained. Any characterisation of history as "socially constructed" is, therefore, inadequate if this is held to imply the impossibility of making true statements about the past.
3. The teaching of knowledge is central to school history and should not be crowded out by an undue emphasis on historical concepts, skills, understandings, interpretations, biases, etc.
4. The testing of knowledge should play a central part in all assessment schemes under the National Curriculum, though assessment should also test for skills in investigation, analysis and interpretation, communication, and evidence of originality. Assessment in history should not test for qualities *in isolation*.
5. The study of history prepares pupils for life in the society in which they will live. The view, therefore, that the content of school history should be chosen entirely or largely for its capacity to illustrate historical method is seriously inadequate.
6. Political history remains central to the subject matter of history, although the study of history should give due weight to social, economic, and cultural history.
7. Sufficient time should be allocated in schools to ensure that the syllabus prescribed by the Secretary of State can be adequately covered. Pupils should not be considered as having reached a high standard in history unless they have covered the whole syllabus.

8. The autonomy of history as a discipline must be maintained, even if it is part of an integrated study programme. This means having specialists, trained in the subject, to teach history as a discrete subject in secondary schools. Only thus can both the particular nature of history as a discipline and a substantial body of historical knowledge and understanding be communicated to the next generation.

APPENDIX B

B

UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK
DEPARTMENT OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES
Professor Robert Skidelsky **Coventry CV4 7AL**
(0203-523523 ext 2486)

6 March, 1990.

We are writing to invite you to support the History Curriculum Association which is being set up to give historians a chance to influence the shape of school history under the National Curriculum. The crucial decisions will be taken over the next few months, following the Final Report of the National Curriculum History Working Group, due to be published in the middle of March. The Association is designed to give an opportunity for historians to express their concern about developments in school history which have been largely set in train by school teachers and by educationalists. The government has given the Association the right to be consulted on the Final Report. The support of the country's professional historians will be crucial to the credibility of any submission it makes.

The future of school history is at stake. The "nationalisation" of the school curriculum, which started with the introduction of GCSE in 1986, has culminated in a centrally-prescribed National Curriculum for primary and secondary school pupils. As far as history is concerned, this centralising process coincided with the triumph of the "new history", based on the Schools Council History Project, and the acceptance of an assessment scheme, covering all subjects, based on "criterion-referencing". These developments have already had major, and in some ways undesirable, effects on the way school history is being taught and examined - indeed on the very nature of history as a school subject - and will have even bigger effects in the future. With some exceptions, university and professional historians have taken little or no part in the debate. Whether the changes in school history are considered good or bad, and we certainly support some of them, they should not be allowed to be set in concrete without professional historians considering the matter and having their say.

The proposed changes have already spawned much controversy and a huge literature, as all educational topics tend to. No short, accurate summary of the salient issues is readily available. So some of the statements made in this letter and the enclosures must be taken on trust.

Some of us got involved in the debate two years ago, out of a sense of discomfort with some aspects of the "new history" prescribed for GCSE; especially its hostility to British history and to knowledge. (The hostility to knowledge came partly from a particular view of epistemology; partly from the supposed association of knowledge with the mindless memorising of dates and the rote-learning of facts.) The notion that school history should impart a sense of the central sequences and turning points in the development of societies, and especially of our own society, disappeared. Examining Groups started to offer "exotic" syllabuses, like the History of Medicine or Energy. The emphasis ceased to be on knowledge. Instead it was recommended that pupils be taught the "skills", "concepts", and "understandings" of historians, in a simulation of what historical method is supposed to be. There was much that was admirable in these new approaches, not least the increased use of primary sources. But there was also much that was destructive of history as a subject and as a discipline.

A small group, which included five Fellows of the British Academy, was formed last year to fight for balance and high standards in GCSE history. Its proposals are enclosed. The call for the study of British history "over a large span of time" was in fact accepted by the Interim Report of the National Curriculum History Working Group. This shows the effect which historians can have when they choose to speak out.

Unfortunately, as the enclosed paper "History in the National Curriculum" points out, the History Working Group was compelled to work within an assessment framework which, in effect, prevents the testing of knowledge as such. Instead, excessive emphasis is placed on the testing of "skills" and the measurement of "attainment targets" by methods which are seriously flawed and, in examination terms, unsound. The result will be a school history curriculum which is not knowledge-based but test-driven. The chief flaw in this assessment system is the slicing of the so-called "skills", salami-like, into separate pieces in order to make testing more "objective" and "more precisely focussed".

3

What this ignores is that in history knowledge and skills are not separate and equal but must both be demonstrated and tested together. It used to be recognised, in the marking of essays and essay-type examination questions, that the whole may reveal more than the sum of its parts. The "holistic" nature of history as a subject needs to be re-asserted and re-established in any examination or assessment scheme.

The main aim of the History Curriculum Association will be to draw attention to the fact that history is a knowledge-based subject and to bring pressure to bear on the Secretary of State to make the acquisition and assessment of historical knowledge an essential part of history as a school subject.

We strongly urge you to read the enclosed papers, and if you share the aims and principles set forth, to get in touch with Robert Skidelsky by 20 March at the latest with an indication of your support. The launch of the Association, with an impressive body of supporters, should coincide with the publication of the Final Report. This will leave time to prepare a submission, and circulate it for comment by supporters, during the three-month period allowed for consultation. It goes without saying that the more leading historians there are who openly support our aims and principles, the more likely we are to secure their adoption.

Yours sincerely,

(signed)
Lord Blake, FBA,
Professor Ralph Davis, FBA,
Professor George Holmes, FBA,
Professor Jack Scarisbrick,
Professor Robert Skidelsky

C

APPENDIX C

BBC: HELP YOURSELF HISTORY

I enclose a copy of the BBC book and a critique by Chris McGovern including a letter sent by Kenneth Baker to John MacGregor.

What is very important to note is that the Preface is written by Chris Culpin who was co-opted on to the History Working Party!

'G.C. Help yourself G.C.S.E. History.'

Produced by Elizabeth Cleaver, Senior History Producer, B.B.C. School Radi

This commentary written by Mr. C.J.M.McGovern. Former Head of History Lewes Priory Comprehensive School, East Sussex.

Should the B.B.C. teach our children that a main disadvantage of 'The Daily Telegraph' is that it has 'an official political bias' because it 'supports the Conservatives'? This happens to be one of the less controversial dimensions of 'Help Yourself G.C.S.E. History', ^{recently} launched B.B.C. 'Interactive Pack' of booklet and audio tape. Children are assured of 'an exciting new package to help you through G.C.S.E...whatever syllabus you are taking...with self-assessment, real exam questions and guidance from a chief examiner.'

