

WHITE PAPER ON SCHOOLS POLICY

1. As you know, I have for some time been preparing a White Paper setting out our policies for the schools in England and Wales. Since we took office we have set about making a large number of changes, all designed to raise standards. In this enterprise we have moved into the school curriculum in a wholly new way; we are reforming the examination system; we are reforming teacher training and pressing local authorities to tackle their management tasks more vigorously in the interest of efficiency; and we have decided to reform school government to give more say to school governors and parents. Running through these policies is the drive for better value for money and for a more efficient use of the resources invested in education.

2. All this needs to be brought home to the education service and to its customers. Progress is being hampered because people cannot see how our various initiatives fit together. The attached draft White Paper, which I will be asking H to consider on 6 March, gives the whole picture and announces some new decisions eg on school government. (The draft assumes certain policy decisions by H in relation to in-service training and appraisal of teachers and the response to the Swann report).

3. The text (which is acceptable to the Treasury at official level) gives pride of place to standards and value for money; stresses the need for a curriculum which properly equips pupils for work, in personal qualities and attitudes as well as in schools, and shows how our various initiatives, notably the TVEI, serve this need.

4. The White Paper, like our policies, breaks much new ground. Indeed, it registers definitively that in the interests of standards this Government is prepared to enter territory not entered by previous Governments since the war. It makes a critical appraisal of the schools and exposes their weaknesses in a way which is unprecedented. The case has to be thoroughly argued, and the evidence marshalled, if the education service is to be persuaded - as you know I cannot coerce it - to do all that we want them to do in the national interest. So the text is necessarily lengthy, and often directed mainly at



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readers within the education service. To help other readers I propose to issue a short, crisp layman's summary when the White Paper is published.

5. I am proposing to H that the White Paper should be published on 26 March and that I should then make an oral statement in the House. That date would fit well in the announcement of the outcome of David Young's working group on the 14-18 age range. It would also be the occasion for referring as necessary to industrial action by the teachers. We cannot, in my view, allow such action to deflect us from the serious business of making and promoting our policies on school education.

6. I am sending a copy of this minute to Nicholas Edwards.

KJ

26 February 1985 .