

17 April 1985

④ Agree X be pursued with Sir Keith?

AT
18/4

PRIME MINISTER

The CPS has recently brought out a good study of selection and technical skills in the USA, USSR and West Germany.

They show how the common school - our comprehensive - failed both in the USSR and in the USA. It led in the USA to the establishment of a vigorous and growing private sector, and in its turn to the magnet school in the public sector.

In the USSR, it led to the establishment of a few highly competitive mathematics and physics boarding schools, the foreign language schools, and the mass schools with a special profile.

In West Germany, they retained a more traditional style of selective education, with the Gymnasium (grammar school) the Realschule (technical school) and the Hauptschule (secondary modern).

The author is particularly enthusiastic about the success of the stable German system. He argues that German pupils in the lower half of their ability range achieve standards in mathematics equal to those of the average of pupils of all abilities in England. The system provides realistic goals for all pupils by recognising their different capabilities

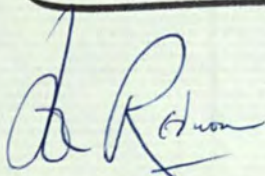
and the likelihood that they will enter employment at different ages and different levels. It possesses flexibility by allowing transfer between the different types of school at a variety of ages. Such transfers occur for many pupils. The author also cites evidence to show that the level of attainment in British technical schools before they were demolished by the comprehensive movement was high, given the ability of the pupils going to them.

There is some dissatisfaction in the UK with the typical neighbourhood comprehensive school. This is based on the discipline and standards problems that many of these schools enjoy, upon the lack of parental choice, and the inherent difficulty for a headmaster and a senior teaching staff of running some of the larger organisations. The evidence points towards the need for smaller secondary schools, with more unity of outlook and aim amongst the staff and parents, more choice for the parents, and more competition between the schools in terms of standards and achievements.

Keith is only looking at direct grant primary schools.

X /

Shouldn't we reopen the question of direct grant technical schools with him?



JOHN REDWOOD

