

PRIME MINISTER

POLITICAL INDOCTRINATION IN SCHOOLS

Sir Keith Joseph has now discussed his draft circular with Professors Hirst and Minogue.

The revised draft is attached, with a covering letter from DES.

The changes which the Professors propose do not add up to much. The draft remains essentially the same: a statement of abstract principles.

DES, and I understand, Professors Hirst and Minogue, nonetheless firmly believe that it is worth issuing. They do not dispute that it does not offer practical guidelines to teachers. But they believe it will have an important symbolic value, will indicate the Government's concern, will encourage those who are trying to maintain standards, and will influence those who risk falling into bad habits for the better. They doubt there is much that can be done about the real malcontent and the malicious.

Personally, I think the circular is a statement of the obvious. But DES may be right that at worst it can do no harm, and at best it may help a little bit. Certainly Sir Keith Joseph is keen that it should be published on 4 February, before the Lords' Debate on indoctrination on the following day.

Content that the circular should issue in the form Sir Keith proposes?

Yes

MEA

MARK ADDISON

31 January 1986

CONFIDENTIAL



DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

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FROM THE SECRETARY OF STATE

Mark Addison Esq
Private Secretary
10 Downing Street
London SW1

30 January 1986

Dear Mark,

BIASED TEACHING AND POLITICAL INDOCTRINATION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

In accordance with your letter of 16^{at 11ap} January my Secretary of State has discussed the draft statement of principles with Professor Hirst and Professor Minogue. Both supported the proposal of a circular enclosing such a statement. In the light of their constructive and penetrating comments Sir Keith Joseph has amended the draft statement in two places which are side-lined in the attached revised text.

Sir Keith Joseph believes that it would be right to issue a draft circular as soon as is practicable. He has considered the timing in relation to the teachers' dispute. In his view there is no reason why this initiative should affect the dispute. He proposes to publish the draft circular on 4 February: this would strengthen the Government's position in relation to the Lords debate on Indoctrination which will take place on 5 February.

I am copying this letter to Joan MacNaughton, Stephen Boys Smith, Robert Gordon, Colin Williams, Alison Smith, Andrew Lansley, Jim Daniell and Robin Young.

yours sincerely,
Rob Smith.

R L SMITH
Private Secretary

C O N F I D E N T I A L

Draft statement of principles

THE TREATMENT OF POLITICALLY CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

1. One of the principal functions of education is to prepare pupils and students for the active discharge of the responsibilities of citizenship. It has long been recognised that this means, among other things, that issues of a politically controversial character will inevitably figure in some parts of the curriculum and can arise spontaneously in many. In treating such issues the education service in this country applies the principles appropriate to a free and open society.
2. Their application has a positive aspect. It is part of the task of schools and colleges to promote the attitudes, knowledge and skills which are necessary for the preservation of our society's fundamental values, notably its commitment to parliamentary democracy, the freedom of the individual within the law, and the equality of all citizens under the law. Among the attitudes to be promoted are a rational approach to evidence and argument, both informing opinions and in resolving differences; awareness of the duties and rights of citizenship; respect for the law and respect for the rights of others, including their right to hold their own opinions and to express them within the law. Pupils and students need to be equipped with the intellectual skills which are necessary if our society's fundamental values are to be understood, critically appraised, developed and defended.
3. It follows that, within the limits set out above, schools and colleges should be ready, in the interests of good education, to tackle issues which are politically controversial. In doing this teaching staff should at all times seek to distinguish between fact and opinion, be ready to acknowledge personal bias, make clear that on matters of opinion views other than their own may be legitimately held, and encourage pupils and students to form their own

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conclusions on the basis of evidence and reflection and of discussion with others. How this is best done for pupils and students of varying maturity and understanding is a matter of professional judgment and calls for the exercise of professional responsibility.

EDUCATION PTO

General Pong

