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From the Minister of State  
for Industry and Information Technology

29 November 1984

Rt Hon Sir Keith Joseph Bt MP  
Secretary of State for Education  
and Science  
Department of Education and Science  
Elizabeth House  
York Road  
London SE1 7PH

EDUCATION FOR ECONOMIC AWARENESS

Thank you for copying to Norman Tebbit your letter of 14 November to Nigel Lawson. I have seen also the Prime Minister's comments as recorded in her Private Secretary's letter of 18 November.

I fully appreciate the Prime Minister's concerns. The promotion of economic awareness in schools could well provide an opportunity for those with political motivations to promote particular lines of economic thinking. When taught within a recognised examination syllabus, economics has of course a long tradition within the curriculum but the current proposal would not necessarily have such an examination constraint to avoid misuse. The analogy with "peace studies" is obvious.

Nevertheless, I sympathise with your view that too few children leave school with any understanding, of even a simple kind, of how industry and business works and how the community depends upon those involved in wealth-creation. At this level, we are talking far less about comparative theories and more about basic skills such as understanding profit and loss accounts and explaining the way in which markets act and commerce relies upon consumers, the importance of price, good design and quality and technological innovation and of management. I am quite sure that industry would appreciate the efforts of the education service far more if school children had these basic skills and some understanding of how wealth-creation can take place.

I would not want to make drafting amendments at this stage. But if we were to concentrate on these kinds of business and industrial literacy rather than economic awareness and change the wording and

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content to reflect that, I think there may well be a way forward. Certainly, I would welcome the opportunity to support further developments along these lines.

I am copying this letter to the Prime Minister, Willie Whitelaw, George Younger, Nick Edwards, Tom King, Douglas Hurd, David Young and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

GEOFFREY PATTIE

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