



Prime Minister,
 Baroness Cox's signed
 letter is at Flag C
 MHA 11/3

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

ELIZABETH HOUSE, YORK ROAD, LONDON SE1 7PH

TELEPHONE 01-928 9222

FROM THE SECRETARY OF STATE

8 March 1985

Dear Caroline,

1. The Prime Minister is to meet Baroness Cox, Professor Pollard and Dr Marks on Tuesday 12 March, with my Secretary of State also present. Baroness Cox and her colleagues wish to propose radical education initiatives: eg the development of specialist state schools as centres of excellence; and the further enhancement of parental choice.
2. The Prime Minister will recall the earlier debate about vouchers, publicly concluded by Sir Keith Joseph's statement in the House on 22 June 1984 (Annex A). The Government has now sought other ways to increase parental influence in schools, and the Schools White Paper - soon to be published but not yet public knowledge - will announce the Government's decision to legislate to increase parents' representation on governing bodies and to clarify and enhance the responsibilities of those bodies.
3. Sir Keith is also considering a radical - and confidential - proposal for widening parental choice that has been previously advocated by the Prime Minister: the establishment of a number of grant aided primary schools. He will be ready to say more about this at the meeting.
4. As background, you may wish to remind the Prime Minister of Sir Keith's letters of 14 November to her and to Baroness Cox (Annex B) and his statement in the House about research into standards.

Yours,

Elizabeth

MISS C E HODKINSON
 Private Secretary

Mrs Caroline Ryder
 10 Downing Street
 LONDON SW1

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend has no plans to introduce such legislation.

1610

Teaching Posts (Vacancies)

Mr. Arnold asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information his Department collects on vacancies for teaching posts in individual local education authority areas.

Mr. Dunn: Since 1979 the Department has conducted an annual survey of the number of vacancies on a date in January of each year for full-time secondary school teachers in each local education authority, by teaching subject. National results for surveys up to 1983 were published in September last year in statistical bulletin 14/83, which is available in the Library.

1611

Teachers

Mr. Arnold asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he takes to encourage unemployed trained teachers to move to parts of the United Kingdom where there are shortages of teaching staffs.

Mr. Dunn: None. It is for local education authorities, as the employers of teachers, to take such steps as they consider necessary to attract teachers in their areas so as to make good any shortages. Teachers seeking work in other parts of the country may make use of professional and executive recruitment and other facilities provided by the public employment service.

1612

Mr. Arnold asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will estimate, for each principal teaching subject in secondary education, whether the supply of trained teachers exceeds or is less than the demand.

Mr. Dunn: There are too many unknown factors to give a precise estimate of the relationship of supply demand. Indicators which give a measure of the relative strength of demand are the extent of unemployment amongst newly trained specialist teachers—obtained from the annual surveys conducted by the Department and by the Universities Council for the Education of Teachers—and the number of vacancies in each secondary school subject reported by local education authorities in the Department's annual survey. On these indicators, demand is currently higher than average in mathematics and science, craft, design and technology, business studies and music, and lower than average in English, foreign languages, religious education, geography, history and art; for home economics and physical education the evidence is mixed.

1605

Secondary Schools (Liverpool)

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will now make a statement on the reorganisation of secondary schools in Liverpool.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend is consulting Liverpool LEA as required by section 12(6) of the Education Act 1980 on two modifications to its proposals to reorganise county secondary provision in the city.

14

1606

School Holidays

Mr. Silvester asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will take steps to require that the number of occasional days for school holidays may not increase because of particular years being a leap year.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend has no proposals to change the regulations governing occasional days of holiday in term-time. The Education (Schools and Further Education) Regulations 1981 permit maintained schools to be granted not more than 20 sessions of occasional holidays during term-time within the school year which must comprise at least 400 sessions.

1607

Education Vouchers

Mr. Couchman asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a further statement about education vouchers.

Sir Keith Joseph: I was intellectually attracted to the idea of education vouchers because it seemed to offer the possibility of some kind of market mechanism which would increase the choice and diversity of schools in response to the wishes of parents acting as customers. In the course of my examination of this possibility, it became clear that there would be great practical difficulties in making any voucher system compatible with the requirements that schooling should be available to all without charge, compulsory and of an acceptable standard. These requirements—difficult though the latter two are to achieve effectively under any dispensation—were seen to limit substantially the operation, and the benefits, of free market choices; and to entail an involvement on the part of the state—centrally and locally—which would be both financial and regulatory and on a scale likely to necessitate an administrative effort as great as under the present system. These factors would have applied whether vouchers were available only within the maintained system or could be used in the independent sector as well.

