

PRIME MINISTER

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The Chief Whip has asked me to let you know what happened when the Backbench Education Committee met yesterday and were addressed by Andrew Neal of the Federation of Conservative Students. There was considerable hostility to the consultative document and seven members of the Committee expressed clear opposition. The Chief Whip is therefore encouraging the Secretary of State for Education and Science to proceed as fast as possible with her consultations with local authorities and Vice-Chancellors so that she is before long in a position to say that the proposals in the consultative document (to which the Government are not committed) are not acceptable. Although the Government cannot come out against the proposals before the consultations have taken place, prompt consultations will enable us to get off the hook *quickly and relatively painlessly.*

CWR