

Editorial

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The deadline for submissions on the latest draft orders is now passed. SCAA has received many hundreds of lengthy documents — including, of course, one from DATA on behalf of its members. SCAA has now gone into retreat and will deliver the new orders, ready for parliamentary approval, by the end of the year. Schools will receive them in January 1995.

One of the main issues has been the role of food as a material. DATA is unambiguous in seeking the retention of food, arguing that it should be required rather than optional at Key Stages 3 and 4. The well publicised argument against food, led by the Engineering Council has been a major driving force. But this has now been countered by the Institute of Chemical Engineers' statement. It reads:

Food technology should be included in the revised national curriculum for design and technology. The professional body for process and chemical engineers objects to the Engineering Council's comments on the proposals for the revised national curriculum. The EngC seems to think that 'food' should be relegated to home economics and dropped from design and technology.

In a response to Sir Ron Dearing, Chairman of the School Curriculum Assessment Authority, IChemE points out the flaws in the EngC view. The EngC seems to be confused between food technology, the processing of food materials on a large or small scale, and the domestic skills needed to prepare food for home consumption. Its comments clearly suggest food means the study of home economics. A view IChemE believes is a basic mistake. The inclusion of food allows boys and girls to study the technology of food in its widest sense and not just 'cooking'.

The technologies used in the manufacture of food are diverse and large scale. The process operations involved are common to other processing industries like petrochemicals, plastics, drinks, agrochemicals, pharmaceuticals and many more. Therefore food should be an important component of design and technology studies.

A good understanding of technology is needed to manufacture food. Compared to other materials, foodstuffs present even

more challenges. Hygiene, texture, taste and changes in state must be taken into account.

Another concern of DATA — the need for a strong emphasis on design — has been reinforced in the evidence of The Chartered Society of Designers. It identifies aspects where the draft proposals 'fall short'.

These include concern that the concept of identifying needs and opportunities has been virtually dropped and that some proposals — including those at Key Stage 3 — are too prescriptive. The society also wants SCAA to place greater emphasis upon cost factors. The Director, Mr Lymbery said: "We recognise that it is difficult for schools to resource themselves, but the work of a designer is now much more computer-based, and we feel the proposals at Key Stage 3 do not reflect how professional designers operate".

These powerful arguments, aimed directly at government, are likely to add considerable weight to the views of DATA and most other teachers' associations.

Meanwhile events at DATA are not suspended until the outcomes are known. Our activities continue to provide ever increasing services to our members. The 1994 Conference at Keele was an outstanding success and is reported by our Chairman, Ray Peacock, in this issue. Membership figures are healthy, foundation and industrial support are also in good shape. Our search for a chief executive has also been successful and a new dynamic appointment will take office in January 1995. We believe he will take DATA forward nationally, regionally and locally to a future in which DATA and its members will occupy centre stage in the preparation of our future citizens.

The task is not easy. Even if a viable, teachable curriculum is achieved the provision of resources still has to be achieved. The shrinkage of local authority provision, the closure of teachers' centres and their resource collection and the recent reduction of the Design Council with the closure of the Design Centre and its library place an even greater responsibility on DATA to deliver mentor support. We intend to ensure the quality support that our key sector of the profession must have if it is to fulfil its role effectively and fully.