cc HO Education
WO
CO
b.c. Sir K. Berrill

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

14 August 1979

Dear Philip

The Prime Minister has seen your Secretary of State's minute of 9 August about the school curriculum.

Whilst the Prime Minister understands the pressures to publish replies to circular 14/77, she would like to be clear what your Secretary of State hopes to achieve at the end of this exercise. She is certainly prepared to see action on the school curriculum in the lifetime of this Parliament, but would like a clearer indication of what the Secretary of State would wish this action to be. She remains convinced that the consultation process is unlikely to produce really worthwhile results unless the Secretary of State approaches it with a clear cut view of what he would like to see come out of it. It is this which she would like to see defined before further steps are taken.

I am sending copies of this letter to John Chilcot (Home Office), George Craig (Welsh Office) and Martin Vile (Cabinet Office).

Yours ever

Mike Pattison

Philip Hunter, Esq.,
Department of Education and Science.

TMP

A

RESTRICTED

Qa 04237

To: MR LANKESTER

From: SIR KENNETH BERRILL

The School Curriculum

1. The Secretary of State for Education's minute of 9 August proposes going ahead with publication of a consultative document on the curriculum to be discussed with interested parties.

2. In our note to you of 19 July, we criticised the Department of Education and Science's original draft consultation paper on the grounds that it did not stress enough the need for the education system to be more responsive to the needs of industry and the economy. But we think the Secretary of State is realistic, given the structure and traditions of our educational system, in saying that proposals for unilateral prescription of the curriculum would create a major row with teachers and local authorities which would not, at this stage, be worthwhile for any benefits which might be obtained. On the other hand, it would be a great pity if a positive DES initiative to influence attitudes to the curriculum in the right direction were to be lost because of the difficulty of going as far and as fast as one might in principle wish. The CPRS believes that, provided the draft is adequately sharpened up and the DES gives a firm lead to the discussions, the Secretary of State's proposal to press ahead with consultations is the best approach.

3. We note that the Secretary of State for Industry (in a letter to Mr Carlisle of 23 July - copy attached) also suggested that the drafting of the paper should be modified to give greater weight to industrial objectives, but supported the general approach.

4. I am sending a copy of this minute to Sir John Hunt.

KB

13 August 1979

RESTRICTED

DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRY
ASHDOWN HOUSE
123 VICTORIA STREET
LONDON SW1E 6RB
TELEPHONE DIRECT LINE 01-212 3301
SWITCHBOARD 01-212 7676

Secretary of State for Industry

2. Mr. Downey
c. Mr. Crawley
c. 1. Miss Hayman
2. Mr. Johns.

23 July 1979

The Rt Hon Mark Carlisle QC MP
Secretary of State for Education and Science
Department of Education and Science
Elizabeth House
York Road
London SE 1

CABINET OFFICE
A 3009
23 JUL 1979
FILING INSTRUCTIONS
FILE No.

cc Sir K Berrill
Mr Harrop
Mr Faulkner

Dear Mark

HOME AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
LOCAL AUTHORITY ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE SCHOOL CURRICULUM

I was glad to see the commentary which you propose to publish as a preface to the summary of local education responses to the circular issued in November 1977 (Annex B to H(79)30).

I welcome your main objectives and agree with the course of action proposed. I would like to suggest just two or three small changes in the commentary where I believe it would be valuable to mention points which are relevant to industry. I think these are well within the spirit of your draft and are certainly in the spirit of the Prime Minister's minute of 9 July asking us all to give priority in our policies to industrial considerations.

In paragraph 13 I suggest that the list of LEA policies should also include "Co-operation between schools and industry". It is important that authorities should have an enthusiastic, well-developed policy towards school/industry co-operation. This is particularly necessary in developing a closer relationship between the content of school education and the needs of an industrial and technological society, as recognised in paragraph 11.

In paragraph 17 (d) it would perhaps also be helpful to include a reference to the need to relate science teaching more closely to modern industrial applications and to the capabilities which people in industry require today.

I should particularly like paragraph 17(f) to draw attention to the national importance of industry. The 1977 Green Paper pointed out that only a minority of schools conveyed adequately to their pupils that we depend upon industry to create wealth. While this basic message is heard repeatedly at conferences, we still have a long way to go to get it incorporated in the curriculum for most pupils. It needs to be highlighted within the broad subject of "Preparation for Working Life". I should therefore

/be ...

be glad if you would consider the following revision to this sub-paragraph.

> "Nevertheless, they commend three particular matters to authorities for additional action: careers education, work experience and understanding the national importance of industry. It remains a matter of concern that the importance of careers work in schools is still often under-recognized, that the potentialities of work experience on a wider scale have not been sufficiently explored and that many pupils are not being taught how industry creates national wealth and the ways in which we depend upon industry for our standards of living".

