

Prime Minister

Christopher Price, as
Chairman of the Education
Select Committee, is
messing for confidential
information. He will not
get it... He may
try to raise the
issue with you.

BF 4



DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE
ELIZABETH HOUSE YORK ROAD LONDON SE1 7PH
TELEPHONE 01-928 9222
FROM THE SECRETARY OF STATE

D C R Heyhoe Esq
Private Secretary to
the Lord President
Privy Council Office
Whitehall
LONDON SW1A 0AA

MF

24 May 1982

M/P 24/v

Dear David

Thank you for your letter to Imogen Wilde of 20 May
about the refusal of information to the Select Committee
on Education, Science and the Arts about which Mr Price
is due to see the Lord President later today. I attach
a note for the Lord President, as requested.

I am sending copies of this letter to Mike Pattison at
No 10 and David Wright (Sir Robert Armstrong's office).

Yours sincerely

Nick Cornwell

N J CORNWELL
Private Secretary

NOTE ON REFUSAL OF INFORMATION TO THE SELECT COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION,
SCIENCE AND THE ARTS

1. When the Secretary of State, Dr Boyson and officials appeared before the Committee on 19 May they were questioned, inter alia, on the recently published report by HMI on the effects of local authority expenditure policies in England (copy enclosed). In various places the report refers specifically to a specified number of LEAs. One such reference (para 8) is to four LEAs whose level of provision for schools (not the quality of education offered) gave HMI most concern last year and who had further reduced their provision. The Committee asked the Senior Chief Inspector to name these four authorities. Under pressure, she confirmed that one of them was Gateshead, since that LEA had already made this fact known to the press. But she refused to name any other LEA, on the grounds that the HMI report had been prepared with the help of information from LEAs obtained on the understanding that no LEA would be mentioned by name in the report. The Secretary of State supported this refusal to break a confidence.

2. The purpose of the Report is to assess effects on the national system taken as a whole: it is not to produce self-standing assessments of individual LEAs. There is no doubt that the information necessary for an effective HMI report on the national picture would not be forthcoming from LEAs if they believed that the report might mention individual LEAs. However, it is the practice of the Senior Chief Inspector to inform each LEA which makes up a group specified in the report that it is included in that group (which is why Gateshead were able to identify themselves).

3. The information about each LEA's level and pattern of expenditure and the changes made from year to year is locally known or obtainable. The only information which is withheld from Parliament

and the public is the judgment of HMI of the success or failure of LEAs, in relation to each other, in translating the level of provision into a satisfactory educational offering, a translation which involves not only the volume of resources but the skill with which it is deployed, the quality of the teaching force, and many other factors.

4. Neither Parliament, nor the Government, has, under existing legislation, the power to control what each LEA spends on education and the pattern of that expenditure. The Government can only influence that level and pattern broadly through the Rate Support Grant and in other ways.

5. A balance has to be struck between the desire of the Select Committee to have as much information as possible and the ability of HMI to obtain the information needed to assist Parliament, the Government and the education service in judging the adequacy of provision nationally. The Committee last year gave precedence to the first objective and invited the Senior Chief Inspector to consider naming individual LEAs in the next report. After sounding the local authority associations she decided against such an approach in the interest of securing the second objective.

6. The Lord President will wish to reserve a final judgment on any points made by Mr Price until the transcript of the 19 May session is available. Subject to that, he is recommended to maintain the line that it is wrong in principle for the Government to reveal information secured on a promise of confidentiality: and that confidentiality is, on balance, necessary for the reasons set out in para 5 above.

7. Mr Price did not express any concern during the hearing about the Department's response to his request for papers on the question of the financing of education. This issue is currently under consideration by Ministers and is one on which Ministers hold differing views. It would clearly be inappropriate, therefore, at this stage for the Committee to be given any working papers.

Parliament
cc JV

PRIVY COUNCIL OFFICE
WHITEHALL, LONDON SW1A 2AT

8 June 1982

✓
MAD 18/1

will request if required

As you know, your Secretary of State discussed with the Lord President this afternoon the reply to be given to Mr Christopher Price MP's letter of 26 May about the identification of local education authorities.