The I.R.A. bombing of the Grand Hotel in Brighton is chosen as the starting point. Elizabeth Cleaver, Senior History Producer, B.B.C. Radio has clearly done her homework on what currently constitutes 'best practice' for history teaching. Historical content exists only to act as a vehicle for the transmission of what are called 'skills'. It is not deemed as being important in its own right. The Brighton bombing is considered first rate material for developing skills in 'Examining Evidence'. At no stage, however, are pupils invited to consider the human suffering caused by terrorism, or the morality of terrorism. Instead children are presented with a selection of evidence, including Mrs. Thatcher, describing what happened, but just two pieces of evidence, both written, to explain why it happened. Firstly an unnamed source states that 'the I.R.A. was fighting its battle for a socialist united Ireland'. Secondly the I.R.A. claim of responsibility is published in full - 'Tory Warmongers', 'Thatcher will now realise that Britain could n't occupy our country, torture our prisoners, shoot our people ...etc.' And that is all. Not a terrorist viewpoint to balance several other viewpoints, but just the terrorist viewpoint. The oxygen of publicity is all in one direction, under the guise of history, and with a B.B.C. - Chief Examiner seal of approval.

Matters scarcely improve when one turns to an exercise on 'The Sinking of the Belgrano'. The event is chosen to teach 'empathy'. The booklet presents just one piece of evidence - the front page of 'The Sun' newspaper, headlined, 'GOTCHA Our lads sink gunboat and hole cruiser.' Pupils are asked what this suggests about the motives for the sinking of the Belgrano? Presented out of context 'The Sun' headline reinforces the earlier I.R.A. statement about 'Tory Warmongers'. Little in terms of balance or historical understanding is salvaged by the audio tape which accompanies the booklet. It provides an extract from a B.B.C. 'Nationwide' programme. During the programme the Prime Minister faced very critical questioning from a lady called Diana Gould. We are not told anything about the questioner. We are not told that a third voice on the recording belongs to a skilled B.B.C. presenter. The presenter encourages Mrs. Gould to suggest that the P.M.'s motive was 'a desire for action, a desire for war'. This may be fair enough as part of a studio phone-in programme, but should it be carefully extracted, along with 'The Sun' front page, to provide children with their only evidence about the Falklands War?

One is tempted to ask whether school children should be taught history at all, if they are to be fed this particular diet. Elsewhere in the pack the sacrifices on the Somme in 1916 are presented simply as an exercise for determining authenticity of sources. Stalin is studied to satisfy the requirements of what is called a 'bias scale', with Khrushchev's milder criticism of the greatest mass murderer in history being dismissed simply as an illustration of 'propaganda'. When one comes to 'The Rise of Nazism' one is confronted by an extraordinary piece of deception. Drawings of three named Germans are presented, with a five-line 'summary of each character'. Drawings rather than photographs, in a booklet sprinkled with photographs, including a particularly distressing one of black demonstrators killed in South Africa. It is not explained why photographs of the three Germans are not printed. It is not explained that these people never existed. 'How would each of these characters feel about the democratic Weimar Republic and about the Nazis? Which would they support?' Exam success, who associate the young, skin-head thug, wearing swastikas, with support for the Nazis. And which character might be the anti-Nazi? Perhaps the young lady depicted as a Renaissance madonna, who just

happens to have a hammer and sickle boldly embroidered on her dress, and who as 'to support her widowed mother' following the death of her elder brother in the First World War. It just happens that she 'was teaching history in a secondary school in Berlin', and 'would like to see Germany ruled by the people...' Into what murky waters will such historical stereotyping lead our teenagers?

A good deal of the interactive pack is given over to the history of medicine. This tonic lends itself better than most to a preconceived idea about G.C.S.E. concepts such as 'causes and effects', 'continuity and change'. Unfortunately the history of medicine does not provide a valid model for judging the rest of history. It is pointed out, for example, that there have been periods of 'regression' in medical history.

'Regression' is defined as, 'Going backwards or getting worse; a decline in standards'. But is this a definition, a rule, which can be applied to the whole of history? Is not the restoration of democracy in eastern Europe a regression, a retreat from Marxist progress, towards the freedom of the past? And what are we to make of people like those who opposed further progress under President Ceausescu? The booklet tells us that, 'Not everybody is willing to accept new ideas - because they are prejudiced, or conservative or just want to protect a selfish interest they have in an old idea or method.'

Aside from this flawed model for the evaluation of history the B.B.C. booklet is not without errors of basic historical fact e.g. it mistakenly claims that the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act stated that 'no help was to be given outside the workhouse.' And as with much G.C.S.E. history it can never quite forgive Britain for its colonial past - 'By 1900 the European Powers (especially Britain) controlled most of the known world for their own economic benefit.' And candidates who wish to score top marks on reasons why people in Britain fought for King and country in 1914 are urged to consider the fact that 'peace movements were not as common as today' and that 'they probably trusted their social betters too much...'

The perpetrators of the worst excesses of this so-called 'new history' are now forging ahead regardless of criticism. The views of eminent historians have been pushed aside. 'A' Level, for all its many imperfections, provides a last bastion of intellectual honesty for this subject. It too will shortly crumble. The educationalists who brought us 'new history' for G.C.S.E. now bring us E.T.H.O.S. (Enquiry into Teaching History to over Sixteens). It has received provisional approval from the School Examination and Assessment Council for its proposals to reform 'A' Level history. Ethos project officer, Sean Lang, claimed recently in 'The Times Educational Supplement' (15.12.89.) that, 'History at advanced level does have a future, and we are it.' Knowledge of story reminds me that others have claimed that 'The future belongs to us'.

28.12.89.



CONSERVATIVE

15th March, 1990

In Mr McGovern

Many thanks for your letter concerning the BBC's GCSE History book and tape.

I very much share your views and I have written to John MacGregor suggesting that the Schools' Examination and Assessment Council should be made aware of the implications of the publication.

I shall, of course, write to you again as soon as I hear from him.

Yours truly
Kenneth Baker

C.J.M. McGovern, Esq.,
Windover,
Punnetts Town,
HEATHFIELD,
East Sussex,
TN21 9DS

THE RIGHT HON. KENNETH BAKER MP
CHAIRMAN OF THE PARTY



CONSERVATIVE

15th March, 1990

Ken Baker

Mr. C.M. McGovern, former Head of History at Lewes Primary Comprehensive School has sent me the enclosed commentary on the 'BBC Help Yourself GCSE History' booklet and tape.

I must say having studied the booklet that I have considerable sympathy with the views Mr. McGovern expresses. I wonder whether it would be possible for you to have this investigated and perhaps make the Schools' Examination and Assessment Council aware of the implications of this publication.

I have written to Mr. McGovern saying that I have contacted you.

Ken Baker

The Rt. Hon. John MacGregor, M.P.,
Department of the Education and Science,
Elizabeth House,
York Road,
LONDON,
SE1 7PH

Encs.

**THE RIGHT HON. KENNETH BAKER MP
CHAIRMAN OF THE PARTY**

D

APPENDIX D

BRITISH HISTORY: CONTENT IN KEY STAGES 2-4 (AGED 7-16)

The Secretary of State's proposed recommendation is that the core units of British History should be taught in chronological order, with not more than one unit being taught in any one school year.

