

# COMPREHENSIVE EDUCATION

- 1). No selection of any kind.
- 2). Totally COMPREHENSIVE system.
- 3). Minimum 6 form entry.
- 4). All co-educational schools.
- 5). Unstreamed classes.
- 6). Teacher training for COMPREHENSIVE schooling.
- 7). Purchase of sites large enough for purpose-built schools.

## Claims on education

THERE appears to be an active and extremely vociferous pro-comprehensive action group of parents and teachers.

They loudly claim massive support from the vast majority for the non-selective, non-competitive "all-in" school.

Strange — where are the queues of children waiting for admission to such schools, and ready to provide the more than adequate "academic leavening" that will supposedly solve all the problems of existing comprehensives?

The previous Tory Education Committee's "consultations" with the people about the Dawes Plan were at least genuine.

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Wishing to retain the status quo of particular technicals, grammars and secondary moderns, etc., many parents and teachers objected, fought and won. The plan was withdrawn.

Now the Socialists, of course, pre-supposing that 99 per cent of ratepayers want a fully comprehensive system of education (meanwhile suffering a "non-selective hotepotch") are going to "consult" parents, teachers and educationalists.

They will later claim that their plans for the reorganisation of the system have been fully endorsed.

There must be many parents and teachers—termed maybe by the noisy progressives "old fashioned and square"—who would prefer to retain and improve our good schools, secondary modern and grammar alike.

But I would like to know why they are so silent.

Rhomboid.

Hall Green.

ACCORDING to an "Evening Mail" report last week, Councillor Miss Sheila Wright was due to meet representatives of teachers' associations to discuss the Labour Council's intentions for the reorganisation of secondary education in the city.

Since the good lady did not see fit to enquire the views of the rapidly expanding Professional Association of Teachers on the subject, I wonder if we might make our views known to her through the medium of your newspaper?

Like any other teachers' organisation, and indeed the teaching profession in general, we are very much divided on whether we favour comprehensive schools or not.

There are probably as many of our members who support the comprehensive idea as there are opposing it.

However, even the most vigorous opponents of the comprehensive system among us are agreed that as a result of the voting in the municipal elections, the Labour councillors have a perfect right to put their ideas into practice and to introduce an all-comprehensive system.

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What we do most energetically suggest, however, is that only purpose-built comprehensive schools can possibly be justified.

The system of merging two schools half-a-mile apart and saying "This is now one comprehensive school" is disastrous.

It therefore follows that it is much too soon to talk of finally discarding the 11-plus examination.

Even if the Council moves with great haste it must be at least 10 years before fully comprehensive schooling is possible in schools built for the purpose.

To rush this scheme at top speed and to make artificial comprehensive schools can only be harmful to the children, and therefore is not educationally viable.

Hurvy H. Jones  
Chairman, Birmingham  
Branch, P.A.T.

Sedington.

I WOULD like to reply to Mrs. Dudley and "Comp" in Letterbox.

As a former comprehensive school pupil, and now a medical student at the University of Birmingham, I feel I am in a good position to put forward the opposite point of view.

I cannot agree with "Comp" when he says that comprehensive schools have a grammar stream.

The system is not as rigid as he would suggest.

Certainly the classes in any one subject are streamed.

But it does not follow that just because a pupil is in the top stream for one subject he will be in the top stream for every subject.

Each pupil is assessed on his ability and then put in the appropriate stream for each subject. This ensures that he gets the maximum benefit from all subjects being taught at the correct speed for his ability.

Very few pupils, even in so-called top grammar schools, can claim to be expert in every subject, and would be

greatly benefited in some subjects.

This type of flexible streaming benefits everyone.

Each pupil learns every subject to the maximum of his ability — not too fast so that he falls behind, and not too slow so that he gets bored.

If improvement is shown by a pupil in a subject, then he can simply be moved up to the next stream where the work is a little harder, and further improvement can occur.

The amount of rubbish that is written and spoken about comprehensive schools by people who obviously have never studied the principles under which they work infuriates me.

They are the rarest systems of education so far devised; they benefit both the bright and the slow pupils.

B. Chad.

Edgbury.



