

Education

Top copy on  
Education Oct 1970

CONFIDENTIAL

13 January 1972

Discussion at Chequers on  
Education

Both of us were present at the talk on education which the Prime Minister had at Chequers yesterday afternoon with your Secretary of State, Sir William Pile and Mr. Hudson. Although the ground covered is reflected accurately in the aide memoire which your Secretary of State handed to the Prime Minister, it may be useful to set down in this letter a few additional points which emerged in the discussion.

Nursery Education

It was explained to the Prime Minister that an expansion of nursery education could be carried out relatively cheaply in relation to the educational budget as a whole. It was thought that expenditure of about £100 m. over a period of three years would provide nursery education for about 90 per cent of those who needed it. The educational and social benefits of an extension of nursery education were also outlined.

Secondary Education

It was pointed out that there had been no programme for the improvement of secondary school buildings compared with that for the improvement of the primary school buildings. Secondary school buildings were more expensive. It might be possible to pick out a few of the worst secondary

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

- 2 -

schools and concentrate on them but this would inevitably take some time. The main issue in secondary education was re-organisation on comprehensive lines. This was now a matter for choice by local education authorities, but there was a procedure for local objections to be made to the Secretary of State. Difficult issues had arisen over the disappearance of Grammar schools with a high reputation in a number of areas, e.g. Whytlee, Hexley, Chislehurst, Marylebone, Worcester and Kidderminster. In some cases the number of local objections had been very large and the decision of the local education authority had not been arrived at by a majority of elected Councillors but had turned on aldermanic votes. In the past only a few comprehensive schemes had been turned down, mainly on grounds that the buildings were unsuitable. The Prime Minister asked whether it could be argued that certain comprehensive schemes should be turned down on educational grounds. The Secretary of State said that it might be possible to argue that a comprehensive scheme would involve the disappearance of a uniquely good Grammar school and that the local education authority had not discharged the onus of proof. But it was difficult to establish how a child would suffer from the introduction of a comprehensive scheme, particularly as educational opinion, rightly or wrongly, was still strongly in support of comprehensive schools. It was agreed that the essence of the present arrangements was that the re-organisation of secondary education was a matter for local government rather than Westminster. If the procedure for local objections was allowed to influence policy, as opposed to being simply a means of allowing the difficulties of individuals to be taken into account, the Government might get the worst of both worlds.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

- 3 -

### Raising of the School Leaving Age

The Prime Minister was re-assured that there was no difficulty about the supply of teachers for those who would be staying longer at school. There was less certainty about the buildings but it was thought that they would probably be satisfactory. The Prime Minister asked whether the curriculum had been properly worked out or whether, as at the time of the previous raising of the school leaving age, opportunities would be missed. The Secretary of State explained that the Government had no power to dictate the curriculum. Much useful work had, however, been done by the Schools Council and it was clear that there were educational benefits for those who stayed at school for a further year. At present 91 per cent of those who left school at 15 had no GCE or CSE qualification; this was true of only 7 per cent of those who left school at 16.

### Higher Education

If the Robbins principle was accepted the provision for higher education would need to double over the next 10 years. If, however, the Robbins principle was to be abandoned, the Government would need to decide what the new principle should be - the economic need for people who had received tertiary education, or the available resources. The Prime Minister said that he did not reject the Robbins principle that all those qualified for higher education should receive it. He doubted, however, whether the right view was being taken of what constituted the qualification for this purpose. There was widespread anxiety that insufficient attention was being paid to preparing the leaders of the future, i.e. those concerned with policy formulation in industry and Government. The French system had undoubtedly produced good results. Although management education had expanded in Britain in recent years, the results had been disappointing.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

- 4 -

There was a fear that further expansion of higher education would affect quality. The Prime Minister said that he also felt that resources in higher education were wasted by allowing too much teaching and study of subjects which were neither relevant nor able to provide a proper intellectual discipline. It was agreed that it was important, in planning the future development of higher education, to make sure that the two elements in the "binary system" each had their own clear and separate objectives.

#### Students' Unions

The Secretary of State explained that she had now delayed for a year the introduction of new arrangements for the financing of students' unions. A new solution would have to be worked out which would satisfy three principles - that there should no longer be an open-ended commitment, that the students' unions should have proper rules, and that they should be accountable.

#### School Milk

The Secretary of State said that she thought that the best solution would be to give local authorities the power to spend the product of a rate of 1p per head on such matters as the supply of school milk, without attracting the rate support grant. But she recognised that the Secretary of State for the Environment saw considerable difficulty in this proposal.

PLG

P. H. Halsey, Esq., M.V.O.,  
Department of Education and Science.

CONFIDENTIAL

• br copy kept by the Hatcher L# 26/1/72

THE SITUATION IN EDUCATION

AIDE-MEMOIRE BY SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EDUCATION

1 Tables A & B summarise how much money is being spent on the main sectors of education, and the numbers of pupils, students and teachers involved, both now and five years hence.

2 Some of the problems facing us are concerned with deployment of resources, but some are political. Educational issues have become much more sensitive, politically, than they were even five years ago. There are many articulate and well organised pressure groups which get a ready hearing from the press and the media. Many carry no responsibility for making the system work, but are very ready to condemn government policies and their execution.

3 My powers are limited. I can control capital, but not current, expenditure by local education authorities, and the block capital and recurrent grants to the U.G.C., though not their detailed distribution between universities. I have no control, and only limited influence, over what is taught and how it is taught. The local education authorities and the universities, between them, have direct responsibility for running virtually all educational institutions. They have wide freedom of action. I am somewhat apprehensive about Peter Walker's intention to give local authorities even greater financial discretion.

