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PRIME MINISTER

13 July 1988

Education Reform Bill: Lords Amendments

Kenneth Baker highlights two amendments from the Lords which he says cannot be accepted in their present form.

Grant-Maintained Schools

It seems curious that a non-elected body such as the House of Lords should be so insistent on majority voting rules. The vote in question is not a vote for schools to become GM schools but simply to trigger-off the process. Following this there will be ample opportunity for the LEA, dissident parents and any pressure group to set out and debate their views.

The House of Lords amendment would have more weight if the vote was a vote to change the status of the schools. But it is not.

Personally I cannot see any new reason why the original proposal should be varied. Kenneth Baker's suggestion makes the whole procedure more cumbersome and an added disincentive for parents to consider this route.

Recommendation

Reject the Lords amendment.

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Universities Funding

A number of peers have become very worked up over this issue. My understanding of the Bill's proposal that the UFC would "make payments, subject to such terms and conditions as they think fit", was that the Secretary of state wanted the UFC to be able to take quicker action than for example the UGC did with respect to the mismanagement of University College, Cardiff. The major thrust of our policy however was that universities were to be made more responsive to student demands: (money should follow the student) and that he was actively working on a paper.

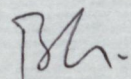
From a conversation on the telephone with a junior minister in education earlier today however the significance of the expression "contracts" is that DES will be able to specify to institutions or invite institutions to bid for, precise numbers of engineers, scientists, humanities students etc that they admit.

This seems a completely retrograde step and totally different from what the Secretary of State has outlined in bilaterals. Indeed from these I was clearly under the impression that we were expecting a paper from the DES discussing alternative ways of money following the student.

To the extent that Kenneth Baker's proposed amendment of the Lords will make it easier to move to contract based funding, we are moving in the wrong direction.

Recommendation

If you wish to prevent a move in this direction then Kenneth Baker's recommendation should not be accepted as it stands.


BRIAN GRIFFITHS

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Examinations Reform Bill

Universities

Don't minimize out, please, in the
Max Schell point. If it gets
out, our efforts to make the
universities more accountable
will be set back.

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E. R. B.
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Nigel Wicks

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Prime Minister ²

The Independent

Friday 8th July 1988

Very surprising, but welcome news.
Still subject to Appeal.

Rawlston news.

N.C.U 8.7

Parents win court battle to block schools merger

PARENTS have won a key battle in an 18-month campaign to prevent the merger of two Derbyshire comprehensive schools.

Two High Court judges decided yesterday that plans by Derbyshire County Council to merge Ilkeston with nearby Cantelupe were unlawful.

Parents of pupils at Ilkeston objected because the merger entailed the loss of the school's sixth form which would have been absorbed by a college three miles away.

A group of parents appealed to Kenneth Baker, the Secretary of State for Educa-

By Simon Midgley
Education Reporter

tion. In June 1987, Bob Dunn, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, appeared to approve the council's plans. A Department of Education and Science official told the local education authority in a confidential telephone call that approval had been granted.

News of this decision was leaked to the press and Peter Rost, Conservative MP for

Erewash, complained to the DES. An official then announced that there had been "a misunderstanding" and that a decision had, in fact, yet to be taken.

A month later, DES officials again recommended the merger. Mr Dunn told Mr Rost that it had been approved. Mr Rost objected for a second time. On 28 July, an existing draft letter of approval was scrapped and an alternative letter of rejection sent instead.

The council then applied for a judicial review of this decision and on 18 December

the DES announced that the original decision to allow the merger should stand.

A group of Ilkeston parents then raised £1,500 to meet the cost of their own judicial review. Giving judgement yesterday, the judges declared that the Secretary of State's decision of 28 July to block the merger was valid.

After the judges give their reasons for their decision later this month, Derbyshire County Council will have to decide whether to appeal to the Court of Appeal against the judgement.

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