



Prime Minister <sup>(2)</sup>

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

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FROM THE SECRETARY OF STATE

You asked if you  
could see the latest position  
on academic tenure. A note  
by the PM's list is also attached.

POS  
21/10

Andy Bearpark Esq  
Private Secretary  
10 Downing Street

21 October 1986

Dear Andy

**ACADEMIC TENURE**

Thank you for your letter of 23 September asking about the present position on academic tenure in the light of Sir Peter Baxendell's comments. FLAP PTV

The Secretary of State made clear in his speech to the CVCP in September - copy enclosed - that he would like to see an end to academic tenure in the strong form in which it is granted by about half our universities. It is now over two years since Ministers agreed that Sir Keith Joseph could announce the intention to legislate to abolish such tenure for future appointments when the Parliamentary timetable allowed. The proposed Bill has twice failed to win a place in the legislative programme and Mr Baker does not believe that it would now be either practicable or desirable to legislate before a General Election.

In the meantime, in response to Mr Baker's request that in the period before legislation universities should co-operate in keeping the number of new tenured appointments to the minimum, the Vice-Chancellors are reviewing current practice in academic appointments. Sir Edward Parkes, a former Chairman of the UGC and now Vice-Chancellor of Leeds, told us recently that in the academic year just ended his university has made a total of 751 academic, research and related administrative appointments. Of these only 33 were academic appointments leading to possible appointment to a permanent academic post - the average age of the appointee was 30, and a further five years' probation was involved. The remaining 718 appointments involved fixed term contracts with no obligation of renewal at the end of the term. As it happens even permanent academic posts at Leeds are subject to three months' notice, but even so Sir Edward Parkes's figures illustrate how things are changing in the university world.

/As you know

As you know the Secretary of State does not believe that closing universities makes sense politically or in terms of the Government's higher education policy. But he intends to keep up the pressure for the universities to rationalize and become more efficient. The University Grants Committee already has in hand a programme to review and concentrate provision in over twenty subject areas where there is a proliferation of small departments. In general successful rationalisation - whether in the universities, the nationalised industries or the private sector - depends in practice upon agreed staff reduction and redeployment rather than on compulsory redundancy. While he has no sympathy with academic tenure, Mr Baker does not believe in this context that it is as serious a problem as Sir Peter suggests.

*Yours sincerely,*

*Rob Smith*

R L SMITH  
Private Secretary



Education

policy

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