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No more selection under a Labour government?

Welcome to our third newsletter

- In November the House of Commons voted, for the second time in two years, to support a bill to end grammar school ballots. A 10 Minute Rule Bill introduced by David Taylor MP succeeded with the support of 126 Labour MPs. 10 Minute Rule Bills rarely get a second reading but make a point.
- The Labour National Policy Forum met at the end of November to discuss the policy documents which will eventually form the next manifesto. *Comprehensive Future* asked some members to lobby for a clear commitment that the next Labour government will end selection by ability and aptitude for secondary school admissions. (See the letter overleaf; the briefing will be on the website www.comprehensivefuture.org.uk in the New Year). Reports from the conference indicate that selection was raised. The second phase document will be sent out for consultation in the New Year.
- At the end of the last session 82 Labour MPs, including several ex-ministers, signed Early Day Motion 1859 calling for an enquiry into the effects of selection.

NOW, there is more work to be done —

- Please respond to the Big Conversation. It offers many opportunities to press for an end to selection. It asks 'How do we give every child an excellent education?' 'How do we ensure that those with potential, regardless of background, take full advantage of higher education?' It asks what should be the next steps on the road to fairness. Visit www.bigconversation.org.uk — it is very important that as many responses as possible call for an end to selection for secondary school admissions. The conversation ends at the end of March. Labour MPs will be involved in consulting.
- Support for *Comprehensive Future* is gathering pace. We want to publicise our support. Please ask your ward, branch, local councillors and Labour group leader to support the *Comprehensive Future Declaration* (overleaf) and let us know as soon as possible.
- We are planning a fringe meeting at the Spring Conference in Manchester, 12-14 March, and a meeting to discuss specific proposals to replace current grammar school ballots regulations. Please contact us for details. They will also be in our next newsletter in the New Year.



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Seasons Greetings from Comprehensive Future

Comprehensive Future Declaration

We celebrate the achievement of over 30 years of comprehensive schools in delivering improvements in both pupil achievement and in participation in further and higher education.

We reject the assumption that general ability or specific aptitude is fixed or predetermined or that this can be definitively assessed by the age of transfer to secondary school. We are concerned about the dangers of social exclusion and increasing inequalities between schools.

Wales and Scotland have successful comprehensive systems. We want the next Labour manifesto to be bold enough to make clear the virtues of a comprehensive system and promise to extend this system to England by ending all selection by ability and aptitude within the first two years of the next parliament.

Comprehensive Future's letter to members of National Policy Forum

Dear Policy Forum Member,

Comprehensive Future is a group of Labour party members including MPs, Peers, Union leaders and councillors formed in 2003. We want to see an end to selection for secondary schools in England by both ability and aptitude.

We understand that the proposed second year Education Commission Document, to be considered at the forthcoming National Policy Forum, does not include a commitment to end selection. It does however quote the views of at least one submission expressing concern about selection and sets out a guiding principle that whatever the school system and admission arrangements every child matters. The document suggests that the adjudicator and local parental ballots are in place to deal with issues of selection. We attach a document showing why there will be no end to selection under these arrangements.

We are writing to ask you to press at the forthcoming meeting for a clear commitment within the document that **the next Labour Government will end selection by ability and aptitude for secondary school admissions.**

Tony Blair in his speech to Labour Party Conference this year said:

'What progress it was in the 1960s when the comprehensive ended the division of children into successes and failures at age 11.'

There is no selection in Wales and Scotland and there are plans to end the 11plus in Northern Ireland but in 36 out of the 150 English LEAs this division of children into successes and failures continues. In addition some schools are introducing partial selection on aptitude.

Selection divides children and communities. It lowers standards across the board. It undermines the aim of bringing about a truly inclusive education system. A recent international study found that:

'The more differentiated and selective an education system is, the larger are the typical performance differences between students from more or less advantaged backgrounds.'

OECD Education Policy Analysis 2002

Only a Labour government can provide the leadership to bring about this change, it **will not come about under the present system**. Please lobby for this clear commitment to be made in the document.