## Teachers to prepare a master 'all-in' plan

Evening Mail Reporter

**B**IRMINGHAM'S teacher representatives have volunteered to work during the school summer holidays to prepare a master plan so that the city can go fully comprehensive early next year, it was stated today.

Councillor Miss Sheila Wright, the new Labour Party chairman of Birmingham Education Committee, said today that there had been three meetings with the teachers and she was delighted with the "helpful and co-operative" attitude they had adopted.

The three separate meetings had been with the teachers' organisations and unions, the Roman Catholic Church schools representatives, and similar representatives from the Church of England schools.

### 30 MEETINGS

She wanted teachers and parents—there would be 30 meetings for parents throughout the city in the next two months—to join with the Education Committee in drawing up an entirely new comprehensive education plan.

Mr. Ron Cocking, ex-National President of the National Association of Schoolmasters, said today that after consultation with parents, it was proposed to set up a working party on July 21 to plan for Birmingham going comprehensive.

### FIGHT

Birmingham City Council Conservatives have already indicated that they will fight any comprehensive education plan.

Today the Liberal spokesman on education, Alderman Ken Hardeman, said he and his colleagues would never support a "hotch potch plan."

The Labour Party, he said, had already prejudged the question of comprehensive education, but he considered that parents' views should have been considered before any decision was taken.

He favoured a referendum. No money was available for secondary school building, so grouping of existing schools must be part of any comprehensive education plan.

## City set for drastic change

LABOUR'S success in the Birmingham city council elections heralds drastic changes in education.

The new chairman of the education committee, Miss Sheila Wright, confirmed that all selection will be abolished and a comprehensive system introduced.

After the Labour-controlled education committee meeting on May 17, the city's chief education officer, Mr. Kenneth Brooksbank, will be instructed to discontinue 11-plus procedure and to prepare for a changeover to comprehensive schools.

### Principles

During the following two days Labour will meet representatives of the local teachers' organisations and church school authorities to outline general principles for the establishment of comprehensive schools throughout the city.

So far, no definite proposals have been put forward although area meetings, including teachers, have been studying the situation. Now working parties of teachers and diocesan council representatives will be set up to formulate a comprehensive education policy.

Fears have been expressed about the future of the two direct grant

schools—King Edward's and King Edward's high school for girls—and particularly the final voluntary-aided grammar schools which constitute the King Edward Foundation.

There are to be early talks with the foundation, and Councillor Wright hopes that they will be able to co-operate and find some way of fitting their schools into the Birmingham system of non-selective education.

### Colleges

She hinted that one or two of the five voluntary-aided grammar schools might possibly become sixth-form colleges.

Alderman Neville Bosworth, one of the governors of the foundation and deputy leader of the council Conservative group, said: "If Labour insisted on imposing 'this dogmatic system of education' the direct grant schools could become independent—a move he would support."

Ministerial approval will be needed for whatever pattern of comprehensive system Labour chooses and this may lead to friction which could be aggravated by Labour's plan to provide free milk-based drinks for seven to 11-year old children.

## Backing—but a watch on details

Education Reporter

LABOUR education leaders were beginning talks with teacher organisations late this afternoon knowing that they have a great degree of support for comprehensive proposals.

The teacher's bodies, however, stressed today that, even where they have already expressed support for comprehensive education they will be concerned about the details of its implementation.

These include the National Union of Teachers, whose Birmingham membership, nearly 3,000, were being represented by an eight-strong delegation at the talks.

Mr. Gordon Green, secretary of the local association, said: "We shall give full backing to the principle of comprehensive reorganisation and the ending of selection, but we shall watch most carefully the detailed working of the plan."

### STATUS

"We shall be anxious to safeguard the status and general happiness of the teaching profession."

Mr. Green moved, and another Birmingham delegate seconded, the important resolution at a national conference of the union which confirmed the N.U.T. policy of full commitment to comprehensive education.

The Birmingham Association of Head Teachers was sending four representatives to this afternoon's talks.

The association has more than 300 members and its support will be essential to the working of any reorganisation scheme.

Mr. W. Barnett, Head of Castle Vale Comprehensive School, one of the four delegates from the Executive of the association at the talks, said before the meeting that the majority of Heads were in favour of a common system of education, namely a comprehensive system, which would do away with the process of selection at 11 years of age.

