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CABINET

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THE CROWTHER REPORT

Memorandum by the Secretary of State  
for the Home Department

Introduction

The Education Policy Committee have now considered the main recommendations of a report of the Central Advisory Council for Education (England) under the chairmanship of Sir Geoffrey Crowther and with the agreement of the Minister of Education the Secretary of State for Scotland and my other colleagues concerned I submit for the approval of the Cabinet the Committee's conclusions. The report is to be debated in the House of Commons on 21st March and in the House of Lords on 23rd March. Paragraphs 8-11 below give the line which it is proposed should be taken by the Education Ministers.

2. The report, which is closely reasoned and lucidly presented, has made a considerable impact upon public opinion and has been widely acclaimed for its boldness and vision. It amounts, in the words of its authors, to

"a consistent programme for the development, during the next twenty years or so, of English education for young people between the ages of 15 and 18. We cannot in conscience advise that anything less is necessary if the national educational system is to meet the requirements of this tumultuous and dynamic century".

3. The recommendations which have aroused the greatest interest and are the most likely to be used by the Opposition as a test of our good intentions are that we should:-

(i) re-affirm the principle of compulsory full-time education up to the age of sixteen, and announce now that we will raise the age in 1966, 1967 or 1968;

(ii) re-affirm the principle that there should be compulsory part-time education up to the age of eighteen for all those not at school, and undertake to introduce county colleges for this purpose within four or five years of the raising of the school leaving age.

Both these principles are embodied in the Education Act of 1944 and so we are being asked to agree to a programme that will fully implement the Act.

### The supply of teachers

4. The most pressing need of the education service today is a reduction in the size of classes. We are committed to this by the Education Act of 1944, by repeated declarations of policy since 1951, and by pledges given in the General Election that over-size classes would be eliminated by 1965.

5. However we strain effort or resources we must realise that we cannot easily carry out these pledges. If we were to provide no more training college places, we could not fulfil them even in the life of the next Parliament, and we could only raise the age if we were prepared to see three-quarters of a million children still in over-size classes.

6. If we put in hand now the provision of 8,000 extra places, then we can either eliminate over-size classes, or put ourselves in a position to raise the school leaving age by 1970, without an intolerable slowing down of the process of reducing class sizes.

7. More generally, we should, for the first time since the war, gain the initiative in teacher supply and be able to meet further demands upon it (including those from the Commonwealth), which all past experience suggests we should expect.

8. These additional places would involve a capital cost of about £12.5 millions spread over four years starting in 1962, and a recurrent annual expenditure of about £4.5 millions from 1965. It is estimated that without the additional places the total bill for education will, as a result of our existing policies, be increased by about 50 per cent by 1969-70: the cost of the new places and of the teachers who would emerge from them would add to this a further 1 to 2 per cent. About two-thirds of all this expenditure would fall on the Exchequer.

9. The Committee on Education Policy are satisfied that these proposals are realistic and justified, whatever decision is taken on raising the leaving age, and recommend their approval.

### The raising of the school leaving age

10. The Committee accept that we should re-affirm the principle of compulsory full-time education up to the age of sixteen and that we should announce now that we therefore propose to intensify the campaign to recruit more teachers and to expand the training colleges by 8,000 places. This expansion will also enable us before the end of this Parliament to make a decision about the school leaving age. In the meantime, we should do all we can to encourage voluntary staying on at school. We should say that the year from 15 to 16 will for some boys and possibly girls be better spent in a full-time course in a technical college rather than in a school.

Compulsory part-time education in county colleges

11. On this the Committee consider that changes in social conditions since the war, the earlier maturity of boys and girls and the great increase in voluntary attendance at part-time day classes have significantly altered the situation. They expect that developments during the next ten years or so will accentuate those changes.

12. The Committee also consider that the development since 1956 of local colleges of further education which provide all types of course for the under twenties makes it desirable to modify the objective of a complete and separate range of institutions called county colleges. If numbers in the less vocational courses grow very fast, there may be a need for some institutions wholly devoted to such classes, but, in general, the Committee consider that the local colleges of further education (of which 300 are already available) form a natural focus for the development of "County College" work. Together with village colleges (on the Cambridgeshire model), youth clubs, Outward Bound schools, short residential courses, etc., there will then be available a wide variety of opportunities for further education on a voluntary basis to catch the imagination of the modern teenager.

13. In the light of these developments Her Majesty's Government consider it desirable to re-assess the original conception of County Colleges when we are nearer achieving the objectives set out in the earlier paragraphs of this paper. Further when progress has been made on the lines of paragraphs 11 and 12, a fresh look on the compulsory aspects of the original plan may be desirable. Her Majesty's Government think that meanwhile we should do all we can to develop part-time education on a voluntary basis and that we should examine with industry and the local education authorities the possibility of introducing legislation to give the young worker a right to claim release on one day a week for this purpose.

Presentation of Government's decisions

14. By these decisions we should be coming close to rejecting Crowther's two main recommendations, set out in paragraph 3 above - and so laying ourselves open to the charge of not implementing the 1944 Act. We must therefore be seen, as a first and essential step, to be acting with vigour to eliminate over-size classes.

R. A. B.

Home Office, S. W. 1.

15th March, 1960