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QUEEN ANNE'S GATE LONDON SW1H 9AT

29 January 1986

Dear Keith,

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BIASED TEACHING AND POLITICAL INDOCTRINATION  
IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

I am grateful for the opportunity to comment on the draft circular and statement of principles attached to your minute of 10 January to the Prime Minister.

The problem of political bias in education is a real one, and I welcome your willingness to tackle it. One aspect of the problem which has been a source of concern to me and my colleagues in the Home Office is the refusal by some authorities and some schools, on political grounds, to allow police officers to visit schools. I would not want to overstate the importance of such visits. They should, in my view, be seen as part of a wider process of establishing links between the school and the outside world, including other statutory agencies and voluntary bodies working in the locality, and should certainly not detract from the role of the teacher in instilling a sense of civic responsibility. But they do have a useful function in helping pupils to understand the nature of the police task in upholding the law.

As you will recall from our exchanges before the Party Conference, I am anxious that we should see the school, so far as possible, as a positive influence steering young people away from delinquency and crime, by helping them to perceive and accept the duties of citizenship and the importance of respecting the interests of others. I think it is important that the statement of principles should convey something of that flavour. I imagine that you will want to recast the statement somewhat in response to the Prime Minister's request, and I may say that I would welcome changes that gave it a more practical thrust. But taking the existing paragraph 2 as it stands, my point would be met if the final sentence were expanded on the following lines:

"Among the attitudes to be promoted are a rational approach to evidence and argument, both in forming opinions and in resolving differences; awareness of the duties of citizenship; respect for the rights of others, including their right to hold their own opinions and to express them within the law; and respect for the law and for those who are charged with upholding it in an impartial manner. Pupils and students need to be equipped....."

I am copying this letter to the Prime Minister and to the other recipients of your minute of 10 January.

Yours  
Douglas

The Rt Hon Sir Keith Joseph, Bt., MP.

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EDUCATION

POLICY PT 6