This was not only his view, but that of the association.

He felt that most teachers would welcome the advent of comprehensive education.

WHY is there so much haste?

The Labour reply is that Birmingham education has already been shrouded in uncertainty for far too long.

I also believe the Labour Party is most unsure about how long it will be able to hold the City Council—supposedly it does get control.

If the education plan does not go through in 1973—the Tories could be back in power in 1974.

And there is one unpredictable weapon in the Tory armoury—the Secretary of State for Education.

If there are enough objections to any proposal to alter the status of a school, the matter has to be considered by the Secretary.

And how long will the Secretary take to make up her mind—faced with a long list of objections from Birmingham? A month? Three months? Six?

It could be a long question. Every day could matter.

I DOUBT whether Birmingham's new comprehensive school system will be ready for introduction in September 1973.

Which raises an awkward question. If the 11-plus has been abolished, who decides which children go to which schools next year?

The head teachers? I talked with a primary school head who wanted no part of the job.

"In a very short time I should become the most unpopular man in the district," he said.

If anyone knows the answer perhaps they should speak up. And put at least one worried teacher out of his misery.

By the way, the Labour Party is not alone in wanting to abolish the 11-plus.



# 'Betrayal'—teachers

THE controversy over Birmingham Conservatives' plan for re-organising education in the city continued today with exchanges between teachers and a Tory spokesman.

Other developments included:

- A plea by comprehensive school heads that the proposed degree of selection should be cut from 16 per cent to five per cent.

- A protest by the headmistress and 32 staff at Bartley Green Girls' Grammar School at the proposal to change their school into a 12-16 age non-selective school with no sixth form.

- The 5,000-strong Birmingham branch of the National Union of Teachers today declared its "determination to resist the implementation of this educationally unsound scheme."

Under proposals previously agreed, Bartley Green Girls' Grammar School was to have become a bi-lateral school for pupils aged 11-19, with both a selective and non-selective entry.

## STAFFS' LETTER

In a letter sent to all members of the city's Education Committee, the headmistress, Miss G. C. Williams, and members of her staff, express a "strong sense of betrayal" at the new proposal for their school.

They say that official notices were sent to all the staff and parents on November 23 about the proposals to turn it into a bi-lateral school — and that they had two months to submit representations.

Miss Williams declined today to speak to a reporter.

Commenting on criticism by teachers' leaders of the re-organisation plan, Councillor Neil Scrimshaw, Deputy Chair-

## WE WILL RESIST CITY SCHOOLS PLAN, SAYS N.U.T.

Evening Mail Reporter

man of Birmingham Education Committee, said today.

"I consider the extreme language of the President of the Birmingham Association of the N.U.T., with the outright refusal even to discuss the education proposals, is most regrettable."

"I would be interested to know whether any representatives of the teachers are in communication with Labour representatives, with a view to forcing a Socialist-approved educational policy upon this city at some future date."

## HEADS' BELIEF

The heads of about 20 comprehensive and bi-lateral schools today issued a statement reaffirming their belief in a system of comprehensive education as being "the only way" to meet the educational and social needs of all children.

Under the Conservative plan, the selective entry to comprehensive schools in the city would be dropped.

Parents would be able to choose between sending their children to 12-18 or 12-16 age schools or sitting them for an examination for a grammar school place.

The comprehensive heads said the local education authority seemed to be committed to selection.

They were, therefore, asking:

- That cutting the degree of selection from 16 per cent to five per cent should be considered. This would result in pupils of a wider-range ability attending all secondary schools, they said.

- That schools should be encouraged to retain and develop sixth forms.

- That the proposal to establish three sixth-form colleges should be dropped.

One of the heads, Mr. O. Beynon, head of Great Barr Comprehensive School, said they all felt strongly that no consultation had taken place.

## MINISTRY REQUEST

A Ministry request for data of primary school projects for 1974 and secondary school projects for 1975, to be submitted by January 29, was being discussed at this afternoon's meeting of the Education Finance and General Purposes Sub-Committee.