A change of this magnitude would desirably be preceded by pilot schemes undertaken by volunteer LEAs. These would require legislation and there was serious doubt whether they could adequately establish the feasibility of a voucher system within a manageable time scale.

I concluded that the difficulties which would arise from the many and complex changes required to the legal and institutional framework of the education system, and the additional cost of mitigating them, were too great to justify further consideration of a voucher system, as a means of increasing parental choice and influence.

For these reasons, the idea of vouchers is no longer on the agenda.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Imported Goods (VAT)

Mr. Onslow asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received about the effect on importers and freight forwarders of his proposal to levy value added tax on imported goods at the time of importation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: A number of representations have been received from importers and freight forwarders on various



DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

ELIZABETH HOUSE, YORK ROAD, LONDON SE1 7PH

TELEPHONE 01-928 9222

FROM THE SECRETARY OF STATE

Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
London SW1

17 November 1984

Dear Margaret,

In my letter of 10 April, I explained to you the action I had set in hand in connection with Caroline Cox and John Marks and their research. --- The Department's two studies have now been completed and I attach a copy of the further statement which I am making to the House in today's debate.

As you will see, I have decided against providing funds for more research along the lines of the Department's studies, which were based on one of the statistical approaches that Caroline and John have used in the past. I am however going to look at proposals for research ranging more widely and Caroline and John (as well as others) will be able to consider whether they are able to prepare a suitable research application on this basis.

--- I am writing to Caroline to put her in the picture. (Attached)

Yours ever,

Neil



Set Copy

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE
ELIZABETH HOUSE, YORK ROAD, LONDON SE1 7PH
TELEPHONE 01-928 9222
FROM THE SECRETARY OF STATE

The Baroness Cox
146 Stag Lane
Kingsbury
London NW9 QQR

17 November 1984

Dear Caroline.

In response to your letter of 21 August, I explained that I hoped to be able to make a further statement in the autumn and that I would let you know what I had in mind as soon as I could. I now attach for you a copy of the statement which I am making today following completion of the Department's two further studies.

You will see that I have decided against providing funds for more research along the lines of the Department's studies (which used statistical techniques successfully applied by you and John Marks) but that I will be ready to consider proposals for research ranging more widely. You will no doubt want to consider whether you and John will wish to prepare a suitable research specification for me to consider alongside any others. As I also indicate in the statement, the Department will be discussing any proposals with the applicants. Mr R W Chattaway will be dealing with any research applications, and if you would like preliminary discussion at any stage, please do not hesitate to get in touch with him or Mr Wakefield.

Leon Kew

[Sir Keith Joseph]

I accept that none of the HMI reports has presented a wholly satisfactory picture and that this year's was no exception. For instance, it drew particular attention, as the hon. Gentleman says, to the patchiness of improvements around the country—both between LEAs and schools within authorities—and to the deterioration of school and college premises because of inadequate repairs and maintenance. On both counts I share the inspectorate's concern.

But we cannot solve the problems simply by spending vastly more. The country just cannot afford it. Unemployment would go even higher if we tried to do so. We must look also to the need to secure better value for the money that we are spending.

The HMI report is useful on that aspect, too. The inspectorate makes it clear that in many cases there is scope for better deployment of existing resources and for better perceptions by heads and teachers of resources needed for good education, as well as, in some cases, absolute increases in the levels of resources.

Her Majesty's inspectorate identified the factors most commonly influencing effective learning as the quality of teaching, the identification of pupil and student needs, the levels of resources available, and the ability to manage and deploy those resources. It stated firmly that without clearer agreement about what it is that the resources are intended to help achieve and consequent careful planning and development, and without adequate and continuing training for teachers, the addition of more, different and better quality material resources will not of itself maintain present quality levels or lead to desirable changes and improvements.

That is the task that faces us, and in facing it we would all do well to avoid over-simplification of what is a complex question—the relationship between levels of resources for education and its quality.

I want to emphasise at this point what a difficult task teachers have if they are to be effective. That is why I regard the present teachers' salary structure talks as so important. They range across many aspects of teachers' work and recognise the need to relate that work and the way in which it is rewarded to changing circumstances.

