

C.C. 8/8/87

PRIME MINISTER

THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM

As Brian says, the document is a compromise. His discussions with Mr. Baker have moved the draft nearer towards your own position. But I have to say that many of the changes are cosmetic, including in particular the deletion of sentences to which you would object without in my view changing the substance. There is now more emphasis on the three core subjects. But all the other subjects are still there, ^(*inevitably, now, I believe*) and there are still to be attainment targets and variations to cope with different levels of ability. Although I can find now no statement which says that there will not be passing and failing, it is clear that there will in fact be no such thing as passing and failing. And I can see no reference to children being expected to repeat particular programmes of study when they fail to reach a particular standard.

The document is long enough for Mr. Baker no doubt to be able to point to particular sentences which nod in your direction. But overall this is a long way from your own conception of minimum requirements to be set in three or four subjects with "driving test" assessments.

Mr. Baker will I am sure feel that he has argued you out of your approach during the successive meetings with him and that you would be wrong to re-open this now. If you want to do so, I am sure it would be right to dismiss the remainder of the Committee before tackling Mr. Baker.

One other small point.

Paragraph 66 refers to a working group on English to follow on from the report of the Kingman Committee. But surely the Kingman Committee should itself do the job of a working group? Otherwise progress on English will be delayed yet further.

D.N.
(DAVID NORGROVE)

21 July 1987