

PRIME MINISTER

EDUCATION REFORM BILL: PROVISION FOR FURTHER EDUCATION
STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS (SEN)

Earlier in the month Kenneth Baker (minute of 10 June) proposed an amendment to the Education Reform Bill to "clarify" LEAs duties in relation to further education students with special educational needs. He claimed this was a nil cost amendment.

You expressed doubts as to whether this would be nil cost (my minute of 15 June and letter of 16 June) and the Chief Secretary also expressed some reservations (letter of 16 June).

Mr. Baker has now written again to the Chief Secretary (letter of 23 June), with a side letter of the same date from his office to me. He attaches the text of the amendment he still wishes to table. Although he does not say so in so many words, he does now accept that the amendment could lead to upward pressures on expenditure. But he rests his case for the amendment on the argument that, if this Government proposal is not put forward, more damaging amendments will be approved by the Lords. Lord Denham supports this assessment in his letter of 21 June.

I think it probably is necessary to accept the assessment that some concession has to be made in the Lords. The Treasury are however arguing that the words "in particular" in the second line of the amendment go too far; I think there is force in that objection.

Content now to agree the proposed Government amendment, subject to deleting "in particular" in the second line?

PRCG.

PAUL GRAY
23 June 1988
DCAALG

Yes
mt