

PRIME MINISTER29 October 1986TACTICS ON TEACHERS

At the end of the day there can be little doubt that the Government will have to abolish Burnham and impose Main on England and Wales. But this does not mean that this should be the starting posture. It is vital that Kenneth Baker put himself in the position of offering the teachers a better alternative to the Coventry cul-de-sac rather than taking away Burnham.

If Burnham were suddenly abolished by Government fiat then the teachers would immediately be up in arms over the withdrawal of their right to negotiate through (the much loved!) Burnham. This is not good ground for the Government to fight on, much better to keep the debate about the 16% pay offer and the terms and conditions that go with it. Burnham can then be killed off in a few months time when its manifest irrelevance has become clear to all.

Once the outrage over the Main offer has died down, the unions will inevitably want to enter into discussions over the details. This must be resisted. As soon as the DES start talking, the structure and conditions will start sliding backwards. Teachers expectations will be raised and peace in the schools may actually become less likely.

Obviously Ken Baker cannot ignore the teacher unions altogether: what he should do is ask for written representations and refuse discussions (with himself or officials) until these have been received. This way the unions will be forced to put their complete shopping list on the table from the outset rather than gradually erode the Government's position by steadily increasing their demands. Because this way they will be shown to be unreasonable, they

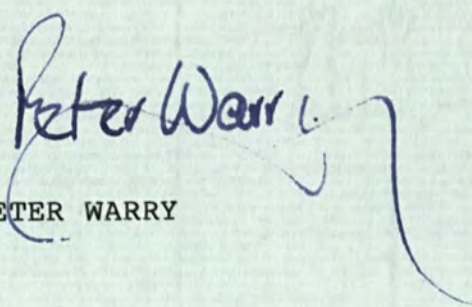
will be much easier to refuse. Ideally Baker should ask for a joint document drawn up by all the unions. This would ~~expose their conflicting demands, probably prove impossible,~~ and almost certainly leave them in disarray.

Conclusion

The Government must adopt the stance of offering the unions something rather than taking away their existing rights to Burnham and the Coventry proposals. Abolishing Burnham would obscure the main issue and arouse comparison with the GCHQ controversy. We strongly recommend that Ken Baker:

- a. Offers Main money inextricably linked to Main conditions as an alternative to the unions continuing to proceed down the Coventry path.
- b. ² That he does not announce the abolition of Burnham at this stage.

- c. That he refuses to enter into discussions with the unions until they have made definitive written representations, preferably on a joint basis.


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