The main ingredients of a successful outcome from those talks will provide for a closer relationship, more amenable to local education authority management, between teachers' pay, performance and responsibilities; a more precise definition of teachers' duties, including the supervision of pupils at midday and the provision of classroom cover for absent teachers; systematic arrangements for the formal appraisal of the performance of all teachers linked to provision to in-service training, promotion and deployment, and enabling the best teachers to be appropriately rewarded.

As I said in the House last Thursday, I should like to see a successful outcome from those talks because satisfactory agreements on those issues would lead to improvements in the quality of education offered by our schools. Therefore, I hope that the representatives of the local authorities and the teachers' unions engaged in the discussions will be successful, although I recognise the problems of bringing complex negotiations in that field to a satisfactory conclusion.

Reform proposals will need to pass three stringent tests if they are to come to fruition. First, they must be

negotiable between the parties. Secondly, they need to be educationally acceptable and hold the realistic promise of delivering improvements in the classroom. Thirdly, they must be affordable. As for the latter, I hope that the teachers' leaders will not mislead their members, as they did earlier this year in the 1984 negotiations, as to what level of pay settlement might be regarded as reasonable.

The autumn statement made earlier this week by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor shows that the Government fully intend to keep faith with the inescapable fact that we cannot spend more on public services such as education than is consistent with the country's ability to pay. To do otherwise would put us back on the destructive road to wage-push inflation and still higher levels of unemployment.

The hon. Member for Durham, North asked me about the Sheffield speech and the progress under it. The speech announced the fourfold Government initiative that is intended, with the help of teachers, local education authorities and parents, to raise the standards of children of all abilities in our schools. I have never pretended that that speech did more than set in place the necessary conditions for the raising of standards.

I remind the House briefly that the four parallel initiatives cover the more rigorous selection and training of teachers, an attempt to reach a national agreement on the curriculum, a transformation of examinations towards clearer absolute assessment and the introduction of records of achievement so that children's performances outside the classroom can be assessed and recorded. All four initiatives are progressing according to the publicly announced timetable. Again, I cannot pretend that they have yet begun to have an effect, and I hope that no hon. Member will chide me for that, as there was never any pretence that they could have an instantaneous effect. However, the schedules are all as announced.

I turn to an area upon which I believe the whole House can unite in seeking more information. I refer to research into what explains the different standards in different schools. I announced in the House on 1 March 1984 that I had asked the Department to undertake two studies before considering the potential for further research into school standards. I have now received reports on the two studies and these will be published shortly. Copies are being placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

The first of these studies extends the earlier analysis by the Department, published as statistical bulletin 16/83, of factors affecting examination results in different local education authority areas. It shows an even higher correlation—over 70 per cent.—than the earlier analysis between examination achievements at school and social background factors, probably reflecting the more recent information available for these factors. I explained in my earlier statement that it was expected that the extended study would provide limited insight into the effect of other factors on examination results. In the event, after taking account of the effect of social background—I stress that—the new study shows no more than a slight relationship at local authority level between pupils' examination achievements and the level of resources, including teaching resources, available to their schools, and a similarly slight statistical relationship with the proportion of pupils in grammar schools.

The second study was designed to examine the scope for carrying out further research on these relationships at the level of individual schools or groups of schools. This

study also shows a strong statistical relationship between examination results and social background factors, and again does not show a very substantial relationship with other factors such as the level of resources available to the schools. It also demonstrates the difficulty of extracting suitable data on social background factors from census material. Difficulties over the use and interpretation of data relevant to social background are also indicated by research commissioned by the Department and undertaken by the university of Leeds, which examined, *inter alia*, the development of suitable measures of home background. A report on this research is being prepared. I impose all this on the House because it is the background against which we can make further progress.

The two studies carried out by the Department thus show a strong relationship between school pupils' examination results and socio-economic background, but they shed little light on the influence of other factors on school pupils' performance, or on the wide variation in examination achievements among pupils from similar socio-economic backgrounds. I believe that it would now be research into the factors giving rise to this wide variation, which may be factors related to the way the school carries out its work rather than external to the school, which is likely to be most relevant to the development of the Government's policies for improving standards in schools, particularly if the research also includes other measures of pupil performance.

I have concluded that I would not be justified in providing funds for more research along the lines of the Department's recent studies. I am, however, willing to consider proposals for research ranging more widely and exploring the relationship between the social background of pupils collected at the level of individual pupils, a range of school outputs including public examinations, and a range of school inputs such as resources, the achievements of pupils on entry to secondary schools, teaching quality, the organisation of the school and its internal practices including teacher expectations, curriculum continuity and homework. Such research would be complex and expensive and could not be expected to yield results in less than three years. I shall want the Department to discuss any proposals in detail with the applicants before I decide on financial support.