Thus a likely pattern for the teaching of British History from aged 7 to GCSE would be as follows:

- Age 7: 1 term on Romans, Anglo-Saxons and Vikings
- 8: 1 term on Life in Tudor and Stuart times
- 9: Victorian Britain or Life in Britain since 1930s

- 11: 1 term on Medieval Realms 1066-1500
- 12: 1 term on Making of the UK 1500-1750
- 13: 1 term on Britain 1750-1900
- 14: 1 term on Britain in the 20th century

Plus 1 or 2 options at ages 11-14 (one on social history: examples being Sport and Society, Crime and Punishment, Roads).

Plus 1 option at aged 14-16 (examples: Education, Women in Society, Public Health, Immigration, Parliament).

This means that out of 29 terms aged 7-16 (30 less than the last one for GCSE), only 9 or 10 will be on British History. From age 13, the only core material on Britain will be a gallop through expansion, trade and industry 1750-1900 and 27 years of the 20th century.

E

APPENDIX E

PROVE IT

This is modern history published by Oxford University Press,
for I would think 12-13 year olds!

It is a foretaste of how history will develop if nothing is
done about the curriculum.

CONFIDENTIAL

PRIME MINISTER

NATIONAL CURRICULUM: HISTORY

You discussed the position on history with Brian Griffiths and John Mills earlier this week. You decided to put off the bilateral we had scheduled with John MacGregor until the Policy Unit had had chance to prepare a detailed paper for you.

That work is now completed, and we have arranged for John MacGregor to come in on Monday afternoon. The various papers below are:

- John MacGregor's original minute;
- the Working Group report itself;
- the earlier Policy Unit note;
- and, in the separate folder, the further material that the Policy Unit have now put together. This is a considerable tour de force.

You will want to consider how best to handle the talk with John MacGregor. I assume that at some point you will want to hand over to him the latest Policy Unit note, which summarises both the criticisms of the existing report and makes recommendations for the way forward. I think the options are:

- i) let John MacGregor have the note on Monday morning so that he has been it before he comes to see you;
- ii) hand it to him at the beginning of the bilateral;
- iii) or, talk through the issues at the bilateral and hand the note to him at the end as a kind of aide memoire of the changes you want to see made.

Which option would you prefer?

PLG
PAUL GRAY
16 MARCH 1990

c:\wpdocs\economic\HISTORY.MRM

CONFIDENTIAL

SCIENCE BUILDINGS,
TONBRIDGE SCHOOL,
TONBRIDGE,
KENT TN9 1JP

13/3/90.

Dear Mr. Griffiths,

I am attempting to coordinate opinions on suggested changes in G.C.S.E examinations, and would be grateful for your support. I strongly believe that the supply of trained Scientists could be jeopardised and thus the economy - as well as the Science teaching profession - be seriously affected in the future.

There seems to be an enormous feeling amongst the actual teachers in the Science area, and not the 'theorists', that we could be making one more backward step.

Yours sincerely, Y. J. Masdon (Head of Science)

An article I wrote recently

In defence of Separate Subject Science

The National Curriculum and its aim of promoting 'Balanced Science' for all up to the age of 16 is acceptable to almost everyone. Balanced Science must not however be equated with Integrated Science. Most Science teachers believe strongly that children should be taught Biology, Chemistry and Physics by specialists in these subjects, that is by people who are most likely to be able to inspire the students and share their enthusiasms with the pupils.

Universities do not produce General Science specialists, they produce graduates in the three main branches of Science. The recruitment of Science teachers is inadequate at the present moment and is certainly not likely to be encouraged by an Integrated Science Course; a Biology graduate is likely to want to teach Biology, not Chemistry, nor Physics. His interest is in Biology, his chosen subject and it is in this area of study that he will best communicate the beauty and interest of science. If he is not allowed to do this, will he enter the teaching profession?

Furthermore, one should not forget the present members of the Science teaching profession. Teachers are experts in their own chosen subject, be it Chemistry, Biology or Physics. The enthusiasm which they have for their own speciality cannot be artificially manufactured to apply to another Science. Those who assume that the basic attitudes of Science are common to all subjects (and that any one Science teacher can easily teach all three Sciences) are naively unaware of the actual situation.

The National Curriculum for Science should provide a basic core of knowledge and understanding which all children must be taught, but it must not be the ceiling for the more able pupil. The content of the National Curriculum for Chemistry in particular and all Sciences in general, is a totally inadequate challenge for a bright 16 year old. Able pupils with an urge to go beyond what is contained in the National Curriculum should be encouraged to do so and be given something to show for their endeavours.

It is apparent that the greatest failure of the changes in the Science curricula, is the lowering of standards for the able. The content of syllabi at GCSE is less than at 'O' Level; the content of all 'A' Level syllabi has been reduced. Oxford University Science departments found that the Science students who took the entrance examinations in November 1989 knew less than any previous year group. Is it coincidental that they were the first GCSE group?

We should now categorically accept that standards at the top have dropped and that the new examinations (GCSE) are less exacting to the more able pupil. Why else should many University Science Departments be considering either a change to four year degree courses and/or a reduction in their demands on the first year student?

I contend strongly that the retainment of separate subject exams is essential to stretch the more able pupil and also to revive the morale of present Science teachers. The morale of the teaching profession is low for many reasons and requires some support. The opinions of the many excellent and experienced members of the teaching profession at all levels, University, Polytechnic and Schools, on the future of Science education in this country, need to be considered more carefully rather than seemingly to be ignored.

The Masters' Common Room
Tonbridge School
Kent TN9 1JP

TELEPHONE 0732 365555

19 March, 1990

Dear Mr. Griffiths

I enclose all the signatories of the letter which I have sent to the Rt. Hon. J. MacGregor, Mrs. Angela Rumbold, The Editor of The Time and Patrick Thompson, M.P. Please feel free to use this letter, copy it and send it to anyone you feel could help our cause.

Thank you for all your support.

Yours sincerely,

F. Marsden

P.J. Marsden (Dr.)

I am most concerned that Physics + Chemistry graduates will be even less likely to come into teaching if "Science" prevails.

19 March, 1990

We are deeply concerned by the suggestion that the S.E.A.C. Science Committee (Schools Examination and Assessment Council) will recommend to the Secretary of State for Education that G.C.S.E. exams in individual Sciences, Physics, Chemistry and Biology, will be discontinued.

We approve of the general aims of the National Curriculum to provide Science for all pupils up to the age of 16. Balanced Science must still allow the more able pupils to be academically stretched by separate examinations in the three Sciences.

It must not be forgotten that many Science teachers in schools are specialists in their own individual subjects. No changes should occur which may cause Science teachers to leave the profession. Furthermore, the recruitment of Science graduates into teaching will not be encouraged by a system in which their own chosen subject is not being examined at 16.

It is of paramount importance that schools provide an adequate supply of scientists and engineers to maintain and develop the industrial base on which our country is so dependent.

