

Press Release Thursday 8th April 2010

HOME EDUCATION LICENSING SCHEME THROWN OUT IN

LAST MINUTE WASH-UP

Home educators today feel a huge sense of relief as the Government has been forced to drop the home education parts of the Children Schools and Families Bill in a last-minute wash-up agreed by front benchers of the three major parties at the end of the current Parliament.

The Government had mistakenly attempted to rush through changes to the home education law in England without pre-legislative scrutiny.

Ministers and civil servants rashly dismissed the findings of the Select Committee Inquiry, which reported that the plans were "too aggressive", based on "less than robust" evidence and should be scaled back.

Ann Newstead, spokesperson for Education Otherwise said: "We are thankful for the Select Committee's scrutiny and for the support of hundreds of backbench MPs who - unlike the Government - actually took time to listen and to understand how completely unjustified, inappropriate and ill-conceived these proposals were."

The past year has seen a massive rise in political awareness amongst home educators who quickly realised the need to talk to their local MP. Last Autumn, families took part in a nationwide series of not-back-to-school picnics and a mass lobby of parliament where hundreds of home educating children and parents set out their case to MPs.

At Christmas, 331 constituencies returned petitions against the proposed legislation on home education, culminating in a mass presentation of petitions to Parliament on 8th December.

Annette Taberner, Education Otherwise Trustee, said: "as a community we are now much more politically active and aware and we won't be sinking back into complacency."

Fiona Nicholson, Education Otherwise Trustee and Chair of the Government Policy Group said:

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"The wash-up has been widely criticised as being undemocratic but the whole process of this Bill has been deplorable and whatever its faults, the wash-up at least prevented a grave injustice being foisted on tens of thousands of home educating families. Throughout this entire sorry episode, Government Ministers have fundamentally misunderstood the nature of this debate and up to the last possible second Ministers have belittled the enduring commitment to children's rights shown by home educators."

Shortly after the Government's plans were unveiled last year, Lord Lucas, now vice Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group on home education said:

"We are considering a section of the Bill which will cost £20 million per annum, which is about £1,000 per home-educated child. These children receive no money to help pay the costs of examinations; no money to buy textbooks; no money to buy materials; no money and no tuition to help them over difficulties in education. Now the Government can find £1,000 for each of these children-and will spend it on auditing them. Not one penny will go to help the children; it will all go on auditing them. What have these people done to deserve that?"

Notes for editors:

Education Otherwise web page on the Children Schools and Families Bill -
<http://www.freedomforchildrentogrow.org/csfbill.htm>

Ministerial statement on the Children Schools and Families Bill April 7 2010 -
http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/news/index.cfm?event=news.item&id=statement_on_the_children_schools_and_families_bill

Lord Lucas, House of Lords November 26 2009 -
<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200910/ldhansrd/text/91126-0011.htm#09112630000780>

Chair Select Committee interview December 2009 -
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2009/dec/16/home-education-ed-balls>

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