

PRIME MINISTER

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TEACHERS' PAY: THE IMMEDIATE RESPONSE BY GOVERNMENTThe ACAS "Agreement"

The ACAS meeting this past weekend is likely to produce a highly unsatisfactory outcome: substantial agreement on much higher pay funded by central government, in return for no - or very little - agreement on conditions, appraisal and negotiating machinery for pay. Indeed, on these matters not only is no agreement being reached between the unions and management, but there is not even agreement among the unions.

The ACAS document is likely to be an agreement on the appropriate "Heads of Agreement".

1. The most detailed area of agreement is Pay Structure: a 2-year entry grade (£7,600) leading, after successful assessment, to a Main Professional Grade (max: £14,500) and a superstructure of Principal Teacher (£750 and £2,000 supplement) and Deputy Heads and Heads (max: £29,500).

This is a victory for the NUT and NAS/UWT who refuse to identify some teachers as better than others. It gives large increases to ordinary teachers, smaller increases for heads, and special allowances only for the Principal Teacher grade and heads.

2. The agreement on Duties, Responsibilities and Conditions of Service is limited to the length of the teaching year and hours of teaching time. Most of the duties, responsibilities and conditions of service of teachers will take months to negotiate.



The NUT has, however, conceded the drawing up of a professional code in addition to contractual duties: but, while valuable, this is likely to be unenforceable.

3. In the area of Appraisal, it looks as if a pilot scheme will be introduced covering six or so LEAs: the concept of appraisal, however, is more akin to career development for teachers rather than genuine evaluation.
4. A commitment to new negotiating machinery, which will be extremely unclear, and which the unions have given themselves 4 months to develop.

#### Conclusion

The objective of the unions and Labour-led LEAs is highly political: an agreement which will embarrass the Government and which can be rushed through very quickly - because of the likely substance of the MAIN Report. Apparently the unions are fearful of MAIN. The ACAS document is not an agreement: it is specific over pay, but unspecific about teachers' duties.

#### The Government Response

The Government's response needs to be much more subtle than it has been to date.

1. The Government should welcome those parts of the document which, however vague, point in the right direction - eg acceptance of appraisal, the professional code in addition to contractual duties, the linking of pay and conditions in future negotiating machinery.



2. The Government should point out that the agreement is extremely limited and that in all honesty it can only produce a considered response after ACAS has filled in the large gaps on duties, etc. This will enable the Government to play for time and therefore compare ACAS with MAIN.
  
3. The Government must criticise those parts of the agreement with which it fundamentally disagrees, eg the pay structure which provides insufficient differentials in pay, and far too few special allowances to deal with London Weighting, inner cities and shortage subjects.
  
4. The Government must take the initiative over the funding of the proposed agreement: it should invite the LEAs to put forward proposals for increased efficiency in the management of their authorities which will provide the savings to help finance the extra funding.

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