



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

19 February 1980

Your Secretary of State and Lady Young this morning discussed with the Prime Minister a paper (H(80)14) on the Warnock Report.

The Prime Minister made it clear that she did not intend to put any obstacle in the way of your Secretary of State proceeding as proposed. But she did wish to put across to him her personal view that the proposals could be controversial, could increase delay in dealing with individual cases, and might well produce no ultimate improvement in provision for children with special requirements. The existing special schools in many cases provided relatively higher standards of teaching than were available in the main school sector. She had looked to Mrs. Warnock to produce practical proposals, growing out of her experience as a top quality head mistress. She was concerned that the result would be an enormous increase in the bureaucracy surrounding special educational needs.

Your Secretary of State and Lady Young explained that there would be no dramatic change, and that it would be made clear that the lack of funding for new activity limited the scope for action at present. What they had in mind was, nevertheless, a change in concept. There was a continuum of treatment appropriate to children with particular needs. The Warnock message was that the best available quality of education should be there for all to benefit from. Parents would have statutory rights to receive information about the assessment of their children, and they would be present when that assessment was made.

The Prime Minister reaffirmed that she did not intend to require changes in the proposed approach, although she maintained her personal doubts.

There was also some discussion about your Secretary of State's written answer today on the examination system, and about Erith schools' organisation. I understand that your Secretary of State intends to report to the Prime Minister on the latter point in the course of the week.

/I am sending



I am sending copies of this letter to Godfrey Robson (Scottish Office), George Craig (Welsh Office) and David Wright (Cabinet Office). I would be grateful if they could ensure that the letter is seen only by those who have a need to be aware of this morning's discussion.

M. A. PATTISON

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