4 Nevertheless, since the Government took office there has been a continued expansion of educational facilities, a big switch of capital resources to the primary schools, and an inquiry into teacher training has been instituted (the James

/report

report will be published very shortly). We have also done something for the Direct Grant Schools. Only one pre-election commitment remains to be implemented - the expansion of nursery education.

5 This year the following issues will have political implications -

- (i) School Milk We still have to find a way of neutralising the ill-effects of last year's controversy. Policy on school meals and milk will continue to be very sensitive. The further increase in the cost of the school dinner in April 1973 will reopen the debate.
- (ii) Teacher Training The recommendations of the James Report will be controversial.
- (iii) Students Union Funds We cannot expect a very early solution.
- (iv) ROSLA The indications are that the raising of the school leaving age later this year will go off reasonably well. But we must expect difficulties in some areas over truancy and misbehaviour.
- (v) No secondary school improvements There is bound to be continued criticism until we can allow a modest level of improvements to secondary schools. It need not be on the scale of the primary improvements programme.
- (vi) Teacher Supply For the first time since the war this is now buoyant and will remain so. How long we should go on giving top priority to improving school staffing standards will be a growing point of educational controversy.

/(vii)

(vii) Higher Education During 1972 we shall have to fix the level of university grants for the next quinquennium. This involves taking a view about the rate of expansion that we can afford, and the balance between the university and local authority sectors.

6. I would select two issues as being of pre-eminent political importance at the present time -

- (i) Nursery Education. This is my biggest outstanding problem in resource allocation. We shall have failed if, within the life of this Government, we have not taken a substantial initiative in the provision of nursery education. This means something more, and more widespread, than the Urban Programme can provide. Moreover the present restrictions on admission of under fives to schools are unenforceable and are breaking down.
- (ii) Secondary School Organisation. The previous Government applied as much pressure as it could to local education authorities to get them to reorganise secondary education on comprehensive lines. We have said (DES Circular 10/70) that we shall leave them free to decide how to organise. But many authorities still want to go comprehensive. As a result a number of proposals (which require my statutory approval) have been submitted which involve the loss of identity of an existing grammar school, usually through a merger with another school to make a comprehensive. Some

Government supporters, in Parliament and outside, are uneasy about this. But many of our own local councils are running with the comprehensive tide. The question is what sort of balance should be struck between defending existing grammar schools and leaving local education authorities free to make their own decisions?

Department of Education and Science  
11 January 1972



TABLE A  
EDUCATIONAL EXPENDITURE

	1971-72		1971 Survey Prices 1975-76	
	£ million	% of total	£ million	% of total
Primary Schools (1)	534	22.2	557	20.5
Secondary Schools (1)	682	28.4	787	29.0
Further Education (2) (Non-Advanced)	182	7.6	213	7.8
Higher Education (3)	656	27.3	781	28.8
Other (4)	349	14.5	376	13.9
	2,403	100.0	2,714	100.0

Notes.

- (1) England only
- (2) England and Wales
- (3) England and Wales for Advanced Further Education and Teacher Training. Great Britain for Universities.
- (4) Special Schools; School Meals and Milk, Administration (England) Youth Service (England and Wales).

EDUCATION

PUPIL, STUDENT AND TEACHER NUMBER FORECASTS

Thousands

	1971-72	1972-73	1973-74	1974-75	1975-76
<b>PRIMARY SCHOOLS</b> <sup>(1)</sup>					
Pupils	4,820	4,868	4,845	4,807	4,754
Teachers	185	193	197	198	200
<b>SECONDARY SCHOOLS</b> <sup>(1)</sup>					
Pupils	3,074	3,200	3,549	3,668	3,791
Teachers	171	181	194	209	221
<b>FURTHER EDUCATION</b> <sup>(2)</sup> (Non-Advanced)					
Students (full-time equivalents)	566	580	546	546	566
<b>HIGHER EDUCATION</b> <sup>(3)</sup>					
Students (full-time equivalents)					
Advanced Further Education	123	133	141	149	159
Teacher Training	114	116	118	121	122
Universities	258	247	259	274	292

Notes.

(1) England only

(2) England and Wales

(3) England and Wales for Advanced Further Education and Teacher Training. Great Britain for Universities.

(4) Special Schools: School Meals and Milk, Administration (England) Youth Service (England and Wales).

HIGHER EDUCATION IN GREAT BRITAIN  
ACADEMIC YEARS

	1961/2	1970/1	1976/7	A	1981/2 B	C
1. Full-time and Sandwich places						
Universities	125	228	310	325	350-400	400-450
Advanced Further Education	26	94	150	) 325	450-400	600-550
College of Education	43	123	130			
TOTAL	192	445	590	650	800	1000
2. Full-time equivalent of part-timers	22	32	40	45	50	55
3. Opportunity rates for 1. above expressed as --						
(a) Home entry aged under 21 as % of qualified (2 + A & 3 + H) using latest projects for school leavers	103%	102%	99%	80%	98%	122%
(b) Home entry aged under 21 as % of 18 year old age group	7%	14%	18%	18%	22%	27%
4. Expenditure £m* (for 1 + 2)	267	635	820	940	1220	1640
5. Growth rates % p.a. Higher Education						
1961/2-1966/7	11/12%					
1966/7-1970/1		4/5%				
1961/2-1970/1		8/9%				
1970/1-1976/7			4%			
1976/7-1981/2				3%	8%	15%
Schools	←			3 + %	→	

\*Constant at 1970 prices