As I explained on the telephone, Sir Keith and Mr Biffen agreed that no concession should be made in relation to the past commitments given to the local authorities over confidentiality. Although two of the authorities (and, as you subsequently explained, now three) had made their positions known, this was a matter for them.

It was also agreed that no commitment could be given to the Select Committee about handling matters any differently in future. However, the Lord President explained that his own interest was in keeping relations between Select Committees and Departments at a suitably low temperature. He saw no prospect of providing time for a debate on the point at issue and he thought that Mr Price recognised this. It would nevertheless help in handling the matter in the House if there could be some indication of possible future movement in the direction which the Select Committee advocated. Sir Keith agreed that, without giving any commitment whatsoever, he would be willing to say that he was ready to consider the future position on its merits.

.../...

Mrs Imogen Wilde
Private Secretary to the
Secretary of State for Education and Science
Elizabeth House
York Road
London SE1 7PH

In the light of the above, the next step is, as we discussed, for your Secretary of State to reply to Mr Price's letter. You kindly agreed to let me have a copy of the draft when it is ready. Meanwhile, Mr Biffen would propose to take an early opportunity to discuss the point with Mr Du Cann, in his capacity as Chairman of the Liaison Committee in the hope that he might thereby further defuse the matter.

I am copying this letter to Mike Pattison (No 10) and David Wright in Sir Robert Armstrong's office.

Yours ever,

David

D C R HEYHOE
Private Secretary

cc TV
PRIVY COUNCIL OFFICE
WHITEHALL LONDON SW1A 2AT

25 May 1982
Pattison

Dear Imogen,

Thank you for the briefing material that you provided for the Lord President's talk with Mr Christopher Price MP yesterday.

The Lord President briefly mentioned the outcome of this meeting to your Secretary of State before Cabinet this morning. After reiterating his concern at the Government's unwillingness to provide the information requested, Mr Price said that he proposed to raise the matter again with his Committee when it meets tomorrow. He would then write formally to your Secretary of State confirming that the Committee was still of the same view and asking for a considered reply. He intends to send a copy of his letter to Mr Edward du Cann MP, as Chairman of the Liaison Committee, and to the Lord President.

The Lord President noted Mr Price's intentions and said that he would take the opportunity to talk the matter over with Mr du Cann and with Sir Keith after he had seen Mr Price's letter.

I am copying this to Mike Pattison (No 10) and David Wright in Sir Robert Armstrong's office.

Yours ever,

David

D C R HEYHOE
Private Secretary

Mrs Imogen Wilde
Private Secretary to the
Secretary of State for Education and Science
York Road
Elizabeth House
LONDON SE1 7PH

22 MAY 1968

12
11
10
9
8
7
6
5
4
3
2
1

010



Parliament

PRIVY COUNCIL OFFICE
WHITEHALL, LONDON, SW1A 2AT

20 May 1982

✓ MAF

Dear Imogen,

During Business Questions today Christopher Price MP stated that at a meeting of his Select Committee yesterday your Secretary of State had refused to give information which the Committee had requested. He did not specify what the information was, but I imagine he was referring to the possible changes in the financing of local authority education about which you wrote to this office on 18 May enclosing copies of the previous correspondence between your Secretary of State and Mr Price. In the course of his intervention today Mr Price went on to refer to the "undertaking" given by the previous Leader of the House and he has subsequently telephoned to ask if he might come to see Mr Biffen about this on Monday or Tuesday of next week prior to a meeting of his Committee on Wednesday 26 May.

In the light of the above, it will be most helpful if you could provide Mr Biffen with a background note on the points at issue, and especially on what transpired at yesterday's meeting of Mr Price's Committee, together with a recommended line to take which Mr Biffen might use when Mr Price comes to see him. Could you please let me have this as soon as possible on Monday morning, since Mr Price will probably be calling on Mr Biffen during that afternoon.

I am sending copies of this letter to Mike Pattison (No 10) and David Wright (Sir Robert Armstrong's office).