Since that offers help only over the middle distance, I shall tell the House of a new initiative that may help in the slightly nearer future. Hon. Members will be aware that in announcing the Government's decision to adopt a single system of examination at 16, the Government also announced their intention that there should be distinction awards to recognise the breadths and levels of performance of those whose new GCSE grades and subjects reach a defined standard. The Government intend to add another level below distinction to encourage both the breadth and level of performance. Below the distinction award, we propose to introduce an award that will be called a merit award, which will recognise a breadth and level of achievement that is lower than that of the distinction award but which is still commendably wide and high. I hope that that will prove to be a further stimulus towards excellence.

Mr. Radice: Is that not reintroducing the O-level by another name?

Sir Keith Joseph: No such thought is in my mind. The award stands self-justified by its objective. In due course, I shall spell out the definition.

The Government and I were chided for the announced increase in the parental contributions made to some students in higher education. However, the Government have no plans to charge parents the same amount as overseas students. The purpose of that extra contribution is, first, to meet the cost of higher student awards; and secondly, to enable the Government to provide some more badly-needed money for basic research in universities and through the research councils. I believe that the strong national asset of basic scientific research should be supported in that way, and that is why the Government have asked the families of students to pay the extra contributions.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): My right hon. Friend will appreciate the problem of many of his supporters, who find it very difficult to justify this increasing tax on families, many of whom have other children at home and large financial commitments as a result, when at the same time we are increasing the payment to farmers who have had a bumper record harvest this year. Is there no way of squaring this circle? How does my right hon. Friend intend to deal with those students who have obtained places in higher education and who are deemed to be receiving parental contributions sufficient to pay towards the fees, if the parents do not cough up the money? Will there be sentries on the gates to stop them getting into their classes, or what will happen?

Sir Keith Joseph: I have no answer to either limb of my hon. Friend's question. The world is not a perfect place and no Government have yet managed to secure that all parents provide what their children need. That means that those children must show initiative in coping with the problem. Mercifully, I am not responsible for agriculture.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Does not the Secretary of State agree that it is important that all young people should be treated equally? Does he realise that some girls whose parents come from the Indian sub-continent have considerable problems because their parents do not consider that they should go on to higher education? Consequently, their parents will not fill in the application form for a grant; thus, although the family may be on an extremely low income, those girls will lose any grant. Furthermore, they will have to find their own fees if they go on to higher education. Is that not an extremely unfortunate development from those proposals?

Sir Keith Joseph: If the hon. Gentleman has a way of overcoming the problem I should be glad to hear it.

I hope that I have answered the questions asked by the hon. Member for Durham, North. I can report to the House that we are on schedule with the Sheffield policies, but we do not expect instant transformation from them. I have announced various initiatives in research and for the encouragement of standards. I have explained our support for discussions between local education authorities and teacher organisations which are broadly encouraging. I ask the House to vote for the amendment and against the Opposition motion.

4.40 pm

Mr. Sean Hughes (Knowsley, South): I am pleased that in the preface to his remarks the Secretary of State said that he was sure that both sides of the House were interested in improving education standards. Time and again his party has postured as the party committed to the



House of Lords · Westminster

January 25 1985.

PERSONAL.

The Prime Minister,
10 Downing Street,
London SW1.

Dear Prime Minister,

I am writing to you because I am deeply worried about widespread grassroots anxiety concerning the present state of education.

Many people feel that the time is overdue for the government to take some radical initiatives. Examples could include the development of specialist schools as centres of excellence within the state system and the further enhancement of parental choice. Such policies would be consistent with Conservative philosophy and would also have great public appeal.

Current initiatives, although sound, do not go nearly far enough. Unless the government proposes some fundamental changes in the very near future, the next manifesto may well have few major achievements to record. This would be tragic, as education is an area where the government's philosophy, translated into policy, would be immensely popular with the electorate.

Would it be possible for me, together with Professor Arthur Pollard and Dr. John Marks, to have a brief interview with you to discuss these matters?

Yours sincerely,
Cairi Cox.

The Baroness Cox.