I am copying this letter to members of Home and Social Affairs Committee and to Sir John Hunt.

Yours,

Keith.

PRIME MINISTER

The attached minute from Mr. Carlisle is his response to your doubts about the paper which he prepared for H Committee on the school curriculum. Flag A is a further note from Sir Kenneth Berrill.

You felt that the consultation procedure would be expensive, time-consuming, and ultimately unproductive. Mr. Carlisle is reluctant to accept your alternative of prescribing a basic curriculum. He still speaks of positive action on the curriculum during the life-time of this Parliament. Before he sets anything in hand, I think he should still be asked to make it clear to you precisely what he wants to come out of the consultation process. If he has a result in mind, and proposes to engineer the process to produce the result, he should explain to you what his target is. If he cannot do that, your scepticism seems entirely justified.

I entirely agree. It seems to me an exercise without any kind of leadership. MT

The earlier papers are:

Flag B	Paper for H Committee
Flag C	Sir Kenneth Berrill's earlier minute

Sir Keith Joseph has also commented - letter attached to Flag A.

MAP

13 August 1979

Education

PRIME MINISTER

THE SCHOOL CURRICULUM

1. You raised some questions about the proposals which I outlined in H(79)30.

2. Since we took office I and my Ministerial colleagues in DES have stated several times, in Parliament and elsewhere, that we intended to publish the replies made by local education authorities to Circular 14/77 and then to have consultations with the authorities, the teachers and others (in particular CBI and TUC). A similar undertaking was given by my predecessor. The object of publishing a summary is to get an authentic text in front of the public; if we do not, others (we have reason to believe that the National Union of Teachers are prepared to do so) may put out their own version.

3. On the assumption that the replies - including those from some authorities which simply do not know what curriculum their schools are following - will become public I do not believe that we can possibly defend a decision to take no further action. We could, I suppose, simply tell authorities that we look to them to put things right, but even if there were agreement amongst them on the action to be taken, I should be as sceptical as you about the likelihood of them taking effective action.

4. It is for this reason that I envisaged, in the draft Departmental paper which would issue with the summary of authorities' replies, consultations with the main interest groups leading in to follow up action, both under my control. The consultations would certainly not be protracted - probably only one meeting with each of the main groups - and the follow up action would be as brisk and businesslike as we can make it; it is certainly not my intention to allow the local education authorities to determine the nature and scale (and therefore cost) of the exercise.

5. What is not practicable, is to accompany the publication of LEAs' replies by some prescription of a basic curriculum. We may, for convenience, talk about "the basic curriculum", but what is needed is a national framework within which each primary or secondary school can take account of the age, ability and aptitude of its pupils, as well as the skills of its teaching staff in working out a curriculum which respects principles of general importance. This is not something which DES could do unilaterally, and we should arouse bitter resentment if we tried.

6. I suspect that some of the qualms you express arise from the drafting of the commentary paper and I am sure that we should sharpen this up. I agree with you that in this kind of operation the risks of diffuse and ineffectual action are ever present but the means to avoid this risk are within my control - and I shall see that they are exercised.

7. Subject to these provisos I believe - and the letter I have had from Keith Joseph shows he is of the same mind - it would be a fundamental error to abandon the 14/77 exercise now: to do so would preclude us from any positive action on the curriculum during the lifetime of this Parliament.

8. I am copying this minute to Willie Whitelaw, Nicholas Edwards and Sir John Hunt.

Penny Gupe

for MARK CARLISLE
(Approved by the Secretary
of State and signed in his absence
9 August 1979

From: THE PRIVATE SECRETARY

CONFIDENTIAL

✓ MAP 27/VII

Education

HOME OFFICE
QUEEN ANNE'S GATE LONDON SW1H 9AT

26 July 1979

Dear Philip

LOCAL AUTHORITY ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE SCHOOL CURRICULUM

Your Secretary of State and the Secretary of State for Wales circulated a paper to H Committee (H(79)30) on 12 July about the school curriculum.

The Home Secretary has seen copies of the letters from the Prime Minister's Private Secretary to you of 20 July and also the letter from the Secretary of State for Industry of 23 July. The Home Secretary proposes to take no action on the H paper until your Secretary of State has had a chance to respond to the Prime Minister's request.

I am copying this letter to Mike Pattison (No. 10), George Craig (Welsh Office), and to Martin Vile (Cabinet Office).

Yours sincerely

Tony Butler

(A J BUTLER)

P J Hunter Esq

CONFIDENTIAL

COVERING CONFIDENTIAL

Education HS

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

Sir Kenneth Berrill
Central Policy Review Staff

The Prime Minister was grateful for your minute Qa 04195 about local authority arrangements for the school curriculum.

She has decided that she would prefer to see a different approach considered. I enclose a copy of a letter that I have sent to Mr. Carlisle's office today.