*Yours ever,
David*

D C R HEYHOE
Private Secretary

Mrs Imogen Wilde
Private Secretary to the
Secretary of State for
Education and Science

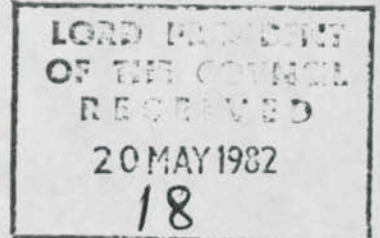


DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

ELIZABETH HOUSE YORK ROAD LONDON SE1 7PH
TELEPHONE 01-928 9222

FROM THE SECRETARY OF STATE

N P M Huxtable Esq
Private Secretary to the Lord
President of the Council
Privy Council Office
Whitehall
LONDON
SW1A 2AT



18 May 1982

Dear Nick,

Thank you for your letter of 12 May about the letter from Mr Christopher Price to my Secretary of State about possible changes in the financing of local authority education. I enclose a copy of my Secretary of State's reply. He wished to be as helpful as possible and so is willing to discuss in general terms the various possibilities to which the Green Paper refers.

*Yours sincerely,
Imogen Wilde*

MRS I WILDE
Private
Secretary

SECRET

PRIVATE COUNSEL OFFICE
WHITTINGTON ROAD, LONDON SW 19 4JH

12 May 1982

Dear Chris

The Chairman of the Select Committee on Education, Science and the Arts, Mr Christopher Price, has written to your Secretary of State about block grant for education; a copy of this letter was sent to the Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons. Mr Price suggested that successive Leaders of the House have given binding assurances that Ministers would be as helpful as possible to Select Committees and that factual papers would be available setting out the basis of pending decisions. He therefore sought a paper dealing with block grants for education before 19 May.

The Lord President has asked me to enquire whether your Department believes that this is a reasonable request. I would be very grateful if you would let me know the present position on this. In particular, it would be helpful if you could let us have copies of subsequent correspondence.

Yours ever
N.P.M.

N P M HUXTABLE
Private Secretary

Chris Eagles Esq
Private Secretary to the
Secretary of State for Education
and Science
Elizabeth House
York Road
LONDON



DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE
 ELIZABETH HOUSE, YORK ROAD, LONDON SE1 7PH
 TELEPHONE 01-928 9222
 FROM THE SECRETARY OF STATE

107

cc Mr Cross
 Mr Simpson
 Mr Alford
 Mr James
 Mr Sande
 Mr Shaw
 Mr Brook

Christopher Price Esq MP
 Chairman
 Select Committee on Education,
 Science and the Arts
 House of Commons
 LONDON SW1A 0AA

11 May 1982

Dear Christopher,

Thank you for your letter of 30 April.

The Government are now considering the responses to the Green Paper "Alternatives to Domestic Rates" and their own position on the various options canvassed in it, including those in Annex B relating to financing the education service.

There are in this case no factual papers which form the basis of a pending decision. How a different system of financing local education authorities might work would depend on what kind of system was adopted: Annex B mentions three possibilities. But what I can do to help the Committee on 19 May, if you wish, is to discuss with them the sort of considerations which arise and to try to amplify the illustrative explanations that the Annex already provides.

Erin

Kew



AGENDA ITEMS
4 and 6

HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA
01- 219 3437

The Rt Hon Sir Keith Joseph MP
Secretary of State
Department of Education and Science
Elizabeth House
York Road
London SE1

30 April 1982

Dear Sir Keith

PLUCK GRANT FOR EDUCATION

I enclose a copy of a report in today's Guardian which indicates that discussions are at an advanced stage within Government about a major change in the funding of education. You will also be aware that the issue was canvassed with you when you last visited the Select Committee and you were unable to help in any way.

You will however be aware that since the new Select Committee system has been set up, successive Leaders of the House have given binding assurances that Ministers will be as helpful as possible to Committees and that factual papers which form the basis of any pending decisions will be available. In my opinion a decision of this magnitude is one over which Parliament should be consulted in a greater measure than it has been so far, by the means of an annex to a Green Paper.

The report indicates that you see this new system in the context of maintaining standards in schools and evening out disparities between local authorities. Thus, the issue is central to our session on the 19 May.

I would therefore hope that the Department will be able to send us a paper before the 19 May, giving us as much information as possible on its view as to how such a system might work. It would be my view that failure to be of real assistance to the Committee on this issue would be a matter of 'general concern' in the terms of Mr Pym's pledge to the House on the 16 January 1981.

I am consulting with my Committee about this issue shortly and am sure they will feel as I do.

Yours sincerely

Chairman, Select Committee
Education, Science and the Arts