

cc/NO



Prime Minister ②

A meeting is arranged on this for 19 October.

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PRIME MINISTERMAINTAINING THE STRENGTH OF THE SCIENCE BASE

In his minute to you of 15th September, Keith Joseph suggested inter alia that an increase in his Science Budget might be funded in part by redeploying funds from "the very large expenditure on defence research and development", and that my Department might contract work to University Departments as an alternative to recruiting replacements for MOD scientists reaching retirement age. I understand that we are to meet to discuss the general issue of strengthening the science base: you may find helpful some initial comments on the defence related issues.

2. I think it is important to put expenditure on defence research into proper perspective. As I explained at your Science Seminar, of the £1900M we plan to spend this year on Defence Research and Development some 83% is for the development of specific weapons and equipment for the Armed Services and the bulk of this will be spent in industry. We plan to spend £330M on research itself: some £150M of this will be spent either in industry or the Universities (£9M of the total), partly on specific projects and partly on maintaining a capability in technologies of particular relevance to Defence. A transfer from defence R&D to "pay for" increases in the science budget would in practice represent a cut in the defence budget and would have to be justified as such and addressed, as you have already suggested, in this year's public expenditure round.





3. As regards recruitment, my policy is that defence R & D should to the maximum extent possible be carried out in industry or the Universities. We have already devolved a lot of work to industry and plan to devolve more. The number of civil servants employed at Defence R & D Establishments, since 1979, has been reduced by some 4,500 including 1,400 (some 14%) in the Science, Professional and Technological Groups. Recruiting has been constrained for some years; but we too must maintain an inflow of good quality people if we are to have the capability we need in the future for the nuclear programme (which has to be done in-house) and for the essential support of the Services and their equipment programmes. This said I should be very happy to look at the scope for increasing the proportion of our effort which is placed with the Universities.

4. I am copying this to Nigel Lawson, Keith Joseph, Cecil Parkinson, Peter Rees and Sir Robert Armstrong.

Ministry of Defence  
4th October 1983



SCIENCE TECH: Science Base

Sept 85



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COMMUNICATIONS SECTION

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