

Annual Conference Resolutions 2005

A. Resolutions for Submission to the Secretary of State for Education and Skills

1. ACADEMIES

(a) This Conference is dismayed by the declared intention of the new Government to continue the fragmentation of the secondary education system by creating Academies, specialist schools of all types and an increasing number of faith schools, as well as maintaining and allowing the enlargement of grammar schools. Conference calls instead for the rebuilding of the secondary system around unselective Comprehensive Schools with a balanced common curriculum.

(b) The SEA deplors the Government's policy of establishing 200 Academies for the following reasons :

- i) Academies are privately owned and managed but publicly funded;
- ii) Academies are divisive and undermine neighbouring schools;
- iii) Academies can set up their own sixth forms making a nonsense of attempts to plan post-16 provision through the local learning and skills councils;
- iv) a massive programme of investment in Academies without evidence that they have a positive effect overall on the education service is a nonsense; and
- v) the funding of academies is at the expense of capital funding for primary schools.

Conference calls on the Government to abandon this programme.

(c) While we object to Academies as unaccountable and selective independent schools, they are still publicly funded institutions. As such it is totally inexplicable that the Government does not require qualified teachers employed in them to be registered with the General Teaching Council and do parents are deprived of the safeguard this provides against the employment of teachers in them guilty of unacceptable professional conduct, serious professional incompetence and a relevant criminal offence. This is a direct result of the Government's determination to free them of "all the regulatory constraints, burdens and bureaucracy of the maintained sector". These constraints have been built up over many years to protect children, parents and teachers and are either necessary for all schools or for none. We call upon the Secretary of State to urgently review the lifting of any regulatory constraints on any schools.

(d) The SEA urges that Academy Schools should not be built on public open space without the approval of the Secretary of State for Education and Skills.

2. WORK-RELATED CURRICULUM

Conference believes that the work-related curriculum, including work experience, and an entitlement for all secondary pupils - not a means of containing the disaffected.

3. SCHOOL MEALS

In the light of recent concerns regarding school meals and the effect of poor nutrition on learning and behaviour, we look to the Government to set minimum nutritional levels and to ensure their adoption in all schools.

4. LIFELONG LEARNING, FURTHER AND ADULT EDUCATION

(a) SEA notes that lifelong learning and adult education have minimal mention in the 2005 election manifesto.

We propose that the Labour Party and this Government address the demographic change with reference to adult education for older adults and the need for funding strategies to enhance opportunities for this growing section of the population.

We believe that this would be beneficial for the physical and psychological health of all participants.

(b) Conference deplores the reduction of funding of 10% for adult education and believes this to be a betrayal of its promise to promote lifelong learning.

(c) This conference notes the recent cuts to the post 16 education and training budget which are causing considerable concern in adult and further education institutions. Further cuts are projected for 2006/7. This will cause great hardship to hundreds of thousands of potential adult students. As it is some time since SEA renewed its position and made recommendations on post 16 education, it is recommended that the NEC undertake a review of the current position and bring forward a recommendation to the next AGM.

(d) Conference calls on the Government to address the iniquitous funding regime for post-16 education and to bring up the level of funding for colleges to that given to school sixth forms.

5. THE CHARITY REFORM BILL

This conference is opposed to the award of charitable status to wealthy private schools catering only for the most privileged, and calls for the redirection of the £100 million or so saved into the education of the most needy in our society.

6. SELECTION

The SEA is appalled that after two terms of a Labour Government with an overwhelming majority, selection at eleven plus still exists in England in ten per cent of LEAs with harmful effects on the comprehensive systems of another ten per cent. It calls upon the Secretary of State for Education and Skills to take immediate steps to end this educational apartheid and the designation of 70% of children in the areas affected as failures at 11; or, at the very least, to set up an enquiry, as was done in Northern Ireland, into the effects of selection, confident it will produce the same result as it did there : a recommendation to end selection at 11.

7. EXTENDING SCHOOL HOURS

The SEA welcomes the proposals to extend school hours to provide extra-curricular activities, homework clubs and childcare for all children from 8am to 6pm as being potentially of great benefit to working class children. It warns however that the funding of £680m proposed is quite inadequate (less than 1% of the £28bn school budget), that any charging should be minimal and that teachers should not have their workload increased as a result.

8. FAITH GROUPS AND SCHOOL BUILDING

This Conference deplores the decision to waive the 10% (reduced from 50% in the '44 Education Act) Faith groups must contribute to the cost of refurbishment of their school buildings, thus donating £550 million of public money to promote selective, faith-based education.

