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C.P. 206(35)

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CABINET.

EDUCATIONAL POLICY - PROPOSED LEGISLATION.

Memorandum by the President of the Board of Education.

On July 18th last the Cabinet on the recommendation of the Educational Policy Committee agreed to a policy of Educational Development, including legislation for (i) raising the school leaving age to 15 with exemptions for beneficial employment and without maintenance allowances (ii) empowering Local Education Authorities to make building grants under conditions to voluntary schools.

In accordance also with the decision of the Cabinet, these proposals were set out at the Election in the Government's Programme of Educational Reform, and received a wide measure of approval.

For the following reasons, it seems to me of the utmost importance that we should introduce and pass the requisite legislation with the least possible delay:-

(i) If we act at once no material opposition is to be expected from the denominations; on the other hand any period of delay might encourage endeavours to secure modifications of the Government Policy.

(ii) To an embarrassing extent school building schemes are being suspended owing to uncertainties as to legislation.

(iii) There is general agreement that there must be an interval of at least three years between the passage of the Act and the actual raising of the school age. Even, therefore,

if legislation was passed within the next six months, the provisions in regard to the school age would not become operative until September, 1939, and would not be in full operation until twelve months later.

In anticipation that early legislation might be desirable, I have in consultation with other Departments been working out the details of the proposed legislation and have now reached a point at which I am ready to instruct draughtsmen to prepare a Bill.

I should accordingly be glad to have the sanction of my colleagues to submit the details of my proposals to the Educational Policy Committee and, if they concur, to proceed at once to instruct draughtsmen, with the hope of having the Bill ready in time to permit of a Second Reading Debate as soon as Parliament resumes after the Christmas recess.

I should, of course, propose in accordance with the usual practice to submit the Bill through the Home Affairs Committee to the Cabinet for approval before it is printed and issued.

O.F.G.S.

22nd November 1935.