

MR TURNBULL

Liverpool Schools

Keith now proposes to offer two modifications:

- (i) Retaining West Derby and Holly Lodge as separate single-sex schools;
- (ii) Deferring the implementation of the scheme by one year.

It is thought by some at DES that Liverpool will reject even as minor a modification as (i). If this is correct, there is an argument for proceeding as Keith suggests. Without giving anything away, we would appear to be the reasonable party whose sensible changes were refused by aggressive opponents.

But this is a high-risk ploy. Commentators on the Liverpool grape-vine have in the past warned that the Council might well call Keith's bluff if he engaged in a tactical move of this sort.

Nor is it necessary to take such a positive step at present. As Keith rightly points out, it will now be necessary to delay implementation of the scheme by a year, come what may. So he could announce:

- (i) that no decision had yet been taken, and
- (ii) that he would (at least) eventually modify the proposals by deferring them for a year.

This procedure - which has been used in other cases - relieves the uncertainty for parents this year, and leaves us with time to watch developments in Liverpool before coming to any final decision.

We recommend that the Prime Minister should press Keith to adopt a delaying tactic, unless he is extremely certain that the Council will reject even a minor modification.

*Ol Letwin*

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11 June 1984