

SEA CONFERENCE RESOLUTIONS 2010

1. This conference believes: that Ofsted should be replaced with a much fairer system of inspection, that the current Ofsted procedures produce unnecessarily high levels of workload through monitoring data collection and excessive lesson observations. Ofsted is seen as an arbitrary and unreliable system of inspection relying too heavily on raw attainment data. The SEA calls on the government to negotiate with teacher unions, parents groups and educationalists to provide an alternative system of inspection so that school accountability involves the full participation of staff, pupils and parents.
2. SEA offers its support to the head teachers and other staff who refused to administer this year's SATS tests.
3. SEA calls upon the new Minister for Education to recognise the importance both for children's health and their capacity to learn of the provision of free breakfasts in schools where there is an identified need.
4. This SEA Conference deeply regrets the fact that Labour has gone into opposition and believes that the education policies of the Conservative/Liberal Democrat Coalition Government is likely to be very bad for education.

Policies are likely to include a massive expansion of the Academies programme which SEA rightly opposed, set up free schools on the Swedish model, a halt in Labour's moves towards a more inclusive education system for those with special educational needs and disabilities, cuts to the Sure Start Programme and a massive programme of cuts across the education system.

Whilst the SEA had major concerns about some of the Labour government's education policies these are likely to pail into insignificance compared with the policies of the new Government. This Conference believes that we now have an opportunity to rebuild a critical friend relationship with the Labour Education Front Bench Team to give them the information that they need to oppose the new Government's education policies and draw up a set of Labour education policies for the next General Election that better reflect the views, and experience of the stakeholders we represent. We call on the incoming SEA NEC to draw up and implement a strategy along the lines of this resolution as a matter of urgency.

5. The SEA calls upon all potential leadership candidates to engage in a proper dialogue with all sections of the Party, including the Socialist Societies, as part of the electoral process. The SEA would urge all candidates to review the reasons for the general election defeat and to make it part of their programme to reinvigorate relations between the leadership and the Party's constituent parts.
6. SEA reaffirms its opposition to the fragmentation of state education and the imposition of free market Thatcherite policies by governments since 1979. It notes that this is a not simply a UK issue but one based on a paradigm which extends across the globe. In this context SEA resolve that in the UK it is opposed as a matter of principle to Academies, Trusts and any state funded

schools and colleges not subject to democratic accountability. SEA commits to the concept of a state education system nationally determined and locally administered. On this basis it reaffirms its support for the Anti Academies Alliance and resolves

- a) to work with any grouping in the UK which endorses these principles
- b) to seek an international dimension to SEA work especially with the Swedish Anti Free Schools movement and US Anti Charter School movement.

7. SEA recognises that the end of 13 years of New Labour government creates a new situation requiring a review of the current SEA operation. While reaffirming its affiliation to the Labour Party, it recognises that it requires to work systematically with other groupings sharing its principles both within the UK and abroad.

Conference therefore resolves to consult with members on possible changes to boost recruitment and improve campaigning potential. It empowers the NEC to call a policy and rules revision conference within 9 months of this AGM/Conference if required, e.g. to allow foreign affiliation and associate membership if felt desirable.

8. This conference supports a change to the SEA constitution to allow for the compositing of SEA motions.
9. Following Labour's general election defeat, the party must redefine what it is for and what it is against in education policy.

SEA believes that the development of Labour education policy should be based on our core values of equality, democracy and solidarity. On that basis we will need both to propose and oppose. This will mean:

- a) Opposing marketisation and privatisation measures which promote inequality and divide communities and proposing democratic and comprehensive models of provision, in particular through a system of single status comprehensive schools and colleges accountable to their communities.
- b) Opposing narrow, divided or socially segregated curricula with separate pathways and early specialisation and proposing a single broad and inclusive framework for all which includes choice, depth, breadth, stretch and progression and values what learners know and can do, in particular through a single Diploma for England awarded at different levels.
- c) Opposing spending cuts which will reduce opportunities and hit the most disadvantaged hardest and proposing measures to target educational investment in ways which reduce inequalities, in particular by keeping routes to further learning accessible to all throughout life.

10. This conference believes that there is now a serious democratic deficit in England's education with the proliferation of unaccountable, competing semi-private and privatised school providers with different admissions policies, funding levels and curricula. This incoherent marketised system does not serve us well and can only lead to greater social inequalities.

In order to address this, SEA will work with other like-minded organisations, including local authorities, to develop a charter for education and will support the development of locally accountable education forums to scrutinise all education provision in their area and develop popular democratic alternatives. Once established, these forums could be the precursors of a system of locally elected education boards to oversee all education provision in their area.

11. Conference notes that:

- The Con Lib coalition government wishes to extend the academies programme by allowing schools with good Ofsted reports to fast track change in status,
- and further that Secretary of State Gove. has announced that 720 individuals, half of them teachers, have expressed an interest in setting up “free schools” possibly in “shops and houses”.

Accepting that many of these individuals will be parents with a grievance, overambitious teachers and American snake oil salespersons, even one such free school would be deeply harmful for the following reasons:

- It is not clear whether special needs legislation will apply in future either to academies or to free schools. This may be motivation for potential heads, devoid of principle, to seek to improve their school by dumping pupils that they do not expect to perform well.
- Any new school will take money away from existing schools. The situation is not a zero sum game; it is a negative sum game, taking place against a background of severe coalition cuts. If a free school is set up because of dissatisfaction with existing schools, it will not be possible to simply close them; many are mortgaged to PFI providers for the next 30 years. They will remain open as second-class institutions to cater for the under-privileged and the dispossessed.
- The so-called “free schools” may be removed from local authority control but they will in fact be “government schools” under the control of Ofsted and the Education Ministry, whatever it be titled by then. It is by no means clear that the coalition government has the ability to directly run thousands of schools. It is more likely that the schools will become feudal fiefdoms run by robber barons, with no democracy, public accountability or decency of treatment for staff and pupils.

Conference therefore calls on the Labour Leadership:

- To reject Blairite education policies, which have led the way into the current situation,
- And to start to campaign for a good, local, secular, comprehensive school for every child.