

(1)
PRIME MINISTER

LIVERPOOL

A meeting of Ministers has been arranged for tomorrow afternoon to discuss further the Education Secretary's response to the proposals from Liverpool City Council for re-organising secondary education in the area.

flag A
flag B

I attach a further minute from Sir Keith Joseph, and Policy Unit advice. Essentially, the Education Secretary is maintaining his preference for modifying the Council's proposals rather than outright rejection. He believes that modification to retain four single sex schools would be beyond his powers, and therefore proposes modification to retain two. An additional modification will now be necessary to delay implementation by one year.

The Policy Unit are prepared to support this line for the rather different reason that it will probably be rejected by the City Council - leaving the Government with the advantage (as the Policy Unit see it) of no action on the plan, and the City Council with the opprobrium. On the other hand, there must remain some risk that the Council will call the Secretary of State's bluff and go along with his modifications in order to implement the other (highly objectionable) features of their proposals.

The question is how great is this risk, and does it outweigh the potential benefits of avoiding outright rejection of a plan which would, for all its faults, reduce expenditure?

If you were minded to go along with the Secretary of State, not least in the hope that the final outcome would be no change, then the meeting tomorrow may not be necessary.

Agree that the Secretary of State should accept the plan with modifications to delay by one year, and to retain two single sex schools?

Yes no

DMB

12 June 1984