RAISING THE SCHOOL LEAVING AGE.

MEMORANDUM by the PRESIDENT of the BOARD OF EDUCATION.

It is a matter of great importance to Local Education Authorities to know immediately and before the end of this part of the Session the date when we propose to raise the school leaving age. Local Education Authorities are already at work on the programmes covering the period of the next three years, which have to be submitted to the Board of Education this autumn. These programmes cannot be settled without a knowledge of the time of the change which is universally expected. The Directors of Education are expecting an immediate decision, and great difficulty and confusion would result from delaying an announcement.

I recommend that April 1st, 1931, be the date chosen and announced for raising the school age. That would give the Local Education Authorities a year and a half to prepare. It would be open to us to pass the necessary legislation either at the end of this session or early in the next. The essential thing is that the Local Education Authorities should have the date definite, and the announcement would incidentally placate the anxiety evidenced in our own party.

It would be possible to raise the age earlier, i.e. on April 1st or August 31st, 1930, if it were urgently desired to use this means of reducing unemployment. My Advisers consider that the earlier date would be practicable as an emergency measure but it would be a more serious call on the resources and ingenuity of the Local Education Authorities to meet the difficulties of accommodation and staffing.

In considering the parliamentary question of the period
for the introduction of legislation there are two alleviating factors:

(1) No legislation is necessary for Scotland, as the age can be raised by administrative order from the Secretary of State.

(2) The Bill required for England need not be much more than a one clause Bill.

Some of my colleagues are anxious about the unpopularity of the change in the textile districts. No doubt this will manifest itself to some extent, though this time there has been no outburst of the traditional opposition to every raising of the age in Yorkshire and Lancashire because of the well-defined commitment of the Labour Party to maintenance allowances as an accompaniment. There is, however, a strong feeling among many textile Members who have spoken to me that it would be politically advantageous to them if the legislation were passed as early as possible in this Parliament.

Educationally the reason for an early date for raising the age is that the numbers of children leaving school at 14 are at their lowest in the next three years owing to the decline in the birth-rate during the war.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Pupils</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>452,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1932</td>
<td>373,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1933</td>
<td>393,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>1934</td>
<td>509,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>1935</td>
<td>580,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936</td>
<td>559,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1937</td>
<td>504,000</td>
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</tbody>
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Educationally, therefore, it would be a mistake to wait till the peak years of 1934, 1935, 1936, 

2.
Whenever the age is raised there are liable to be considerable difficulties facing the Local Education Authorities in finding accommodation and enlarged staffing for the additional pupils. Emergency measures will need to be taken, in consultation with the Local Authorities, to provide temporary accommodation, to expedite building of schools, and to procure a larger supply of teachers. But the most difficult areas will remain difficult whenever the change comes. And my advisers are of opinion that generally the problems can be met over most of the country even if an early date is selected.

In considering the cost of the change much the most important matter is the item of maintenance allowances. These will have to be on a fairly liberal scale if they are to satisfy the expectations of our members and of parents.

It will have to be decided whether allowances are to be given as a right or whether the Local Education Authority is to award them in accordance with a need standard.

It will also have to be decided whether the granting of allowances shall be made a requirement on the Local Education Authority. My own view is that it would be doubtful policy to compel the Local Education Authorities to pay maintenance, and probably wiser to offer them increased financial inducements to adopt a liberal scale. I therefore recommend that the proportion of Exchequer grant be raised from 50 per cent. to 75 per cent. in the case of maintenance grants to children over 14.

In the following estimates (Appendix) I have given as alternatives the lowest possible maintenance grant I can conceive our being able to get through Parliament, i.e.
5/- a week or £13 a year for one-third of the children involved, and the highest we are likely to contemplate, i.e. 7/- a week or £18.4s. a year for three-fourths of the children. All intermediate possibilities can easily be calculated from these figures.

In considering the educational cost of raising the school age it must always be remembered to set against it the saving in unemployment benefit and poor relief which is bound to result. The effect of keeping half a million children annually out of the labour market cannot be accurately estimated but it cannot possibly be negligible. There is good reason for supposing that at least 300,000 children must obtain work during the year. If only 100,000 unemployed were indirectly substituted for them, the national saving in benefit and relief might be estimated at £4,500,000 a year.
APPENDIX.

Provisional Estimate for the years 1931-32, 1932-33, and 1936-37 if school age were raised by one year from 1st April 1931.

A. FINANCIAL YEAR 1931-32.

In the first year the additional cost is estimated to be:

30/- sapitation grant on increased average attendance of 229,000 £344,000 all borne by taxes but received by rates

10/- per unit for books and stationery of increased average attendance of 229,000 £115,000 borne as to £35,000 by taxes £80,000 by rates

5,250 additional teachers (i.e. those that are estimated as likely to be available in 1931-32) at £244 per teacher. £1,281,000 borne as to £743,000 by taxes £538,000 by rates

Total cost to public funds £1,396,000 borne as to £1,122,000 by taxes £274,000 (net) by rates

In estimating the cost of maintenance allowances a higher and lower figure is given on the assumption that the State might pay 75 per cent. and the rates 25 per cent. of the cost. If 33\(\frac{1}{3}\) per cent. of the additional numbers on the registers are given five shillings a week the cost will be £1,113,000 borne as to £835,000 by taxes, £278,000 by rates.

If 75 per cent. are given seven shillings a week the cost will be £3,508,000 borne as to £2,630,000 by taxes, £878,000 by rates.

The Grand Totals for 1931-32 are:

(a) At the lower figure of Maintenance Allowances £2,509,000 borne as to £1,957,000 by taxes £552,000 by rates

(b) At the higher figures of Maintenance Allowances £4,908,000 borne as to £3,752,000 by taxes £1,152,000 by rates
APPENDIX (CONT'D.)

B. FINANCIAL YEAR 1932-33.

In the second year these figures are estimated to rise to grand totals of:

- £3,173,000 borne as to
  - £3,611,000 by taxes
  - £558,000 by rates
- or £2,860,000 borne as to
  - £2,578,000 by taxes
  - £1,484,000 by rates

In these figures no estimate has been made of any cost of providing additional school places either by building or by hiring accommodation, which would necessitate detailed inquiry into local conditions.

C. FINANCIAL YEAR 1935-36.

In this it is assumed that the scheme will be in reasonable working order and allowance must, therefore, be made for loan charges on capital expenditure on extra accommodation.

Exclusive of maintenance allowances the figure is estimated to be:

- £1,680,000 borne as to
  - £1,514,000 by taxes
  - £166,000 by rates

Maintenance allowances on the two bases taken above would bring the grand total to:

- £3,847,000 borne as to
  - £3,138,000 by taxes
  - £709,000 by rates
- or £3,858,000 borne as to
  - £3,653,000 by taxes
  - £2,373,000 by rates

N.B. If it were decided to raise the age on 1st April 1936 the corresponding costs for that year would be:

(a) At the lower figure of Maintenance Allowance
- £2,306,000 borne as to
  - £2,119,000 by taxes
  - £557,000 by rates

(b) At the higher figure of Maintenance Allowances
- £5,091,000 borne as to
  - £4,003,000 by taxes
  - £1,085,000 by rates