

File
original returned
to Dr. N:

W.0567

14 August 1984

MR DAVID BARCLAY, NO 10

DB/97

MAINTAINING THE STRENGTH OF THE SCIENCE BASE

I am a little puzzled by Richard Mottram's letter of 9 August to you since in the first part he appears to disregard the arguments in your letter of 30 July. I suppose we should be grateful that the Secretary of State for Defence "sees no objection" to my proceeding in the way I've been instructed to by the Prime Minister, but I'm inclined to disregard his re-interpretation of the brief and to work from your letter of 30 July. Do you agree?

I am copying this letter to Richard Hatfield.

RBN

ROBIN B NICHOLSON

Dr Nicholson

I think the (red) letter is more "for the record" than for any other purpose.

My letter conceded that ^{there} were "advantages and disadvantages." It seems to me that the essence of your task, with Prof Norman and Sir David Phillips, is to weigh ^{identity and} these. In order to do so, you must surely postulate a change? I do not think we yet have a decision that this should be such a change.

DB/97



MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
MAIN BUILDING WHITEHALL LONDON SW1

Telephone 01-~~8307822~~ 218 2111/3

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9th August 1984

Dear David,

MAINTAINING THE STRENGTH OF THE SCIENCE BASE

Thank you for your letter of 30th July. The Defence Secretary has seen this and has commented that, as he has made clear already, he, for his part, sees no advantage in transferring £20M a year from the Defence Budget to the Science Vote. Such a step would cut the Ministry of Defence's intramural basic research programme at the roots and remove the foundation for applied research. The Defence Secretary can see no way in which this loss could be compensated by greater activity on the civil side. Such a proposal moreover, which presumably implies a PES transfer, would be difficult to explain to the Government's supporters; the House of Commons Defence Committee's forthcoming inquiry into the implications of ending 3% annual real growth in the Defence Budget is relevant here.

While therefore the Defence Secretary sees no objection to Dr Nicholson, Professor Norman and the Chairman of the ABRC examining the proposition in more detail, he believes that they should begin by examining objectively the arguments for and against the change proposed, with no presumption that the change is itself desirable and the problem is simply one of devising the best means.

I am copying this letter to the recipients of yours.

Yours etc,

Richard Mottram

(R C MOTTRAM)

David Barclay Esq

Su+Tax
Budget per

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
MAIN BUILDING WHITEHALL LONDON SW1
Telephone 01-930-7033



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