To the Independent
newspaper

TABLETS OF STONE

The Schools' Examination and Assessment Council (S.E.A.C.) is about to recommend (23 March) to the Minister of Education that G.C.S.E. examinations in individual Sciences are to be discontinued.

The assessment of performance in key stage 4 at age 16 of the National Curriculum will involve taking a "Science" G.C.S.E. examination. This assessment is said not to be possible by separate G.C.S.E. examinations in Physics, Chemistry and Biology. Why not?

Are the contents of the National Curriculum articles of faith written in tablets of stone, and impossible to amend? Is there no flexibility in the system?

If able pupils are no longer given examinations in individual Sciences, can anyone believe this is anything but one more dilution in standards for the most able. The able pupil needs to be stretched intellectually. The same examination is not suitable for all.

Will Science teachers, who are predominantly trained in individual Sciences - and likely to be so for many years too - feel confident that this change is beneficial? Furthermore, does anyone imagine that a new Physics graduate is more likely to be attracted to the teaching profession when his subject is no longer examined as a separate entity?

The National Curriculum should provide a basic core of Science for all pupils. It must also provide an opportunity for an able pupil to be intellectually challenged. Let us hope that these two objectives can be reconciled by an adequate freedom of choice.

F.J. Marsden (Dr.)
Head of Science
Tonbridge School
Tonbridge
Kent TN9 1JP

P. E. Cattermole
Head of Science
Winchester College

Malin Rogers

M. J. W. ROGERS
CHIEF MASTER
KING EDWARD'S SCHOOL
BIRMINGHAM

F. W. S. Benfield

F. W. S. BENFIELD
HEAD OF CHEMISTRY
ETON COLLEGE

John B. Cook

DR. J. B. COOK
HEADMASTER
EPSOM COLLEGE

J. M. Peach

DR. J. M. PEACH
SENIOR TUTOR IN CHEMISTRY
SOAERVILLE COLLEGE
OXFORD

K. M. Bowkett

DR. K. M. BOWKETT,
SENIOR TUTOR
CHRISTS COLLEGE
CAMBRIDGE

D. H. Roberts

DR. D. H. ROBERTS, C. B. E. F. R. S
PROVOST
UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON

Ann Longley

MRS ANN R. LONGLEY
HEAD MISTRESS
ROEDAN SCHOOL

D. S. Gradwell

D. S. GRADWELL
HEAD OF PHYSICS
CLIFTON COLLEGE
BRISTOL.

D. A. Miller

D. A. MILLER
HEAD MASTER
WOODHOUSE GROVE SCHOOL
APPERLEY BRIDGE, WEST YORKSHIRE.

A. C. Driver

A. C. DRIVER
HEAD OF CHEMISTRY
WOODHOUSE GROVE SCHOOL.

M. G. Berry

M. G. BERRY,
HEAD OF SIXTH FORM,
CHELSEHURST + SIDCUP GRAMMAR SCHOOL
LONDON BOROUGH OF BEXLEY.

Maurice Gibson

MAURICE GIBSON, M.A., B.D., C. PHYS., FIRST P,
DEPUTY EXECUTIVE SECRETARY,
INSTITUTE OF PHYSICS
47, BELGRAVE SQUARE,
LONDON SW1X 8BX.

F. J. Marsden

F. J. MARSDEN
HEAD OF SCIENCE
TONBRIDGE SCHOOL
TONBRIDGE
KENT.

RA

PRIME MINISTER

NATIONAL CURRICULUM: HISTORY

We have recently been making reasonable progress in clearing the various working group reports on the national curriculum: earlier this week, you agreed the modern languages one.

But you now need to consider the next stages in the handling of history. This is much more difficult. You will recall that at the interim report stage you pressed John MacGregor to make various key changes, including putting greater weight on British history and ensuring that the attainment targets included testing of basic historical information.

John MacGregor (~~flag A~~) has now minuted you enclosing a copy of the final report of the working group (~~flag B~~). He argues that the Group's recommendations should be accepted. The greater part of his minute is given over to justifying the Group's continued resistance to including knowledge of historical facts in the attainment targets.

The Policy Unit (flag C) argue that the working group report is seriously inadequate, not only in relation to attainment targets but also the coverage of the programmes of study. You will want to go carefully through their points.

If you sympathise with the Policy Unit's concerns, you will want to consider how to handle this. The points are sufficiently fundamental that I do not think it can be adequately handled by my minuting out your summary reactions. You will, I think, need to talk this through with John MacGregor, possibly following a chat with Brian Griffiths.

- (i) do you want to have an early word with Brian about this, followed by a meeting with John MacGregor?

Yes please mt

OR

- (ii) prefer any alternative course of action?

Paul
PAUL GRAY
9 March 1990

EDUC - Gen. Idiary

NATIONAL CURRICULUM: HISTORY WORKING PARTY GROUP
FINAL REPORT

The History Working Party has been fraught with difficulties since it was first proposed by Kenneth Baker. His initial list of membership included the author of the definitive work on the New History, but no major historian of repute. Its original terms of reference argued that the objective of history, inter alia, was to help pupils acquire and develop values placing great emphasis on skills, but very little on history as telling the story of the past. As a result of your intervention these were then modified. It is however worth noting that the Working Party as finally constituted only had one secondary school teacher of history, who has now gone off as an LEA adviser!

Following the publication of the Interim Working Party report you suggested three changes:

- replacing or adding to the existing attainment targets to ensure that pupils learned historical information and were not just tested on "historical understanding";
- putting greater weight on British history;
- rewriting and strengthening the content devoted to modern British history.

The Final Report has put greater weight on British history. But it is open to three major objections as it stands:

- (a) it rejects the Secretary of State's request that the attainment targets should include historical information: John MacGregor has now been persuaded against this;

- (b) individual programmes of study are deficient - the most obvious example being twentieth century British history which will become compulsory for GCSE;
- (c) the balance in the programmes of study which gives equal weight to political, economic, social and cultural, puts too much emphasis on the latter, and not enough on the former.

(a) Historical Information and Historical Understanding

The report argues strongly against pupils being tested in the attainment targets for their knowledge of historical information. This gets to the heart of where the National Curriculum is taking us.

The report gives four reasons for its view: chronology, levelling, complexity and rigidity (mauve pages 31-36). None of these in the opinion of historians in the Policy Unit (Carolyn Sinclair, Robin Harris, John Mills) carries any particular weight. There are problems which have been with history from the beginning - such as the appropriate selection of facts and the difficulties of teaching the same children different subjects at different ages, which mean that some topics will be dealt with at greater depth and with greater sophistication than others, or the problem of coping with slow and fast learners in the same class. None of these are insuperable - indeed 'O' level has had to cope with them for years and has done so very successfully.