FROM THE PRIVATE SECRETARY TO THE LEADER OF THE HOUSE
AND THE CHIEF WHIP

3 May 1985

Dear Tim *Noted*
AS
5/10

BARONESS COX AND PACE

We spoke on Wednesday about Lady Cox's connections with the Parental Alliance for Choice in Education (PACE) in the light of an article which appeared in the Guardian on Monday. As I told you, Lady Cox had severed her connections with the group on her appointment as a Government Whip in the Lords; and she subsequently wrote to the Guardian pointing out the misleading impression that their article had created.

The Times Educational Supplement has today run an article on the same subject and open to the same sort of misconstruction. Lady Cox has now also written to TES pointing out that she has broken all her links with the group.

Copies of this letter go to Richard Hatfield, Janet Lewis-Jones and Jean Caines.

Yours truly

A R Dyer

A R DYER
Assistant Private Secretary

Tim Flesher Esq
Private Secretary to
the Prime Minister



3 May 1985

Dear Stewart

May I first thank you for giving such prominent coverage to the initiatives of "PACE". May I however point out that since my appointment to the Government Front Bench I have naturally resigned from that organisation and I would be grateful if this could be borne in mind in future coverage of its activities.

With best wishes.

Yours sincerely

Carrie Cox.

COX

The Editor
The Times Educational Supplement

NEWS

Inspectors, advisers and boards
condemn GCSE proposals

All-out attack on plan for higher grade exam awards

by Susannah Kirkman

controversial Distinction and awards are under attack again; test protests come from I.e.a.s, public school heads, the Southern Examining Group and from members of the Secondary Examinations Council, the Government advisers on exams. Inspectors and advisers and the five boards which make up the Southern Examining Group have rejected the certificates proposed by the Government for pupils to achieve high grades in seven GCSE subjects. The Headmasters' Conference condemned the proposals as "pre-emptive to a degree not hitherto laid by the Secretary of State". The introduction of the certificates is a "retrograde step... a step back to the matriculation exemption

proposed by schools, according to Mr John Day, secretary to the Southern Examining Group monitoring committee. One of the requirements of the certificates is that pupils should offer one subject from CDT, home economics, art and design and music. As the DES Curriculum 5 to 16 paper has recommended that CDT should be compulsory for all pupils up to 16, there is a danger that the other subjects would be ousted from the curriculum, says NAIEA. NAIEA shares the independent schools' fear that the awards will reduce the range of modern languages and science subjects taught in schools, as pupils taking three modern languages or three science subjects will not qualify for the Distinction or Merit certificates.

PACE marches fast into sex battle

by Bidy Passmore



Baroness Cox: leading member

A new parents' pressure group, formed to give national backing to local campaigns for the retention of popular schools, has been surprised to find its first battle being fought under the Sex Discrimination Act.

The Parental Alliance for Choice in Education (PACE), launched at a meeting in the House of Lords last week, aims to challenge local authorities who ride roughshod over parents' wishes on issues such as single-sex education, or which do not even attempt to find out what parents want. Although "non-party political", its members include leading right-wing figures in education such as Baroness Cox, Dr John Marks and Mr Fred Naylor, its acting honorary secretary.

The group was therefore taken aback to discover what were the best legal grounds for mounting a test case - challenging the decision to close Merrywood, an all-boys' comprehensive on a Bristol council estate.

Mr David Pannick, QC, advised local parents that Sir Keith Joseph, the Education Secretary, was wrong to sanction the closure - but not, as they had expected, because of lack of consultation by Avon County Council or because of the loss of single-sex education.

His attention focussed instead on the fact that Merrywood Girls' School was to stay open. Pupils there were being treated more favourably than boys, he said, and that was a breach of the Sex Discrimination Act.

This week, the parents are seeking leave in the High Court for a judicial review of the closure decision, due to take effect in 1986. They have already raised £1,500 and now need an extra £2,500 to pay legal costs. On a pre-war council estate, with unemployment running at 30 per cent, that is no easy task. Fund-raising activities such as sponsored walks are planned.

Fight for course

by Bert Lodge

A campaign to save a teacher training course which specializes in encouraging black students was launched this week by the Inner London Education Authority.

It follows proposals last month from the National Advisory Body for local authority higher education that the teaching studies department at the Polytechnic of North London should

Unions take council to court over docked pay

by Richard Garner

Liverpool City Council faces a High Court hearing over a controversial decision to dock the pay of teachers and their heads who turned up for work on a day that schools were shut because of a demonstration against rate-capping.

decided it would be possible to get the money back at a later date." Local members of the NAHT told Mr Dominic Brady, chairman of the education committee, that all its members had reported to school as usual. Mr David Hart, its general secretary,