A Labour member, Councillor Miss Sheila Wright, said before the meeting that the recommended lists included items in the draft reorganisation plan.

"But there is no guarantee that the plan will be adopted," she said. "It is jumping the gun."

## CAMPAIGN

The N.U.T. announced that it was inviting other teachers' organisations to join in a campaign opposing the city scheme.

The Birmingham branch of the National Association of Schoolmasters has also announced its opposition to the scheme, and is urging its members to write to Birmingham councillors and Mrs. Margaret Thatcher, Secretary of State for Education.

Another protest has come from the Lower Sixth form of King's Heath Boys' Technical School, which would become a non-selective school for the 12-16 age group under the scheme.

In a petition to the Council House, the boys of the Lower Sixth say the present system at the school is conducive to first-class education.

# City to go comprehensive

BY 30 votes to 13, the new Labour majority on Birmingham Education Committee has decided to abolish the 11-Plus examination.

They started talks today on introducing a fully comprehensive system next year.

Conservatives predicted chaos and disaster and pledged their support for a fight to retain the city's grammar schools.

The new Labour Chairman of the Education Committee, Councillor Miss Sheila Wright, said, however:

"We believe that our proposals will be welcomed by the vast majority of parents and teachers, after the long drawn-out indecision of the last eight years."

## Timetable

Miss Wright outlined the following timetable for the city to go comprehensive in September, 1973:

- Discussions with teachers' organisations started today.

- Talks with voluntary bodies, including the Handsworth Grammar School Foundation will begin tomorrow, though it may take at least a month to arrange a

meeting with the King Edward Foundation.

- A city-wide series of meetings with parents will be held during the next two or three months to find out what non-selective system they would like in their area.

- A detailed plan will then be drawn up, followed by a further series of consultative meetings before the final plan is brought before the Education Committee and the City Council.

Transfer at the age of 11 is being retained, at least for the time being.

Miss Wright said they hoped to retain an element of choice of schools within the comprehensive system, including some single-sex schools.

The teachers' representative, Mr. Peter Davies, said the majority of his colleagues wanted a non-selective system of secondary education.

He doubted the wisdom of dispensing with the 11-Plus examination until they could be sure of being able to introduce a comprehensive system by September, 1973.

Miss Wright said that if they found there was any undue obstruction to their plans, inside or outside Birmingham, over which they had no con-

trol, they would obviously have to look at the situation again, with the teachers. She added: "At the moment, we can see no reason to do so."

## 'Great value'

Replying to a challenge by Conservatives to say what would happen to the King Edward Schools, she said she was not going to be forced to make any statements before meeting the Foundation.

The King Edward Foundation, she said, had been of great value to the city over the years and had shown itself willing to co-operate with the education authority.

Miss Wright said: "We hope we shall be able to discuss with them the system of education the majority party wish to put into operation and come to a conclusion which is satisfactory to both sides."

Alderman Sydney Dawes, the former Conservative Chairman, claimed that the

mass of parents in Birmingham were in favour of retaining the grammar schools system and that the Labour Party intended to force through comprehensive education whether parents liked it or not.

He said: "When it is known what your exact proposals are — and this we do not know at the moment — I am certain parents will rise in their wrath and destroy your plan."

A Labour member, the Rev. Coun. Fred Howell, said the issue should not be seen just in terms of party politics.

He said: "Selection is educationally wrong, socially wrong and definitely wrong in terms of the Christian Gospel."

## 'Chaos'

Coun. Neil Scrimshaw, the former Conservative Deputy Chairman, said it was not the Conservatives but the Labour Party who had labelled children as failures.

He questioned whether the Socialists would be able to

stick to their timetable and he said there would be chaos if they discontinued the 11-Plus. He said: "You will, by this precipitate rush, take us very close to disaster in the education system."

"I believe disaster will occur and you will be marring the lives of many thousands who will find their courses disrupted, whatever the pledge you give now."

Another Labour speaker, Coun. Douglas Banbury, head of a school outside Birmingham, said that if they recognised the uniqueness of children, they could not support the separation of them into sheep and goats by highly questionable methods of selection.

He said: "If selection is dropped, it follows logically that we must have a comprehensive, non-selective system of education."

