
Campaigning for a change in Labour policy to bring about an end to selection at 11 both by ability and aptitude

Patrons

Fiona Millar
Lord Hunt of Kings
Heath

Chair

David Chaytor MP

Secretary

Margaret Tulloch

Treasurer

Malcolm Horne
Gen Sec SEA

National Policy Forum meeting - the outcome

The July newsletter encouraged all supporters to lobby members of the National Policy Forum to ensure that a promise to end selection was included in the policy document which will go to conference. Malcolm Horne, treasurer of *Comprehensive Future* and SEA General Secretary, was able to go to the Forum meeting from July 23rd to 25th as an observer and he confirmed that selection was raised as an issue by many attending. Following discussions in workshops and with Ministers and unions a consensus amendment to the policy document was put to the final plenary on Sunday morning and agreed there by a large majority. It says:

"Our vision for education promotes quality choice for parents and pupils. We reject the damaging Tory assumption that general ability is fixed or predetermined and their damaging proposals for every primary and secondary school to select and choose their pupils, and to do so on their own criteria.

"We will avoid the dangers of social exclusion, continue to tackle inequalities between schools and to end the growth of selection. We have also removed the ability of schools to use interviews as a covert form of selection.

"We are pursuing a non-selective system in secondary education. So we will continue to ensure that all schools abide by the strict requirements of the admissions code of practice which does not allow any extension by ability.

"The government will study carefully the report on secondary schools admissions by the Select Committee on education and skills. We recognise that as we move to a system of all schools becoming specialist there is a case for examining carefully the role of selection by aptitude. Few specialist schools exercise their power to select by aptitude but it can provide opportunities for children talented in areas such as sport and music to develop their natural skill. Given the new circumstances the government will review the current list of prescribed aptitudes to see if they all continue to be appropriate.

"As schools become specialist so collaboration, federations and partnerships between them is growing. This development is to be welcomed, particularly in the context of the emerging 14-19 curriculum reforms, which will break down the academic vocational divide particularly in selective areas, and should therefore be accelerated to drive up opportunities and standards for every pupil in every school.

"In addition we will, as set out in the child poverty review recently announced by the chancellor, review in partnership with local authorities and headteachers the way that funding is distributed within LEAs to schools. As part of that review we will consider whether all authorities should follow the example of those LEAs that use their local funding formulae to provide extra support to those schools that admit disproportionately high numbers of under-performing pupils."

Other amendments, which would have made the very clear commitment to **end** all selection, which *Comprehensive Future* wants to see, were put after the consensus motion had been agreed and were heavily defeated.

Education and Skills select committee on admissions

This all party committee published its report on Secondary School admissions on 22nd July on the last day of Parliament. *Comprehensive Future* was able to email some of its findings to NPF members before the Forum. As the consensus amendment overleaf indicates the Government has to respond. The report has much to say about selection:

"We have found no evidence that selection by ability or aptitude contributes to the overall improvement of educational standards." (Paragraph 258)

"We believe it is time for Ministers to engage in an informed debate about the role of selection in secondary education and its impact across the education system as a whole. The Government needs to explain how it reconciles its insistence that there will be no return to selection with its willingness to retain and increase selection where it already exists. Without an honest and robust engagement with this issue the Government's policy on selection will continue to appear ad hoc and without principle." (Paragraph 215)

"Aptitude tests are an additional and unnecessary complication in the school admissions process. Moreover, the resources invested by schools running these tests are significant both financially and in terms of staff time . . . We recommend that the facility for state funded schools to admit pupils on the basis of aptitude tests should be withdrawn." (Paragraph 201)

"We are aware of no research evidence, nor did we receive any representations, indicating that partial selection contributes in any way to the overall improvement of educational standards. We therefore recommend that this option should be withdrawn." (Paragraph 204)

". . . the current arrangements for a selection of local people to decide the admissions arrangements of their grammar schools are flawed. The petition and balloting arrangements are a gesture in the direction of local democracy but waste the time and energy of all concerned. If the Government believes a local vote is the appropriate mechanism by which the future of selective schools should be decided then it is high time for a review of the present arrangements. In any event, the current provisions for grammar school ballots should be immediately withdrawn so as to ensure that no further resources are wasted in this exercise." (Paragraph 227)

House of Commons Education and Skills Committee 4th Report Session 2003-4, *Secondary Education: School Admissions*, £15.50 from the Stationery Office or on the Committee website at www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm/cmmeduski.htm

Comprehensive Future wins increasing support for declaration

Support continues to grow for the declaration including from CLPs, individuals, TU branches and wards.

Since our last newsletter these additional CLPs have supported our declaration:

**Bedford and Kempston;
City of London;
City of Westminster;
Islington North;
North East Bedfordshire;
Reading East;
Reading West;
Mansfield;
Weston Super Mare.**

The July newsletter on the website has the list of supporting CLPs as at July 2004. Having wide support across the party strengthens our case for change.

Please raise it with your CLP as soon as it meets this Autumn.

The declaration is enclosed and can also be downloaded from the website at the address below.

Catch up with the latest news on the website

A report of the *Comprehensive Future* conference on May 1st with speakers Roy Hattersley, Lord Hunt of Kings Heath, Professor Margaret Maden and Fiona Millar is now on the website (under press releases and other documents).

The website has all previous newsletters as well as *Comprehensive Future* submissions and briefings.

Check it out on www.comprehensivefuture.org.uk

Come to our fringe meeting

Ending Selection – third term lucky?

Chair: Fiona Millar

Speakers: Frank Dobson, John Edmonds,
Lord Hunt of Kings Heath

Wednesday 29th September, 1pm

Refreshments

Creation Night Club, West Street, Brighton

This is outside the security area so passes are not needed but is close to the conference centre near the beach at the end of West Street