



PRIME MINISTER

STUDENT UNIONS

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Thank you for your note on your talk with the Federation of Conservative Students.

Recently, when we had to make a technical amendment to the Regulations, I made it clear that the Department is conducting inquiries into the position on Union funds, and that the amendment was designed to maintain the existing position pending their outcome.

Information gathered to date shows wide differences between universities. For instance, in Birmingham the Union is not only a social centre but constitutes a large part of the University's catering arrangements, whereas at Surrey Union arrangements are much more limited. Further, some Unions raise a substantial amount of money on their own and it is therefore difficult to control the way they spend it.

It would require legislation to appoint a Registrar with power to control the constitution of student unions. The procedure for settling the level of fee to be charged to LEAs could be changed by an amendment of my Regulations. Alterations in the rules governing Union activities would have to be carried out in each university and polytechnic individually.

The matter is being treated with urgency, but I cannot pretend that we yet know all the answers.

Raymond Thibault

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cc Mr Thuel