LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

CALL FOR VIEWS ON THE NON-DOMESTIC RATES (SCOTLAND) BILL

SUBMISSION FROM ANONYMOUS

When I first started infant school it was great fun. As time went on and the emphasis for reading and writing grew in primary school, it was far from fun! I don't blame the school for my torturous experience I just did not fit in. For the last two years of primary school I stood out as someone who could not read or write, with repeated accusations of laziness. School became a hostile and confusing environment with no support for learning my-way. I was deeply humiliated, losing all self-confidence and faced the greatest challenge of my life. In the last two years of primary school I was regularly requested to read aloud to the class, unable to make sense of the words and feeling a deep sense of humiliation and failure, I wet my trousers, and as a consequence was sent to the sickroom, a windowless room with a bed and a bucket. This room I now understand as an isolation room, consciously or not I was sent there as a form of soft punishment. Fortunately my mum played squash with the headmaster, and she knew I was not lazy. She shared her confusion with the headmaster as to why I had lost all self-confidence, repeatedly refusing to go to school and having got there under duress, spent the best part of the day in the sick room/isolation room with stomach cramps. My negative response to the school experience brought me before the headmaster, as a consequence another interview followed with the county child psychologist. The child psychologist reported my frustrated learning difficulties and requested the support of a church funded learning support teacher. The learning support teacher began coming to see me regularly and at the same time classroom humiliations stopped and were replaced with repeated opportunities for me to demonstrate to the class my skill at climbing the rope in the gymnasium faster than anyone else and making things. After a protracted and unique route through secondary, higher and further education I am now a self-employed artist and Doctor of Philosophy. After a lifelong journey with my dyslexia, when my son showed similar levels of frustration with his school experience at seven years old, I was not prepared to allow history to repeat itself. My son and daughter began showing signs of dyslexia 7 years ago, and before negative responses to the school experience went any further I needed to take action. Twice a week my son aged seven would sit or lie on the pavement sobbing and refusing to enter the school grounds before the morning bell. This situation required the headmaster to come out and escort my son hand in hand into the school, this went on for several months. With some family support my son age 7 and daughter age four entered the private school system at St Mary's, Melrose. With adequate and comprehensive learning support my son and daughter since starting at St Mary’s have never once shown a negative responses to their school experience related to their dyslexia. On my son’s first day at St Mary’s his learning support needs were assessed, a support plan made and implemented before lunchtime. The contrast in learning support provision compared to his previous school could not have been more stark. On my son’s first
day at St Mary's his confidence for school bounced back so successfully, on getting
in the car at pick up, he said, "daddy when can I start boarding".

It saddens me greatly and it's easy to criticise the division between public and private
systems of education we have in this country. My son and daughter undoubtedly and
unfortunately represent the fortunate few who find the support to go to such fabulous
private schools like St Mary's and Gordonstoun. However our family shoulders a
heavy price in securing a child-centered education that does not sacrifice their
confidence or academic potential. My personal motivation for supporting my children
through such a positive education experience is just one of the many reasons others
choose to brunt the acute tax that is, private education.

Raising the cost of school fees with this politically motivated bill, feels like a further
humiliating blow to the condition my family and I face as Dyslexics. Dyslexic children
do not swim in the same direction as the majority of learners in mainstream state
schools, with large class sizes with little or next to no learning support provision they
flounder. It maddens me to think of all the dyslexic kids that do not get the same
level of support as my kids. To find out that this bill will not even raise funds to
improve the existing state education provision is wrong, we need better state
education with adequate learning support provision, and taxation policy to delivers
that. Not vote winning policies that serve one political ideology. The dyslexic powers
of creativity, context rich memory and lateral thinking are a massive wasted
resource. Stifled unnecessarily in early education our children, (our future), have little
chance of following through further education where they may find them selves in a
postgraduate situation that finally provides a platform for there inherent specialized
dyslexic skills to shine.