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10 DOWNING STREET

LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Principal Private Secretary

20 April 1988

Dear David,

OPTING OUT IN SCOTLAND

Your Secretary of State came to see the Prime Minister this afternoon to discuss opting out in Scotland.

After your Secretary of State had described the position, the Prime Minister and he agreed that he should report to her further on opting out in Scotland after he had carried out his consultations and before final decisions were made on the contents of next session's Scottish Education Bill. It was also agreed that your Secretary of State should keep the position open for the future when the Government Minister responded to Mr. Allan Stewart's amendment.

I suggest that you should confine sight of this letter to your Secretary of State and named members of your Department on a strict need to know basis.

Nigel Wicks

(N.L. WICKS)

David Crawley, Esq.,
Scottish Office.

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NOTE FOR THE RECORD

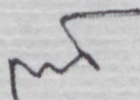
OPTING OUT IN SCOTLAND

This note amplifies the conclusions set out in my letter of today's date to David Crawley recording Mr. Rifkind's meeting today about opting out in Scotland.

The Prime Minister said that she could not see why the people of Scotland should not have the same advantage as the people of England and Wales in being able to choose whether to opt schools out from the local authority system. There was no compulsion to do this and it would have been worthwhile even if only half a dozen schools chose this route. Mr. Rifkind said that he agreed. It was a question of timing. He had had considerable difficulty persuading certain back-bench colleagues in supporting the limited proposals in this session's Bill. His problem was that there was not a significant body of opinion in Scotland in favour of opting out. He hoped that the Catholic hierarchy could be persuaded to support opting out as a way of retaining control over their schools. But the leak of letters had made that more difficult. Since the Prime Minister and he had both stressed publicly that opting out would not be introduced until there was a demand for it, it was important to be able to point to such demand before permitting schools to opt out. The Prime Minister drew attention to the advantages of the Order-making power described in my letter of 21 March to David Crawley. This would enable the legislation to be passed, but not activated until there was evidence of a desire to take advantage of it.

It was agreed to proceed as described in my letter to David Crawley.

N-L W



N.L. WICKS

20 April 1988