But what is more curious is that, after telling us why children should not be tested for their knowledge of history using the attainment targets, the Report then goes on to argue, "We are however concerned to ensure that historical information will be taught, learned and properly assessed. We have, therefore, expressly displayed in each programme of study the essential

knowledge which must be taught, and without which the objectives set by the attainment targets cannot be achieved."

Essential knowledge? After expressing such agnosticism? If it is difficult to put historical information in attainment targets, it is surely just as difficult to include it in programmes of study. Most of the objections they make and which have convinced the Secretary of State are just as valid for programmes of study as attainment targets. On putting this question to someone involved in writing the report, we were told "But of course the programme of study would include a much wider margin of choice."

These arguments effectively mean that the Report does not wish pupils to be tested with any degree of rigour on their knowledge of historical information. This is contrary to the forceful remit which you gave John MacGregor last summer and which he passed on to the Working Party.

The fact remains however that the very basis of history, especially at the early stages, is factual knowledge. By all means this needs to be well related to themes and concepts (eg 'liberty' or 'revolution'), but omitting it from the attainment targets simply leaves nothing concrete to measure. Thus the attainment targets as drafted (pp 296-333) are full of jargon eg

(Target 2, Level 8) "Evaluate historical interpretation in terms of distortion."

(Target 3, Level 10) "Devise criteria to evaluate complex sources to investigate a range of historical issues."

We do not believe, as parents, that we could judge our children's attainment against such criteria. Our concern up to the O-level stage if not beyond would be: do they know, broadly, about (say)

the First World War or the Reformation: causes, chronology, consequences.
We can have little confidence from the Report.

(b) Individual Programmes of Study

Some individual programmes of study (eg modern Japan) seem fine, but others have serious weaknesses.

Take for example **Britain in the Twentieth Century**. (pages 211-213). This is a core subject for 14-16 year olds studying for GCSE - the very heart of modern British history.

This is the only core British History Unit for the run-up to GCSE. It is intended (as stated on p.211) to give pupils "insight" into the recent history of Britain by concentrating on two out of three of the following.

- 1906-14 (political emphasis)
- 1929-39 (economic emphasis)
- 1960-69 (social and cultural emphasis)

The "essential" elements for study of these which must be taught as follows:

- 1906-14 Achievements and problems of Government
 - Irish nationalism
 - Suffragettes
 - Trade Unions
 - War 1914
 - Asquith
 - Lloyd George
 - Relative economic decline
 - Technological developments
 - Liberal Welfare Measures
 - Arts and popular culture

1929-39 1931 crisis and National Government
Economic depression (problems of old industry in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland)
Economic recovery: new industries and their locations
Uneven effects of Depression
Arts and popular culture

1960-69 Conservative and Labour Governments
Britain and Europe and the Commonwealth
Economic issues
Increased personal and social mobility
Permissive society
Immigration
Arts and popular culture

While there is a core unit on the Second World War, it is hard to accept that the above list is a representative way of achieving (at O-level equivalent) "insight into the recent history of Britain."

- It is about Britain in the Twentieth Century yet it covers only 27 years.
- It covers periods when there was a Liberal government, a Labour and National government, the Wilson government and the declining years of Macmillan - is this typical?
- It deals with the stop-go problems of the sixties, but without anything of the foundations of Keynesianism and corporatism laid down between 1945-50.
- It omits the First World War - the origin of Twentieth century inflation in Britain.
- It devotes half the course to social, religious, cultural

and aesthetic issues such as: car ownership, relaxation of censorship, the pill, CND and the bomb, TV and satire, and festivals!

(c) Programmes of Study

The programmes are summarised on pages 62-66. Each programme is then set out in more detail (mauve pages 81-245). The top boxes on each page contain 'essential' information which must be taught. The lower boxes contain additional themes and topics which teachers may well want to cover but need not.

The Working Party proposes that Standard Assessment Tasks (ie yearly tests) are always, and only, based on the 'essential' information in the programmes of study. (para 8.23, page 341). The implications of this for the scope of tests can be judged from the paucity of much of the 'essential' information.

KEY STAGE 1 (ages 5-7) (pages 81-85)

This is all right

KEY STAGE 2 (ages 7-11) (pages 87-133)

This is reasonable, but there is heavy emphasis on rather vague 'social' themes, for example, 'essential' information in 5 of the 12 study units include:

- | | |
|--------|--|
| HSU 4 | Victorian mothers and fathers |
| HSU 5 | (post 1945) Differentiation between men and women in work and politics |
| HSU 9 | Role of men, women and children in agriculture |
| HSU 11 | Importance of women in literary culture |

HSU 13 Authority and gender roles (in Roman and Victorian times)

Such emphases look rather dubious.

KEY STAGE 3 (ages 11-14) (pages 135-209)

This is a crucial stage where most of the 'real' history which children will carry with them into adult life is learnt. What is proposed is very deficient.

The core units are all right as far as they go. But they allow only about a term each to gallop through (a) English medieval history from the Conquest and (b) the Tudors and Stuarts and half the 18th century. Exactly the same amount of time will be spent on eg Native peoples of the Americas or Islamic Civilisation. These latter are worthwhile subjects, but the balance is questionable.

The optional study units are not all right. They are too inflexible. Children will not be able to do the Reformation and the French Revolution. But they will have to spend a whole term on a 'non-Western culture from its own perspective.' This is absurd. There is, for example, nothing comparable with the option on Islamic civilisation up to the 16th century to give children the broad sweep of medieval European history: Popes and Emperors etc. This will be an entirely blank page for school leavers.

Out of a total requirement of 9 units, a maximum of 5 can be British. This is barely sufficient.

KEY STAGE 4 (aged 14-16) (pages 211-245)

This will form the GCSE syllabus from 1994 and is thus crucial.

The British component is 'Britain in the 20th century' (see comments above) and a Unit on a long time-span theme such as Parliament 1500 to date. There will also be some British element in the Second World War Unit. But this is not much on Britain when set against a compulsory unit on either post-war Europe, the USSR or USA (both over the whole 20th century) and one on Africa or Asia. The USSR and USA options are both more comprehensive than the 20th century Britain option. That is again absurd.

There is little doubt that pupils are going to emerge from GCSE in the 1990s with a decidedly sketchy view of British history. They will, for example, not have touched the Tudors since age 11 or 12. The British topic which GCSE pupils will end up knowing most about will be the 1960s! Even from today's perspective that is odd; it will be even odder in the late 1990s when the later 1970s will be as distant as the late 60s now are.

General Criticism

The Working Party accepts that Study Units will need, over time, to be reviewed and revised. But it urges that this is not done for some years (para 9.34, page 354). Since the National Curriculum will not work its way right through to GCSE until the mid 90s that means, in effect, not much change until 2000 or beyond.

But frankly the proposed framework is too rigid to endure that long. The post-war Europe Unit for GCSE (pages 220-221) for example already looks dated: essential information deals with divided Germany, but not the prospect of unification (which will be history before the Unit is ever taught). Yet GCSE pupils will be condemned to study of "Women and Family

Life in Eastern and Western Europe" regardless. Good schools and teachers will be absolutely frustrated by this.

