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An education in browbeating *Public Opinion*

FOLLOWING the recent swell of parental views on Government English Junior Schools, expressed both in the press and on RTHK's Open Line, a response from the Department of Education was awaited with great interest by those concerned.

Two points at least had in general been agreed upon: overcrowded classrooms and the need for afternoon school. A statement was eventually elicited from the Department of Education by RTHK.

The tone of the statement was both aggressive and aggrieved in the face of the recent criticism. There was no suggestion of sympathy or even of having really listened to the debate.

The department spokesman made short work of the first point: overcrowding.

"In the eyes of Government," he assured us, 40 in a classroom is not overcrowding. Therefore overcrowding does not exist in Hongkong schools, whatever parents and education authorities elsewhere may think.

On the subject of longer school hours, the spokesman for the Department of Education could only suggest that Government has higher priorities for the funds that the additional amenities would involve.

The statement ended on a note of the utmost complacency, expounding the excellence of the present system.

There was no comment on the allegation that some members of the Department of Education send their children away to junior schools in England and offering not the smallest satisfaction to those who had ventured to ask for a say in their children's education.

The public was merely told once again that it was wrong and Government is always right.

That monumental snub to one section of public opinion was surpassed the following morning by another bold announcement that the Government had given permission for a cement works to complement the proposed power station on Lamma Island. That was Government's answer to the letters, the pleas, the campaigns, to every attempt by the public to prevent the building of a power station on Lamma. How aptly it expressed the Government's utter contempt for public opinion.

MEMBER OF THE PUBLIC