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E. E. B.

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16th August, 1945.

CABINET.

RAISING THE SCHOOL LEAVING AGE.

MEMORANDUM BY THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION.

1. I propose, with the approval of my colleagues, to inform Local Education Authorities that the school leaving age will be raised from 14 to 15 on the 1st April, 1947.

2. Under Sections 35 and 108 (3) of the Education Act, 1944, the school leaving age was to be raised to 15 as from the 1st April, 1945, but if the Minister was satisfied that the supply of teachers or of school accommodation was insufficient for this to be done, he was empowered to defer by Order the raising of the age to a date not later than the 1st April, 1947. On the 17th August, 1944, Mr. Butler made such an Order and that Order will remain effective until the 1st April, 1947, unless it is withdrawn at an earlier date.

3. I have examined the position in regard to the provision of teachers and school accommodation and am satisfied that while there is no possibility of raising the age to 15 earlier than the 1st April, 1947, it can be done by that date, although this will necessitate some overcrowding of classes in some areas and the use of school accommodation (huts, prefabricated buildings, &c.) of a kind which could be regarded as satisfactory only as a temporary measure.

4. The position, put quite briefly, is that to raise the age to 15, well over 200,000 additional places must be found and 13,000 additional teachers will be required over and above a much larger number that will be needed to replace the married women and teachers over the normal age of retirement who may be expected to leave the profession in the near future.

5. I regard it as of importance that the Government's decision in this matter should be announced without delay, since Local Education Authorities generally are holding their hands until they know definitely when the additional age group may be expected to be coming into the schools. We must make it clear also that we intend to stick to this date.

6. To raise the age to 15 even on the basis of the improvisation proposed will necessitate some reconsideration of the allocation of man-power resources to the educational service. Though this will be a matter for me to take up with the Man-Power Committee, I need a decision of the Cabinet regarding the urgency of this matter.

E. W.

*Ministry of Education, S.W. 1,
16th August, 1945.*