There needs to be more scope for earlier and more frequent review and revision, particularly at Key Stages 3 and 4. Perhaps it could be left to schools themselves to propose syllabuses to the NCC for its agreement, on the basis of carefully written criteria laid down by the Secretary of State as to content and scope. There is a real danger otherwise of school history slipping into a fairly arbitrary straightjacket, over-dominated by unrigorous and 'easy' topics to the detriment of major political and economic subjects.

Recommendation and Way Forward

The Report must be challenged if we are to ensure that the National Curriculum is to deliver basic and effective teaching of history. A way must be found to include knowledge in the attainment targets, and to inject more rigour into some of the programmes of study at Key Stages 3 and 4. The balance between British History and the rest is still not right, particularly given the weakness of some of the British History Study Units. And there needs to be greater flexibility about reviewing the Study Units and adding new ones, subject to strict criteria about content and scope.

Taking this forward could obviously be quite difficult, and you may feel that a short discussion would be helpful.

Yvonne Barker
pp BRIAN GRIFFITHS

John Mills
JOHN MILLS

ce A. O



NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE
STORMONT CASTLE
BELFAST BT4 3ST
Tel. Belfast (0232) 69011

The Rt Hon Lynda Chalker MP
Minister for Overseas Development
Overseas Development Administration
Eland House
Stag Place
LONDON SW1E 5DH

7 March 1990

era 5/3

Dear Lynda,

WORLD CONFERENCE ON EDUCATION FOR ALL

pld A 23

Thank you for copying to me your letter of 15 February to John MacGregor.

Officials here have been in contact with their counterparts in DES. There are no uniquely Northern Ireland issues which have a bearing on the UK's stance on the proposed Declaration and Framework for Action.

I am therefore content with your proposal that the UK delegation should be authorised to agree to both documents unless subsequent drafting changes render them unacceptable.

I am copying this letter to the Prime Minister, the Lord President, the Foreign Secretary, the Secretaries of State for Wales, Scotland, and Employment, the Chief Secretary to the Treasury and the Secretary of the Cabinet.

L. ...

Pr

PB

EDUCATION: Policy Pt. 44.



Wheeler
CW

10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

7 March 1990

Dear Stephen,

WORKING GROUP ON MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

The Prime Minister was grateful for your Secretary of State's minute of 1 March, enclosing the interim report of the Working Group on Modern Foreign Languages. She is content for your Secretary of State to publish the report in the terms proposed.

I am copying this letter to Bob Peirce (Foreign and Commonwealth Office), Anna Colman (Welsh Office), Ben Slocock (Trade and Industry), Uriel Jamieson (Scottish Office), Stephen Pope (Northern Ireland Office), Anne-Marie Lawlor (Employment) and Nicholas Davidson (Cabinet Office).

*Yours,
PG*

(PAUL GRAY)

Stephen Crowne, Esq.,
Department of Education and Science.

PG



PRIME MINISTER

HISTORY WORKING GROUP

I attach a copy of the final report I have received from the History Working Group. Peter Walker and I have studied it with particular care because of our earlier concerns which I discussed with you in the summer about the Group's interim report and the public interest that the teaching of history attracts. We believe that its recommendations are well thought-out and well argued; and that they will lay a secure foundation for raising standards in school history.

2. The requirements proposed by the Group are demanding. The course of study prescribed has a firm chronological structure, underpinned by the recommendation that the core British history study units should be studied in chronological sequence, but with the flexibility necessary to provide intellectual variety and allow for practical constraints. The Group's approach to chronology is well-argued, and I believe that it has found the right balance. The Group have also met my request for a greater emphasis on British history in key stages 3 and 4. In no key stage will the proportion of British history studied by any pupils fall below 50%, and over the whole curriculum most will study a significantly higher proportion.

3. The Group have also looked again at the possibility of including essential historical information in the attainment targets. They have reaffirmed their conviction that the proper place for historical information is in the programmes

CONFIDENTIAL

of study, but this time the arguments are fully and clearly displayed - in Chapter 3 of the report. I am impressed by the argument that history is not a sequential subject like mathematics or science: that there is no natural order of progressive difficulty in which information is acquired. Learning about the Romans is no easier than learning about the Victorians. The natural order of historical learning - within realistic limits - is chronological, but that does not correlate with progressive difficulty. I can understand, therefore, why the Group has not been able to find any rational basis for assigning historical facts to the ten levels of attainment within each target. I also think we must take seriously the Group's point that the structure of attainment targets is too rigid to accommodate the degree of choice which needs to be allowed if there is to be a defence against the critics of a "politically imposed" history curriculum.

4. Our concern was that if essential knowledge was omitted from the attainment targets its acquisition would not be adequately assessed and teachers would neglect it. The Group's answer is that the attainment targets and programmes of study are complementary and have equal statutory force. If the essential knowledge is specified in the programmes of study, it must be both taught and assessed. The attainment targets cannot be met except by reference to the knowledge that is required to be studied in the programmes of study. They cannot be achieved in isolation. Each attainment target therefore is introduced in the report by the rubric:

"Drawing upon the essential historical information in the programmes of study, pupils should be able to:..."

Furthermore, under each individual statement of attainment the Group has given a number of examples of essential

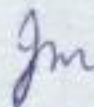
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

historical information drawn from appropriate programmes of study which might be used to demonstrate its achievement.

5. I am therefore now satisfied that the Group's recommendations will ensure the full assessment of pupils' knowledge of historical facts, as well as their exercise of the skills of investigation, interpretation and presentation. I propose to make them the basis of my statutory proposals.

6. The Group's report was overdue by a month, and I am anxious to publish it with my proposals as soon as possible to forestall speculation. If I could have your agreement to proceed fairly soon, I would aim to publish in March. I am copying this minute to Peter Walker, Malcolm Rifkind, Peter Brooke, Douglas Hurd, David Waddington, Michael Howard, Kenneth Baker and Sir Robin Butler.



JM

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

5 MARCH 1990

CONFIDENTIAL

THE SECRETARY OF STATE'S PROPOSALS FOR HISTORY
FOREWORD

.....

The Education Reform Act 1988 provides for the establishment of a National Curriculum comprising core and other foundation subjects, to be taught to all pupils of compulsory school age in maintained schools, for each of which there are to be appropriate attainment targets, programmes of study and assessment arrangements. The Act defines attainment targets as:

'the knowledge, skills and understanding which pupils of different abilities and maturities are expected to have by the end of each key stage'. (in italics)

and programmes of study as:

'the matters, skills and processes which are required to be taught to pupils of different abilities and maturities during each key stage'. (in italics)

The four consecutive key stages cover the years of compulsory schooling 5-16.

