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Piaskowski K (Karen)

From: Gordon Coats
Sent: 06 June 2005 12:19
To: Parental Involvement Bill
Subject: 654



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Dear Sir,

Please find attached my response to the consultation
process.

Many Thanks

Gordon Coats

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3rd June 05

Dear Sir,

This is a personal response to the consultation process for the Parental Involvement Bill.

I wholly commend the Executive's motives to "strengthen...rights as parents and improve parental representation in schools". I wholly disagree with the proposed way of achieving this.

Any democratic system works by having a chosen few individuals elected to represent the opinions of the majority and act upon them. This applies at national and local level. Without this we have anarchy. As glib as this may sound, the proposed parental forums, with potentially any number of participants, would end up as little more than structureless talking shops, or to use a West of Scotland expression, "greetin' meetin's" with personal agendas in abundance.

The Executive have also overlooked one major factor. Parental apathy. I live in East Dunbartonshire where I believe parental involvement in schooling is relatively high. However as a parent of two primary school children, I am astonished at the apathy of parents, even in this area, to their childrens' education. Many look upon school as nothing more than free child care. They are not being put off "getting involved" by the current system. They simply don't care and are "happy" to pay their taxes and expect their children to receive an education. Any ancilliary thinking or action is left to a very, and I mean very, small minority of parents.

Take for example a recent public meeting on this issue at Anniesland College. This was suppose to cover the entire northern Glasgow conurbation. About 50 people turned up. What kind of response is that???

OK. I admit it. I'm on a School Board. However, I can assure you that I have looked at this issue objectively and my comments are based entirely on the (lack of) merits of the proposals. In fact my term is nearly completed but it has been a thoroughly rewarding experience.

I'm not saying School Boards are perfect or work for every school. Infact, the first thing I would change is their Dickensian name. However the School Board system has worked very well in this area, not least because the Statutory requirement overcomes the aforementioned apathy. The election process is an ideal way of selecting the best people to represent parental views. I attend meetings with a holistic approach and not to beat a drum about my own children. The Headteacher keeps us well informed and involves us in appropriate decisions covering the whole school. This is parental involvement.

Keep School Boards! Take what is best of the existing system and discard / amend the rest to try and address the current issues. Do not let prejudices against a Conservative Act of Parliament rule the Executive's actions. OK, School Boards were set up for a particular reason back in the 80s but they have evolved and just need further refinement rather than scrap a working and effective system.

Yours faithfully

GORDON COATS