

N. U. T.



10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

23rd May 1983

Dear Mr. Davis,

Thank you for your letter of 12th May.

I can certainly assure you that our aim is to increase educational opportunity, particularly in those areas where this is most needed. We have always believed that every citizen has a right to develop his or her abilities to the full. But we recognise there is a difference between equality of opportunity - an aim which we support - and Labour's policy which favours providing all children with precisely the same sort of education, irrespective of their different aptitudes and abilities.

Equality of opportunity means providing each pupil with the education best suited to his or her needs. This matching of provision to need is what we have been trying to achieve during our years in office. We have introduced a new Technical and Vocational Education Initiative, which will provide suitable training for those whose interests are practical rather than academic; we have stimulated and financially supported new projects to develop more appropriate education for the least able pupils; we have increased the opportunity for parents to choose their children's schools.

We believe that access to the state education service should be a fundamental right, and our continuing aim is to improve standards in that service. That is why, even at a time of serious world recession, this Government has spent more per child at school than ever before, even allowing for the rise in prices; the average number of children per teacher is the lowest ever; we have started to publish HMI reports on individual schools; we have increased the number of children in nursery education; we have improved arrangements for handicapped pupils; we have initiated important improvements in teacher-training; and we have begun a thorough review of the examination system. I do not believe that, in the light of these facts, anyone can seriously question our commitment to the public education service.

Finally, let me assure you of our absolute conviction that every child has a right to a proper education regardless of his or her parent's means. We believe that this right is entirely compatible with - is, indeed, a corollary of - the right of parents to spend their own money on their children's education if they so wish.

Yours sincerely
Raymond Chandler

Fred Jarvis Esq

NATIONAL UNION OF **TEACHERS**

General Secretary
Fred Jarvis MA



Hamilton House, Mabledon Place, London WC1H 9BD Telephones 01-387 2442 & 9191-3

The Rt Hon Mrs Margaret Thatcher MP
The Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
LONDON
SW1

12 May 1983

Dear Prime Minister,

My Union has this week published a Manifesto for Education, entitled "Our Children, Our Future" and is conducting a Campaign in support of the aims set out in the Manifesto.

Preparations for the publication of the Manifesto and the organisation of the Campaign were put in hand well before the General Election was announced, but now that there is to be a General Election, it is our aim to see that education features as an important electoral issue. We are asking our representatives in the constituencies to seek meetings with candidates to invite their support for the aims and proposals in the Manifesto. We also feel it would be appropriate if you, as Leader of the Conservative Party, could consider the Manifesto and state whether you are prepared to commit your party to the implementation of its proposals. I am writing in similar terms to the Leaders of the other major parties.

I wish to make it clear that the National Union of Teachers is not affiliated to any political party and, as the Manifesto states, we make no choice between political parties, only between educational policies. We are, however, extremely concerned for the future of the education service and seek the nation's commitment to the following beliefs:

- that all children should have equal opportunities to develop their abilities and talents to the full;
- that access to a public education service of the highest quality is a fundamental right for all children;
- and that access to education should be free and not dependent on ability to pay.

We would ask if you are prepared, on behalf of your party, to declare your support for those beliefs.

Yours sincerely

FRED JARVIS
General Secretary