The Act empowers the Secretaries of State to specify attainment targets and programmes of study. Before they make draft Orders, they are required to make formal proposals in accordance with the provisions of the Education Reform Act. In England, the Secretary of State for Education and Science is required to make proposals to the National Curriculum Council (NCC) which in turn is required to consult, and then to make a report to the Secretary of State, containing a summary of views expressed on his proposals and the NCC's

advice and recommendations. In Wales, the Secretary of State for Wales is required to give notice of his proposals to the Curriculum Council for Wales (CCW), and to any other persons with whom consultation appears to him to be desirable. In the light of the NCC's advice and the outcome of the parallel consultations in Wales, the Secretaries of State may proceed to draft Orders, allowing a minimum period of one month for further evidence and representations before the Orders are made.

This document contains the response of the Secretary of State for Education and Science to the report of the History Working Group which he set up jointly with the Secretary of State for Wales to make recommendations on attainment targets and programmes of study. The Secretary of State's comments and the Report together represent the formal proposals for statutory history attainment targets and programmes of study applicable to all schools in England. Proposals applicable to schools in Wales will be made by the Secretary of State for Wales after he has received and considered the final report of the History Committee for Wales, which is due to report in April. He will then proceed to direct the statutory consultation in Wales.

The statutory requirement for consultation on the present proposals applies only in England. Responses to the Secretary of State's proposals should be sent to the National Curriculum Council (NCC) at 15/17 New Street, York YO1 2RA by 21 September 1990. The proposals are nevertheless being circulated for information in Wales.

Extracts from this Report may be reproduced on condition that the source is acknowledged.

HISTORY 5 TO 16: PROPOSALS OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR
EDUCATION AND SCIENCE FOR SCHOOLS IN ENGLAND
.....

The origins and scope of my proposals

1. In January 1989, jointly with the Secretary of State for Wales I appointed a Working Group to advise on appropriate attainment targets and programmes of study for history. The Group's Report on this area of the curriculum represents a considerable achievement, and it is on the basis of the Group's advice on attainment targets and programmes of study that I now make my formal proposals in accordance with the provisions laid down in the Education Reform Act. The full text of the Working Group's Report is attached. References in this document are to chapter and paragraph numbers in the Report.

2. My proposals are confined to attainment targets and programmes of study. They do not relate to assessment arrangements, although advice on such arrangements is included in the Working Group's Report, and I am grateful to the History Group for the thought it has given to assessment issues. I am asking the School Examinations and Assessment Council (SEAC) to take the Group's advice into account in advising us in due course on the Orders specifying assessment arrangements covering history. But my present proposals relate only to Orders under Section 4(2) and (a) and (b) of the Act for attainment targets and programmes of study.

3. The Report comments on other matters, for example the resources, staffing and teacher training implications of establishing history within the National Curriculum. I am grateful for the Group's advice on these points, which will be duly considered, together with any comments on them.

Objectives of the consultation exercise

4. The objective of the processes for statutory consultation in England and Wales is to produce clear recommendations in a form which can be put into draft Orders under section 4(2) (a) and (b) of the Act. My proposals for attainment targets and programmes of study are those recommended by the Working Group. I am satisfied that the Group's recommendations represent a sound basis for legislation and I propose no changes.

THE PROPOSALS

Attainment targets

5. The Report outlines four attainment targets which are grouped for assessment and reporting purposes into a single profile component. For each attainment target there are statements of attainment which define ten levels of attainment specifying what pupils should know, understand and be able to do, appropriate for pupils of different ages and abilities. The Report also recommends the ranges of levels of attainment which should apply to pupils at the end of each key stage - ie at the ages of 7, 11, 14 and 16. These are:

Key Stage 1	-	Levels 1-3
Key Stage 2	-	Levels 2-5
Key Stage 3	-	Levels 3-7
Key Stage 4	-	Levels 4-10.

6. I propose that the attainment targets, the associated statements of attainment at each level and the ranges of levels appropriate to each key stage should be included in the Order to be made under section 4(2) (a) of the Act. For ease of reference the attainment targets are reproduced below.

History Study Units and Programmes of Study

7. I propose a course of study for pupils attending schools in England from age 5 to age 16 which consists of History Study Units: some compulsory, some optional. I have assigned these units to key stages broadly on a chronological basis, and I recommend that the British core History Study Units should be taught, within key stages 2-4, in chronological order, and that not more than one such Unit should be taught in any one school year.

8. The History Study Units are of two kinds:

i Those for which the Group has recommended detailed programmes of study which establish the matters, skills and processes which pupils should be taught in order to achieve the attainment targets.

ii Those which are intended to be designed by schools themselves, in accordance with ground rules proposed by the Group.

9. I propose that the Order to be made under Section 4(2) (b) of the Act should be based on:

i. The assignment of History Study Units to key stages as set out in Annex A to Chapter 5.

ii. The detailed programmes of study set out in Annex A to Chapter 6.

iii. The ground rules for school designed History Study Units set out in Annex B to Chapter 5.

Commencement dates

10. I propose to introduce the attainment targets and programmes of study for all pupils in England in the first year of each of key stages 1, 2 and 3 in Autumn 1991. I propose that those for key stage 4 should be introduced in 1994, once pupils entering that key stage have completed the programmes of study for key stage 3.

Summary of attainment targets

Attainment target 1: Understanding history in its setting

Attainment target 2: Understanding points of view and interpretations of history

Attainment target 3: Acquiring and evaluating historical information

Attainment target 4: Organising and communicating the results of historical study



OTD

Pine thinks Brian Griffiths feels that this report is full of jargon, it that there is nothing to think you need object.



Contact for Mr. Neeson to write to the Chairman as proposed?

PRIME MINISTER

Yes no

Last summer you approved the establishment of a Working Group to advise the Secretary of State for Wales and me on the attainment targets and programmes of study for modern foreign languages in the National Curriculum. The Group is chaired by Professor Martin Harris, the Vice-Chancellor of Essex University.

The Working Group has now submitted its initial advice in the form of an interim report. I enclose a copy. The Group makes a compelling case for the development of competence in a modern foreign language by pupils of all abilities in secondary schools. We strongly endorse that. The structure of attainment targets and programmes of study has been designed, as we asked, to apply to all the languages which pupils may study in the National Curriculum - the 8 European Community working languages and 11 others of commercial and cultural importance. Peter Walker and I consider that the structure covers the important aspects of learning the modern foreign language and that it should provide a good basis for raising the level of competence in foreign languages in England and Wales.

The Group has made recommendations, which are pragmatic and helpful, about some other matters on which we invited advice. Chapters 8-10 cover:

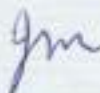
- (a) the form and content of the existing statutory Order which specifies the languages which may be taught as the National Curriculum foundation subject (see below);
- (b) the circumstances in which pupils might not study the same language throughout the five years of compulsory secondary education. This may occur, for example, where a pupil changes school or where a high level of attainment has been reached in one language before the age of 16; and

(c) whether there should be any constraints on the language to be studied as the National Curriculum foundation subject by pupils already conversant with a foreign language - usually the language spoken at home. Their advice here, essentially for strong practical reasons, is that pupils should be able to study a language with which they have some familiarity as their foundation foreign language, although they should have the opportunity of taking another and ideally should be able to study both.