The Committee instructed the Chief Education Officer to prepare estimates of the cost involved in implementing Labour's plan to increase capitation allowances.

A report was also requested on ways of providing free, milk-based drinks for junior school children from next September.

A special sub-committee was set up to report on steps needed for an early increase in nursery education, possible admission to school from the age of four and liaison with

Evening Mail Reporter



As a teacher, I have been persuaded for many years that comprehensive education is the best, educationally and personally, for children. I am deeply distressed that the Education Committee's plan for secondary reorganisation should continue to be referred to in the Press as a "Comprehensive Scheme."

It is nothing of the sort and, if it comes about, will bring the very word "comprehensive" into disrepute.

It is a political sham intended to persuade the electorate that they are getting a comprehensive system when the Chairman of the Education Committee herself admits that there is no money

## 'Comprehensive' and its true meaning

for necessary new buildings, but hopes that expenditure from local resources on extra equipment and teachers will compensate for this.

What utter nonsense! Will a decrepit Victorian building newly labelled "comprehensive," even if given more equipment and teachers, be able to give as much to the brightest—or even the dullest—children in its neighbourhood, as can schools like Shenley Court Comprehensive or a King Edward's Grammar School?

How does the Education Committee propose to get over this? By sharing out the facilities through a "consortium" of schools?

This seems to be the brain child of the Union representatives of "the teachers," who seem to have included no head of a fully developed comprehensive school, but a great number of primary teachers who have not the faintest idea of the organisational problems involved.

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Will some of these explain just how to share these facilities without withdrawing them from some of the youngsters already in those schools?

As for the idea that the committee will be able to recruit high quality teachers of scarcity subjects from outside Birmingham, to be appointed to a consortium and to belong anywhere, have they no idea whatever just what makes good teachers "tick"?

It is simply personal identification with the development of children in a stable environment which includes out-of-school activities.

Let nobody confuse the issue through comparing them with peripatetic teachers of music who deal with individual children in different schools.

This plan must be fought by involving councillors, M.P.s,

Mrs. Thatcher and, if necessary, legal action as far as the House of Lords.

Angry Teacher,  
Solihull.

\* \* \*

MUCH has been made in the Press and at meetings of parents discussing the new "non-selective" scheme of secondary education for the city, of the support of teachers for the scheme.

In fairness, while it is true that the scheme has the support of some of the profession, it is equally true that a substantial number of teachers view the proposals with some scepticism and disquiet.

This is not to say that the latter group is opposed to the comprehensive ideal, but rather, concerned at the rapidity with which this reorganisation is to be carried out.

The effect of this plan being implemented by September, 1973, will be to deny opportunity to the very children which the comprehensive idea could benefit most.

As a colleague said at a meeting: "They should not be talking about propping-up the sub-standard schools, they should be talking about knocking them down."

Miss Wright will have the support of the majority of teachers, only when she is prepared to state categorically the amount of money which she is prepared to spend to make this plan work.

And only then, if this amount is adequate to finance her proposals.

Until then, the vague generalisations, the well-intentioned idealism and the pie in the sky promises tend to form a smoke screen hiding the squalid inadequacy of this "second-city" plan.

Kevin Cassidy,  
Half Green.

## Parents and their apprehensions

THE present proposals for the reorganisation of secondary education in Birmingham justify the worst apprehensions of many parents following the first round of "consultative" meetings.

While the previous scheme had many defects, it at least attempted to match children with the available facilities.

Now it is proposed that children shall be sent to the nearest school, regardless of suitability of the facilities available.

The comprehensive ideal, that each school should contain children of each group and level of ability in the proportions present in the authority, has vanished, and the name "comprehensive" is to disappear even from schools built as such.

The inadequacy of the new scheme is being camouflaged by talk of "consortia," involving co-operation between schools, and "positive discrimination," to bring the inferior schools up to the level of the best.

But the proposed co-operation will operate only from the fourth year, and even then the head teachers who will have to work the scheme doubt its practical feasibility.

No indication has been given where the money for "positive discrimination" is to be found, or that it is realised that grammar type schools will need remedial teachers as much as the secondary modern will need specialists.

Without the money, changing the name board does not improve the school.