9. STUDENT LOANS AND INCOME SUPPORT

The SEA is concerned that Student Loans are considered as income by the Benefits Agency and therefore taken into account when determining Income Support payments. This means that single parents are considerably worse off when undertaking higher education resulting in hardship and inability to complete courses. The SEA believes that this is a further barrier to disadvantaged groups.

The SEA resolves to make representations to the Secretary of State for Education to review this situation when the new arrangements for student support are implemented.

10. ASBOS

The SEA recognises that there are problems in our communities with anti-social behaviour. The SEA believes all people, young and old alike, have the right to be treated with respect and to live in peace within their community. However, the SEA does not believe that the indiscriminate use of Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs), Dispersal Orders and curfews is the solution to problems and can undermine fundamental human rights of freedom of movement and association.

The SEA believes that ASBOs can be effective for disruptive adults and young people when they are linked with multi-agency intervention and with education and support. However, because of the numbers that are being issued, there is inadequate intervention by support agencies. The SEA notes that there is no national consistency about when ASBOs should be imposed. Further, the SEA believes that the conditions applied to an ASBO can lead to young people being criminalized for minor infringements such as dropping litter.

The SEA believes that Dispersal Orders can infringe the rights of young people who are going about their lawful business and can additionally place young people in dangerous situations. The SEA also believes that blanket curfews are an infringement of civil liberties and should not be tolerated.

The SEA believes that the national Youth Agency's entitlement for young people should be fully implemented. This includes young people having a warm, safe, well-equipped meeting place accessible within 30 minutes and a wide diversity of youth clubs, projects and activities.

The SEA resolves to make representation to the Government to :

- a. implement the NYA's entitlement;
- b. produce the long awaited Green Paper on youth work and legislate for minimum youth work provision;
- c. review the use and scope of ASBOs; and
- d. outlaw the use of curfews unless there are exceptional circumstances.

SEA Conference 2005 : Constitutional Amendments from the NEC

1. Add to 6(iii)c 'except that a year's extension may be granted by the NEC to one officer if two or more are standing down in the same year'

(Present (iii)c) Officers shall not serve for more than five years in any one position or for more than ten years in succession in two or more positions)

2. In Appendix 3 iv) after first and second 'Resolutions' add 'and Policy Statements'. Amend '15th May' to 'a week before the May NEC'

Add a new v) and renumber accordingly : 'Amendments to resolutions or policy statements must be received by the General Secretary two weeks before the date of the AGM and placed on the website.'

Motions and amendments may be composited by the General Secretary with the agreement of the movers or their representatives.’

(Present Appendix 3 iv) Resolutions for the Conference agenda may be submitted in the names of branches, affiliated organisations or individual members. Resolutions must be received by the General Secretary by 15th May. The National Executive Committee shall have the power to place resolutions on the agenda.)

B. Resolutions other than those submitted to the Secretary of State for Education and Skills

11. EXAMINATION BOARDS

The SEA calls upon the House of Commons Select Committee to investigate the conduct of examination boards in England, their governance and the way they impact upon the curriculum, teaching practices and finances of schools. It cannot be right, for instance, that AQA can axe without any consultation the only Archaeology GCSE available or that EDEXCEL, now owned by the multinational publishing and media conglomerate Pearson plc can ensure that forms of assessment determine the curriculum, learning experiences and pedagogy of our schools simply because they are more profitable.

12. GOVERNMENT EDUCATION POLICY

This Conference calls upon the Executive to prepare proposals to set up a group, possibly in collaboration with an existing group or think tank, to prepare a carefully argued and comprehensive critique of current Government educational policy.

13. SPECIAL NEEDS

The SEA supports separate special needs schools where they fulfil the needs of their individual students.

14. TOMLINSON

SEA welcomes the Government’s proposed investment in vocational education but regrets the continued division between ”academic” and ”vocational” streams. It regrets the retention of GCSE and A-level examinations and looks forward to a drawing together of these and all vocational qualifications in a framework for a coherent curriculum along the lines recommended in the Tomlinson report.

15. A. ADONIS

This Conference regards the appointment of A Adonis, a former adviser on education to the PM and the architect of top-up fees, the continuing destruction of the comprehensive system, and champion of private schools, as a retrograde step by the PM, breaking his promise to ”listen and learn” and doing nothing to restore our confidence in the Government’s education policies.

16. CHOICE

This Conference believes that all Party members want excellence in our schools and that each child should be equally valued. It does not believe in ‘choice’ as a means of bringing this about.