On the question of the Order listing National Curriculum languages, the Group has not recommended any additions to or deletions from the list and gives firm backing to our policy that all schools must offer their pupils a European Community language. However, it does suggest that the present two-schedule form of the Order, with the European Community languages in Schedule 1 and the others in Schedule 2, should be replaced by a single list to remove any impression that languages in Schedule 2 are less worthwhile in their own right than those in Schedule 1. The Working Group's suggestion is about presentation rather than substance, as priority would still be given to European Community languages. There is no need for us to take decisions on this matter, or on the other recommendations referred to in the previous paragraph, until after we have had the Group's final report.

I propose, subject to your approval, to publish the Group's interim report for consultation. It is important at this stage to check that the structure of attainment targets and programmes of study will fit, with suitable modification of detail, all the modern foreign languages that qualify for the National Curriculum. There is therefore still much to be done and I should like to enable the Group to move ahead quickly with the second stage of its work. I intend to write to the Chairman along the lines of the enclosed draft, thanking him for his initial advice, encouraging the Group to cover those parts of its remit not so far dealt with and inviting him to let me have final advice on schedule at the end of July.

I should be grateful if you could let me know if you are content so that I may publish the report as soon as possible. I am copying this minute and the report to the Foreign Secretary, the Secretaries of State for Wales, Trade and Industry, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Employment, and to Sir Robin Butler.



JM

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

1 MARCH 1990

DRAFT LETTER TO PROFESSOR MARTIN HARRIS

1. I am replying on behalf of both Peter Walker and myself to your letter of 16 February, with which you enclosed the initial advice from the National Curriculum Working Group on Modern Foreign Languages.

2. We are happy to agree to the publication of this interim report for consultation. The Working Group is to be congratulated on the thorough job it has done in the time available. We are most grateful to you for all the hard work that we know has gone into the preparation of this advice. I hope that those who respond to the report will look especially at the structure you have proposed for attainment targets and programmes of study. We need to be confident that this structure will provide a rigorous and stimulating regime for all languages. I look forward in particular to seeing the supplements to the programmes of study for each language, and to seeing your advice on whether any of the statements of attainment need slightly adjustment for particular languages.

3. We are also grateful to you for the clear and helpful advice in Chapter 8 of your report on the form of the Section 3 Order; and for the advice on the other matters covered in Chapters 8-11. We shall look to your final report which will follow your consultations before taking any necessary decisions on the points you have addressed. I have of course already received your early advice that pupils attaining a high grade at GCSE before the end of key stage 4 should nonetheless continue to study a modern foreign language. As you know I have announced my acceptance of this particular advice.

4. I note that you have left some issues for your final report, in particular questions about pupils with special educational needs and about the essential language competences for non-GCSE courses at key stage 4. On the latter question, I attach great importance to their being sufficient flexibility within the National Curriculum at key stage 4 to allow a variety of subject options and combinations to be studied, while

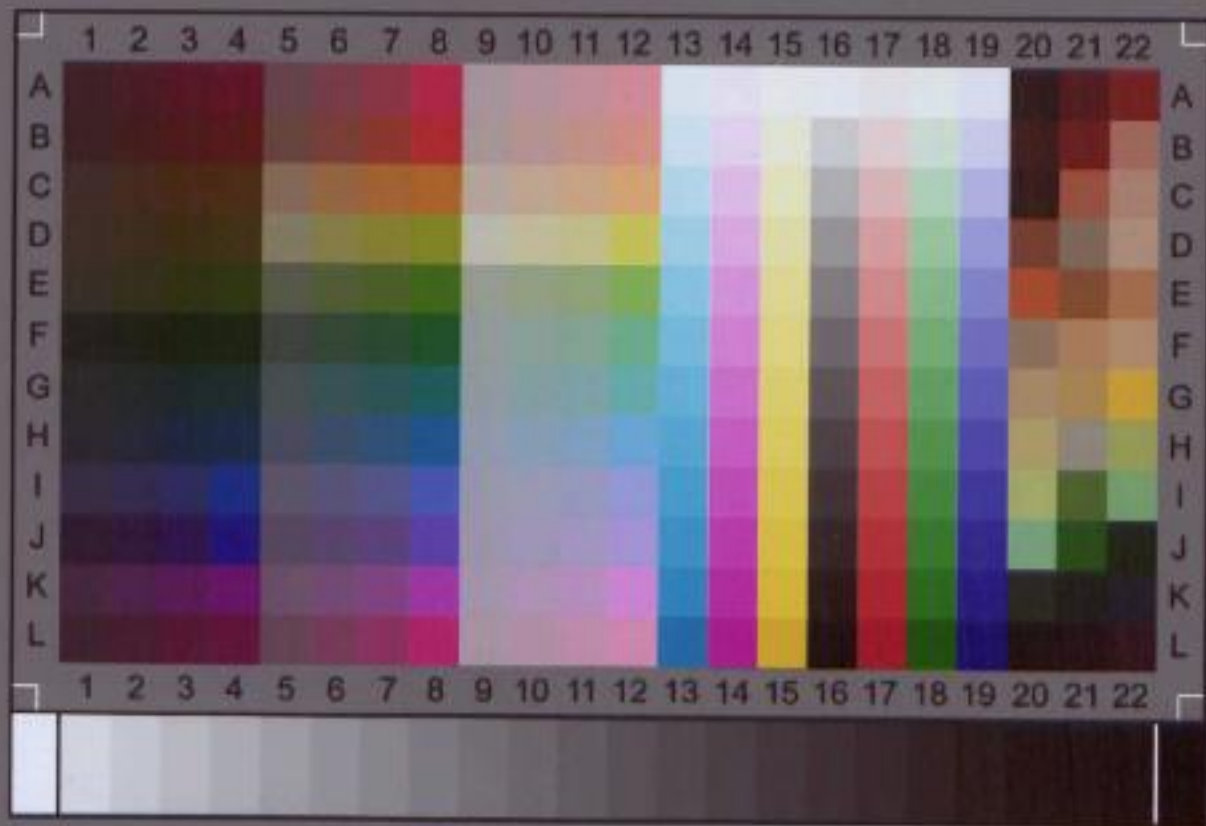
preserving the essential rigour of each foundation subject and the overall principle of breadth and balance. I also look forward to receiving your further advice on assessment. I note that you have invited further evidence on the question of whether pupils who are perceived as having reached a plateau of attainment in one language should be allowed to change to another; I hope that this will lead you to conclude that five years of study of one language is the right pattern for the vast majority of pupils.

● PART 23 ends:-

SS/DES to ms/ODA 23.2.90

PART 24 begins:-

SS/DES to pm 5.3.90



IT8.7/2-1993
2009:02

Image
Access

IT-8 Target

Printed on Kodak Professional Paper
Charge: R090212