The parents fare no better. Because there has been little effective choice so far, there is to be none in the future.

And if any parent is so rash as to move to the area of a school he chooses, he is quite likely to be frustrated by an arbitrary administrative decision.

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In fact, the present proposal is to graft on to a complex conurbation, "village school" type of education, appropriate only to a smaller and more cohesive district.

This situation results from the precipitate decision to abandon the junior school leaving examination because it has been used to classify children as "successes" and "failures."

It could, and should, have been used simply to find out a child's capability and aptitudes to determine a suitable secondary school.

There should be no "passing" or "failing" but rather an attempt at 100 per cent. selection, which is surely more rational than to abandon the attempt to fit children to schools in favour of a geographical lottery.

At the same time, we could continue to bring all schools up to the requisite standards instead of jumbling the lot up to ensure that what is not available to all is available to none.

M. G. Hall  
(Chairman)

Birmingham Association for Education.

\* \* \*

I RECENTLY attended a school's reorganisation meeting at Yardley Grammar School.

Towards the end of the evening a teenager stood up to

say something in favour of the plan, and I was most upset by the treatment he received from what was obviously an audience predominantly against the plan.

The interruptions started very soon after he began to speak and continued until he finished, so that most of what he said was lost in the general noise.

It must have taken some courage to stand up and speak as he did, in a most reasonable manner, at such a meeting and the least the parents could have done would have been to have listened without the interruptions.

If this is the sort of behaviour we can expect from grammar school products, the sooner we get rid of selection the better.

S. W. Westley,  
Acocks Green.

## Say 'Yes': N.U.T. plea to members

Evening Mail Reporter

DELEGATES representing about 4,500 teachers in Birmingham—members of the National Union of Teachers—will be recommended tomorrow to accept the reorganisation plan.

The executive of the Birmingham Association of the N.U.T. voted overwhelmingly last night to accept the plan.

Of 46 people present, 44 were in favour and two abstained, not on principle, but because they were from primary schools and felt that it was a matter for their secondary colleagues.

### 'DELIGHTED WITH PLAN'

Tomorrow evening's special general meeting of the Birmingham N.U.T. will be at Digbeth Civic Hall.

Mr. Richard Frankish, the President of the Birmingham Association, said today: "We, as officers and as an executive, are delighted with this plan."

"It has been drawn up with real consultation."

"We think it is educationally sound."

"It seeks to establish significant new concepts which will make use of available resources to the maximum advantage of all children."

## Pledge to oppose threat to schools

Evening Mail Reporter

PARENTS and former pupils of the King Edward's Foundation schools in Birmingham are preparing to "mobilise forces" against Labour plans to introduce a comprehensive education system throughout the city.

Fears were expressed today about the future of the two direct grant schools, King Edward's School and King Edward's High School for Girls, and particularly the five voluntary aided grammar schools which make up the Foundation.

Labour are committed to the abolition of selective education now they have gained control of the City Council.

Councillor Miss Sheila Wright, who is to be the new chairman of the Education Committee, said that they would be holding talks with the Foundation at an early date.

She said: "We hope they will prove able to co-operate with the system of non-selective education we shall be working out for the city."

If Labour insists on drawing in the Foundation schools into non-selective system, the two direct grant schools may opt to go independent.

Alderman Neville Bosworth, one of the governors of the Foundation and Deputy Leader of the City Council Conservative group, said today: "The direct grant schools receive money from the Education Authority providing they offer a percentage of free places."

"If Labour insist on imposing this dogmatic system of education the direct grant schools could become independent. My vote would go for that."

The five voluntary aided

grammar schools, which rely on local authority support but are responsible for maintaining the fabric of their buildings, may be forced to go comprehensive.

They are: King Edward's Grammar School, Frederick Road; King Edward's Camp Hill School for Boys; King Edward's Camp Hill School for Girls; King Edward's Five Ways School and King Edward's Grammar School, Rose Hill Road, Handsworth.

Alderman Bosworth, an old boy of King Edward's School, said: "I feel tremendous disquiet about the future."

"I think the Labour side is mistaken if they think parents are going to remain passive in the face of a threat to the schools."

Reluctant