

Meeting with Education and Library Boards 9 April 2002 - Parliament Buildings

Present: J Martin G Topping M Browne Minister
 J Fitzsimmons H McClenaghan D Whyte
 D Cargo R Sterling A McAteer

J Martin

- All views valid. Want to build consensus. Need to avoid controversy at this point. Want to build framework all can sign up to.
- New Board members have not yet signed up to a view.
- Welcome much in Burns – concern over practicalities of collegiates.
- Have working groups of board members.
- Would like a common view from Boards.

J Fitzsimmons

- Does not favour yes/no to academic selection. Nothing wrong with academic selection – problem is with those who are not selected.
- Need time for people to change views.
- Need pupils to make informed choices rather than parents who are often ill informed.
- Need to have diversity in order to give effect to choice. Choice should be made when pupils are ready to make it.
- Disaffection and lack of curricular relevance in grammar as well as secondary
- Curriculum is key. Favour junior/senior high school approach.
- Feel young people need to be consulted.

Gordon Topping

- Public and private debates occurring.
- Boards meeting with all schools to build consensus.
- Sees key issues as management of choice ie choose school and then particular course which best meets their needs.
- To achieve this, need (a) diversity in provision (b) flexibility (different learning approaches and more programmes in and out of schools etc.)
- Mid-end May should have position paper.

Helen McClenaghan

- Burns not an issue for about ½ of schools in SELB.
- Freeing up of choice and placing in hands of young people is key issue. Concern that parents not always informed.
- Don't accept research into Craigavon : not so many leave the system and not the case that those in grammar do less well.
- Welcome opportunity to suggest, options and alternatives.

David Cargo

- Has wide diversity of systems in stark relief in small Board area.
- Got high consensus in response to Gallagher and Smith.
- 2 key aspects (i) learner chooses (ii) 3 Key phases (0-6; 7-13; 14-19).
- General acceptance that change is inevitable.
- Will have some idea of Board's view by end April.
- Unclear about what academic selection means, old fashioned language is a barrier.
- Key issue is not academic selection: Model schools and Ashfield are doing very well.
- Key issue is economic and religious division.
- Want to get a view of DE's position early so that can achieve consensus.
- Want to change nature of debate from academic selection at age 11 to transfer at age 14.

Gordon Topping

“Readiness” to move is important along with flexibility. Perhaps some children should not always be automatically promoted to the next year group.