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UNIONIST HEADQUARTERS

Temporary Address

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3rd March, 1977

Lord Melchett,  
Department of Education,  
Rathgael House,  
Bangor.

Dear Lord Melchett,

At a recent meeting of the Executive Committee of the Ulster Unionist Council a paper prepared by the Education Policy Committee of the party on Comprehensive Education was discussed and its recommendations were agreed. These are as follows:-

1. The Government should be pressed to delay a decision on the Cowan Report to allow adequate discussion and a balanced weighing of opinion.
2. The responsibility for Education in Northern Ireland should be for a devolved government in order to examine the full nature, scope and costing involved.
3. The simplistic scrapping of the Eleven Plus without an objective alternative is queried though the Ulster Unionist Party recognises and accepts the need for a change.
4. More relevant work should be devised for non-academic students who should be encouraged to remain at school until they obtain employment.
5. The party favours a system of comprehensive education rather than a system of comprehensive schools.
6. The party believes the welfare of each child to be important and therefore rejects mere equalisation and would seek to develop educational facilities for the greatest potential of each child.
7. The party supports the continuing evolution of our educational system rather than its possible destruction by a revolutionary approach.
8. Names for Secondary Schools might well be changed to obviate unnecessary slurs, and the status of "Intermediate" could be raised by a more generous points system for the employment of ancillary staff.
9. The party believes that the best traditions of the Grammar Schools have a part to play in capitalising our greatest natural resources - boys and girls, but believes that an inequitable distribution of financial resources in favour of a few schools might militate against this.

We were asked to convey these recommendations, reached after considerable thought by a widely representative Education Committee and endorsed by the policymaking body of the whole party, to you as urgently and forcefully as possible.

Yours sincerely

Chairman, Executive Committee  
(Josias Cunningham, M.A.)

Convenor, Education Committee  
(Rev. W. Martin Smyth, BA., BD.)

Recd/Ackd Date 7/3