



NTC folder 15
SCOTTISH OFFICE
WHITEHALL, LONDON SW1A 2AH

SECRET

The Rt Hon Tom King MP
Secretary of State for Employment
Department of Employment
Caxton House
Tothill Street
LONDON
SW1H 9NF

Prime Minister
Mr Younger supports NTC
in England but wants to go his
own way in Scotland.

AT 16/12

15 December 1983

Dear Secretary of State,

**RESPONSIBILITY FOR WORK-RELATED TRAINING IN THE FURTHER
EDUCATION SECTOR**

We are due to meet on 20 December to discuss the note attached to the Secretary of the Cabinet's minute of 12 December about the proposal that funds should be diverted from local authorities to the Manpower Services Commission, which would become in effect a National Training Commission with new responsibilities for the direct funding of some work-related non-advanced further education (NAFE).

The paper notes that further consideration will be needed on whether and how to apply the proposal to Scotland. I am writing to let you, and the others who will be present at the meeting on 20 December, know my views on this.

I published in January this year "16-18s in Scotland: an Action Plan" containing radical proposals for the reform of NAFE in Scotland which have been welcomed both by industry and education authorities. Further education colleges (and to a lesser extent schools) are due to begin teaching the new courses based on the Action Plan in August 1984, but full implementation will take several years. Implementation is being led by the Scottish Education Department in accordance with the Scottish tradition which enables me to exercise a much more direct influence on the education system than in England and Wales.

I support the broad objectives of the proposed change in England, but I consider that in Scotland these objectives will best be achieved by implementation of the Action Plan in the following ways:

- a. NAFE courses are being broken down into modules, and the modules in which each student has reached the required standard will be recorded on a single vocational certificate. Employers will be able to see clearly from this certificate what a student has done, and will be able to specify particular combinations of modules for particular jobs;

- b. the modules allow latitude for content and teaching methods to be adjusted to suit local circumstances and local employers' requirements;
- c. the modular framework means that courses can be quickly updated; individual modules can be revised in the light of new technical requirements or new modules can be added;
- d. the modular framework means also that individuals can update their skills or retrain at any time by adding new modules to those they have already acquired. Although the term "16-18 modules" has been used, students of any age will be able to take the modules;
- e. availability of modules will not be restricted to local authority colleges. Some may be taught in schools, thereby improving the vocational preparation of young people even before they leave school. Private sector providers of training will also be able to use the modular structure and to present candidates to the awarding body, provided that they can satisfy that body that their standard of training and assessment is acceptable. (The awarding body is likely to be initially the Scottish Technical Education Council (SCOTEC) and the Scottish Business Education Council (SCOTBEC) jointly, and ultimately the proposed combined Scottish Vocational Education Council (SCOTVEC)).

The objective of providing more training for the same amount of money should also be achieved by the implementation of the Action Plan. One of the objects of breaking down existing courses into modules is to enable colleges to increase the size of teaching groups by teaching students aiming at different jobs together at the initial stages (after which students will be able to take further modules until they have achieved the combination necessary for a particular job.) Education authorities in Scotland are currently reviewing their provision for NAFE and secondary education in the light of the Action Plan

Employers will also shortly be consulted about the replacement of present SCOTEC, SCOTBEC and CGLI courses by particular combinations of modules. These consultations plus authorities' reviews of their provision should assist in identifying any gaps in present provision and tailoring provision better to employers' need.

Although the Action Plan is led by SED, the cooperation of education authorities is essential to its success. So far this cooperation has been wholehearted, although my view that the Action Plan can be implemented at no extra cost has been challenged and there are signs of restiveness on the part of teachers and lecturers because of the speed of the implementation programme and the burden of curriculum development and staff preparation being placed on them. I very much fear that their cooperation would be withdrawn, and the Action Plan would fail, if it were to be announced that from 1985 the funds at present available to local authorities for NAFE would be reduced.

I would find it impossible to implement the Action Plan in accordance with my present timetable if at the same time I were having to conduct extremely difficult negotiations with local authorities about the reduction in rate support grant. I am not sure that the MSC would welcome, either, the added complication that if the scheme were to be extended to Scotland there would have to be extensive and detailed discussions about the recognition of our new modular courses for the purposes of the proposed new grant: quite separate guidelines would be needed for Scotland on what would be recognised here as "work-related courses" eligible for MSC support.

My initial conclusion is therefore that the proposal should not apply to Scotland, and that we should explain this in the proposed White Paper on the grounds that the 16-18 Action Plan will achieve in Scotland the objectives of the proposal for England. If necessary we can say that we will review the position with regard to funding in 2 or 3 years' time in the light of progress with the Action Plan.

I am sending copies of this letter to the Prime Minister, Nigel Lawson, Sir Keith Joseph, Nicholas Edwards, Patrick Jenkin, Norman Tebbit, Peter Rees and Sir Robert Armstrong.

Yours sincerely,

John S. Gorman

(PRIVATE SECRETARY)

APPROVED BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE
AND SIGNED IN HIS ABSENCE

16 DEC 1987

