

Anger over ESF silence on Millard

DATE: 1982 FEB 10 10:00 AM
10 FEB 1982

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TEACHERS were last night angry and disappointed with the failure of the English Schools Foundation (ESF) executive committee to disclose the future of chief executive Mr Maurice Millard, whom they want sacked.

One teacher described the failure to make an announcement on what had already been decided as a "whitewash". Many speculated that the executive committee wanted to push the issue off the public agenda by not announcing it at the regular ESF meeting as had been expected.

Eighteen months after the protracted dispute over Mr Millard first came to public attention, parents and teachers had hoped that a final decision on his future would be announced at yesterday's meeting.

ESF chairman Mr Ken Woodhouse said a decision had been made but he could not say what this was as it had yet to be implemented.

He said legal advice had been sought on what he could tell parents and teachers at the meeting.

He said: "This is a sensitive and delicate matter and it would not be in the best interests of the foundation for me to discuss details at this stage."

But he promised that parents and teachers would be informed as soon as they could, possibly by letter, and if necessary an extraordinary general meeting would be convened.

At the end of February, a Board of Inquiry headed by Judge Brian Caird recommended that Mr Millard be moved sideways to a newly created advisory post of strategic planning adviser, overseeing long-term plans for the foundation.

Mr Millard's inability to make teachers accept the changes he planned to bring in when he was appointed led to a major row which resulted in the board of inquiry being commissioned by

the Education Department.

Mr Woodhouse said the report had been widely circulated for consultation and these views had been considered before the executive committee had discussed the issue last month.

Deputy headmaster of South Island School, Mr Nick Miller, said he believed the consultation had only served to consolidate the already stated views of the staff at the 15 ESF schools in the territory.

Teachers have become increasingly militant over the issue. In March they made it publicly clear that they did not consider the board's recommendations in any way satisfactory and that Mr Millard should be removed, not moved sideways.

Teachers and parents have accused Mr Millard of having a "destructive and confrontational management style" and charged that this led to low morale and affected the quality of education.

Mr Millard, who was not present at the meeting, has dismissed the allegations as "distortions and untruths".

During the meeting parents and teachers also discussed the appointment of a new vice-chairman and treasurer after the incumbents, Mr Peter Nightingale and Mr Mike Middleton, resigned.

Mr David Begg, chairman of the Joint Council of the Parent-Teacher Association, has also stood down.

It was agreed that Mr Andrew Scott, chairman of the West Island School PTA, would serve as vice-chairman for six months and Mr Terry Courthoys, chairman of the Island School PTA, would serve as treasurer for six months.

And Mr Woodhouse warned parents that fee increases this year would be about 3½ per cent on top of the annual pay award to cover capital improvements that have to be carried out.