

Annual Conference Resolutions 2007

Academies

1. SEA calls upon the new Leader of the Labour Party to give his support to ending the setting up of Academy Schools, and to encourage in their place co-operation between comprehensive community schools within each LA, so that every child has access to the facilities and teaching he/she needs.

Selection / Grammar Schools

2. The SEA welcomes the statement from David Willetts, the Tory Education spokesperson, abandoning the Tory commitment to the extension of grammar schools and selection at 11 but deplores the spinelessness of both main parties in refusing to abolish selection at 11 where it still exists in parts of England although not in Wales, Scotland or even now it seems in Northern Ireland. The SEA declares its determination to carry on its historic fight against the educational apartheid of selection at 11.

3. Conference notes that the attempt of the Tory Party leadership to abandon Grammar Schools opens possibilities for a campaign against selection. The Tory leadership stated the case against the eleven plus eloquently, until silenced by its right wing. But the genie is out of the bottle and their arguments can be used against them in a reinvigorated campaign against selection. Conference therefore resolves that the SEA will explore with like minded bodies a campaign against Grammar Schools, selection and social divisions in education using the impetus given by developments in the Tory Party.

Faith Schools

4. The SEA deplores the continued existence and proposed vast extension of faith schools in the State sector of education. We welcome the statement from the ATL that "we need schools that embrace the diversity of individuals within our community, not a diversity of institutions dividing pupils and staff on religious grounds." We recognise the difficulty of changing the legal status and autonomy of State-maintained faith schools but believe that in the interest of community cohesion it is vital that steps be taken to achieve this including the immediate appointment of an independent enquiry into the damaging effects of religious segregation in education and steps which can be taken to ensure all schools are accountable to our multicultural society.

5. Conference notes the concerns being expressed by the IPPR about the negative effects of faith schools on efforts to improve social cohesion and calls upon the Executive to consult with the IPPR and other interested organisations with a view to organising a Conference on this subject in the autumn.

A new National Curriculum

6. The SEA is alarmed at the failure of the present government to review the whole of the secondary curriculum in order to make it fit for purpose in the 21st century. It condemns the proposed moves on curriculum post 14 without a wholesale revision of the secondary curriculum which could ensure that all pupils received a common curriculum until 16 no longer bound by 19th century determined subject classifications but seen as relevant to the present world. We call upon the new Secretary of State for Education to set up an Inquiry into a National Curriculum for the 21st Century.

Supply teaching conditions

7. This SEA conference believes that supply teachers are professionals who provide an essential service for staff and children in schools. Therefore conference condemns the exploitation by some supply teacher agencies for not adhering to Teachers Pay and Conditions. This situation results in supply teachers being paid less, having to pay their own GTC fees, having no pension or sick leave rights.

Conference calls on the SEA executive to write to the teachers' unions, urging them to campaign for all qualified teachers, employed as supply teachers, to be treated as local authority employees and paid according to the School Teachers Pay and Conditions Document and have access to the Teachers Pension Scheme.

Post 16 policies

8. This conference considers that the policies of the Labour Government post 16 are deeply flawed and calls for urgent reconsideration. Conference rejects the proposal to raise the School Leaving Age to 18 and compelling adolescents to attend education or training with the threat of penalties on them or their families.

notes that the introduction of the new work based diplomas is deeply controversial and that the Education Secretary has admitted they could go 'horribly wrong' Conference calls on their planned implementation in autumn 2008 to be suspended until rigorous trialling and evaluation has been carried out:

recognises that the A Level reform programme has been conducted with wholly insufficient consultation, a lack of trialling and evaluation and contains controversial features which could weaken the credibility of the exam: that the government has promised a review of A Level in 2008 confined to employers and universities: and has thus created an untenable situation in which implementation and review are due to take place in the same year. Conference calls for A Level reform to be suspended while the review takes place, and that the review shall be open to all interested parties.

Conference resolves that the SEA will campaign with other interested parties to secure the implementation of this resolution.

9. Conference expresses its concern at the failure of the Government and the DfES to consult the National Union of Teachers on major educational issues affecting its members.