

EDUCATION

"Coming Events"

1. A continuous "banana skin" is the future of the ILEA. Labour is conducting a massive, expensive, and effective campaign linking the abolition of GLC, and therefore ILEA, with rate capping, and "therefore cuts in services". Whilst all our friends in London agree with the abolition of the GLC and replacement of ILEA, they do not agree with the Government's proposals for replacements.
 2. An immediate London issue which may cause some trouble is the Secretary of State's decision to approve proposals to reorganise RC secondary schools south of the river, which will lose all school sixth forms putting them instead into one sixth form college. That decision is expected to be announced early in the week beginning February 6th.
 3. The Secretary of State has before him a massive reorganisation scheme for Liverpool from the Labour controlled Liverpool City Council. It has already attracted considerable publicity. His decision is likely towards the end of March. If he approves it, it would be a big banana skin for us. If he rejects, as is more likely, it would be a bonus, especially to the Conservatives about to fight the May local elections.
 4. The Secretary of State is about to make a decision on the Forest of Dean (Gloucestershire) schools. The proposal is to turn the grammar school into comprehensive. If he approves the scheme it will be presented as the Government being against grammar schools and will have ripples far beyond Gloucestershire. If he rejects it, it would be hailed as a victory for the programmer lobby, but Conservative controlled Gloucestershire will be upset.
 5. Teachers pay negotiations are proceeding. The outcome is not likely to embarrass the Government, but the negotiations could drag on till May/June, and all the while there will be a press campaign by the teachers that they have "fallen behind", that the salary structure revision being proposed is unfair, ~~that~~ they are being asked to pay more in superannuation contributions and therefore need more pay.
 6. The Secretary of State has to make a decision over the future of the GCE "O" levels and CSE's. That decision is expected May/June. His officials are pressing him to go for a "single examination at 16+", that is merging O levels and CSEs into one.
- Much of public opinion, and most of Conservative opinion, is that such would destroy O level standards, and whatever else is done GCE O levels must be retained. If he goes for a single system, it will have serious adverse political consequences for us.
7. The Secretary of State still has to make a decision on whether or not to fund further research through the NCES (Caroline Cox and John Marks). The issue has had much press coverage already in recent months. If he agrees to do so it will please Conservative opinion but annoy the Socialists, and if he declines, then vice versa.
 8. The Secretary of State is to make a speech in early March on "Peace Studies" which should please the Conservative lobby.
 9. The Secretary of State will be following up his recent Sheffield speech with further announcements of practical measures to raise standards, but this may not be ready until May. The announcements are likely to please parents and the public, but may upset local authorities including Tory ones.

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