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Keep on fire - Education
*I am surprised this
speech hasn't been picked up
being in mind & on p 2*

BOB DUNN MP

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Extract of a speech by Mr Bob DUNN, MP (Dartford), Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Department of Education and Science, to the Dartford Conservative Association at the Conservative Club Dartford, Kent, on Friday 22 June 1984.

Standards matter, they matter a lot, standards of achievement, of skills and understanding, academic and practical skills and understanding.

This Government and Sir Keith Joseph in particular has been taking giant strides towards raising such standards for all our children of whatever ability. Our announcement only this week on examinations is a further step in that direction of higher standards, higher absolute standards.

But I want this evening to refer to other standards which are equally important and which at present leave a great deal to be desired in many of our schools.

Religious Education and the development of moral values has been sadly neglected in far too many schools.

The place of the family, that essential unit of our society, needs putting back on the pedestal of our esteem where it belongs.

Religious Education in all schools for all children, and I mean all children and not just the young ones, is a legal duty placed upon us by the 1944 Education Act, but it is much more than legal duty, it is a moral duty, it is an essential part of every child's education.

RE is far too often the poor relation on the school timetable. There is insufficient time given to RE, insufficient thought and depth given to the subject, insufficient importance accorded to it.

There are too few teachers properly qualified to teach RE, and there are far too few candidates offering themselves as teachers of RE.

But is this surprising?

In too many schools, RE stops altogether for most children at the fourth form. From the age of 13 or 14 many, many children have no RE at all. Little wonder therefore that some of those children, when they themselves become teachers, probably very good teachers in mathematics or English or whatever is their chosen subject, those teachers shy away from attempting RE, let alone specialising in it.

They have no confidence in the subject, they may well be confused even within their own lives as to the meaning of religion.

My first point therefore is the need for a total renewal in the field of RE:-

- more RE for all children at least up to the age of 16.
- properly worked out courses, of depth and academic rigour, and vigour.
- more in-service training for teachers willing to take on RE.
- more encouragement for candidates for initial teacher training to specialise in RE.

More support for all of this from the local authorities and from the world, of education in general.

X | My second point is very similar, namely that the development of moral values is also a much neglected area of the curriculum, and it to needs careful reappraisal and renewal. For most of us those moral values are anchored in our religious belief, and for most, though not all of us, that religious belief is Christianity, and Christian values.

My third point really stems from these first two. Let us never forget the essential place of the family in our society, and the essential part which a good, stable family plays in the up bringing and education of every child.

The education service must work with the parents, with the family. The child is a part of that family first and foremost, and the prime duty and responsibility for that child and for that child's education rests with the parents.

All of us in education should be resolutely trying to strengthen and support, but never to supplant, the family and family life.

We need more RE, a deeper commitment, a deeper conviction.

We need greater attention to moral values.

We need to place the family at the centre of a child's education and development.

I look back in anger to so much of the so called "progressive" nonsense, dangerous nonsense, in education of the 1960's.

I look forward to a restoration of sanity and stability, not least for the children, in the 1980's.

END