MAP

KPB

20 July 1979

CONFIDENTIAL

cc: Sir Kenneth Berrill

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

BF 27.7.79.

20 July 1979

The Prime Minister has seen your Secretary of State's paper H(79)30 on local authority arrangements for the school curriculum.

She is not convinced that the approach proposed will be productive. Her own view is that the realistic options are either to go for a basic curriculum, and to give firm guidance on it, or to leave matters very much as they stand at present. She takes the view that most local authorities will respond to the proposed memorandum by large-scale, expensive, and certainly interesting work, but that in the end this might produce very little.

I think it would be helpful if your Secretary of State were now to make a further submission to the Prime Minister before any action is taken on the proposals in H(79)30.

I am sending copies of this letter to John Childot (Home Office), George Craig (Welsh Office) and Martin Vile (Cabinet Office).

M. A. PATTISON

Philip Hunter, Esq.,
Department of Education and Science.

CONFIDENTIAL

No - The curriculum paper is very poor - not really worth comment. Either we go for a basic curriculum or give up guidance on it i.e. English, Maths, and science etc.

PRIME MINISTER.

Sir Kenneth Berrill asks whether you would like to intervene on the paper at Flag A - which you saw earlier. Would you like me to write as in the draft enclosed with this minute?

MAP 19/VII

CONFIDENTIAL

Qa 04195

To: MR LANKESTER

From: SIR KENNETH BERRILL

Local Authority Arrangements for the School Curriculum

1. In their joint paper to the Ministerial Committee on Home Affairs (H(79)30), the Secretaries of State for Education and Science and for Wales propose that local authorities should take explicit responsibility for the schools curriculum in their area and that they should operate within an agreed national framework. In the proposals for strategy initiatives summarised in E(79)24 several Ministers stressed the need for the education system to become more responsive to the needs of industry and of the economy. Rightly handled this initiative by the Education Secretaries of State could be a significant step towards achieving these Ministerial objectives on industry and education.

2. There is, however, a danger that the present draft of the consultation paper circulated in H(79)30 may be less effective than it need be in two respects:

(i) It overplays the effect of resource constraints and thereby provides an excuse for those who wish to oppose changes in the curriculum. As with most change, there will be some initial costs and an acknowledgment that shortage of resources will make change more difficult is right both presentationally and on its merits. However, much can be done for little extra cost (especially while the national framework is being agreed) and what is basically needed is a more effective use of existing resources. Too great a stress on resource constraints risks giving schools and authorities an unjustified excuse for doing nothing.

(ii) While the draft makes some reference to making education more responsive to the needs of the economy, these are presented as subsidiary rather than as the Government's main objective. ('Preparation

for Working Life' is placed sixth out of six areas of specific concern.) The consultative document ought to make it explicit that the main object is to involve wider interest in the formulation of curricular policy through the LEAs and the Schools Council (which is no longer teacher dominated), but to do so in ways which will assist our economic performance.

3. The Prime Minister might like to consider writing to Mr Carlisle and Mr Edwards, expressing her support for their initiative, drawing attention to its close connection to the Government's long-term economic strategy, suggesting that Sir Keith Joseph should have the opportunity of commenting from the industrial point of view, and that emphasis of the draft paper be re-examined in this light. I attach a draft for this purpose.

4. I am sending a copy of this minute and attachment to Sir John Hunt, and to John Hoskyns.

KB

19 July 1979

Att

Draft minute to the Private Secretary to the Secretary of State for Education and Science

1. The Prime Minister has seen the H Committee paper on Local Authority Arrangements for the School Curriculum (H(79)30). She believes that this is a valuable opportunity which, rightly handled, could play an important part in furthering the Government's long-term economic strategy. Proposals for strategy initiatives made by a number of Ministers have recently been circulated to E Committee. Several Ministers have urged the need to make the education system more responsive to the needs of the economy generally and of industry in particular (see paragraph 1.2 of the Annex to E(79)24).

2. In this context the Prime Minister feels that it is important that the consultative document should hit the right note. She feels that the present draft needs further consideration in two respects:

(i) It needs to drive home the point that the object of concentrating attention on the curriculum is not to secure uniformity for its own sake, nor just to disseminate the best practice in curriculum design as judged by professional educational criteria, but to make the shaping of the curriculum

more responsive to the needs of the economy and the community generally and thus to contribute to enhanced economic performance. She feels that this emphasis fails to emerge.

(ii) There is a risk that resource constraints are overplayed. These clearly need to be mentioned but if they are stressed too much they could be seized on by schools and authorities as an excuse to do nothing. The very real scope for improvement even within limited resources could be given greater emphasis.

3. The Prime Minister would be grateful if your Secretary of State and the Secretary of State for Wales could consider the draft circular in this light and in the light of any comments which Sir Keith Joseph may wish to put forward.

4. I am sending copies of this letter to the members of H Committee and to Sir John Hunt.