

## Amicable relationship severely damaged

MR Millard, Secretary of the English School's Foundation, has remained remarkably reticent about responding to recent comments made in articles in the *South China Morning Post* over the last few days.

Those responses that he has seen fit to make do, however, warrant a public reply as it appears he is misleading readers of the *Post*.

Mr Millard has stated several times that he was unaware of the feelings of discontent and disaffection of ESF teachers. From such a statement, it is only possible to come to one of two conclusions.

Firstly, if Mr Millard is as unaware as he says, he is obviously failing in his job as a manager.

To be so ignorant of the feelings and concerns of staff, particularly as they are so deep and widespread, must clearly reflect on his management skills.

The second conclusion is, and here I shall paraphrase the lawyer representing the British Govern-

ment in the recent Spycatcher trials, he is being "economical with the truth".

Whichever of these conclusions one would care to accept, the clear inference is that Mr Millard's role must be brought into question.

Mr Millard's other public announcement was that statements by teachers to the media are "misinformation".

From this statement, it is apparent that Mr Millard sees the whole issue as a conspiracy. This theory would stand up to scrutiny if it could be proved that a few teachers are orchestrating a deliberate smear campaign.

However, your reporter appears to have contacted a sizeable number of people (and not just teachers, but principals and parents) and seems to be getting the same story.

Firstly, that there is real concern about Mr Millard's style of management, as well as the type of

policies he is trying to impose on the ESF.

Secondly, people are unwilling to be named for fear of retribution (I also find it particularly interesting that only one source has actually declared their support for Mr Millard and even they declined to be named).

If one is to believe Mr Millard's accusation over misinformation one has to also believe that many teachers in different schools, parents and principals have somehow got together to "misinform" the press . . . and all in the last few days.

History is full of people who have used the conspiracy theory to satisfy themselves that everything was really all right.

In my time with the ESF, I have always appreciated the open and useful relationship between the schools and ESF head office.

There have and always will be disputes, but in the past these have been amicably and responsibly

sorted out. In 23 years of ESF history, to my knowledge, staff have never had to resort to using the media to air personal grievances.

This fact alone must raise important questions about the present situation and rather refutes Mr Millard's boast about his "open management" style.

What I find most disturbing about the last 18 months is that the amicable relationship between schools and the ESF has been severely damaged and has been replaced with one of confrontation.

This makes the jobs of schools, school principals and school representatives particularly difficult.

If allowed to continue, the whole ethos of the ESF could suffer, with negative effects on the present high standards which we as teachers are trying to maintain and parents fully deserve to expect.

AN ESF TEACHER  
(name and address supplied)