

Subject

6/f 7-2-80



GOVERNMENT FILE

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

31 January, 1980.

When your Minister called on the Prime Minister this afternoon they had a brief discussion about the Centre for Overseas Pest Research. Mr. Marten explained that the Centre had done excellent work on the problems of locusts, which had not been very costly; but in any case, this work was now being handed over to the Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations. Apart from one or two staff who were assisting with the handover, the direct expenditure by HMG on locust work would shortly cease.

As for the rest of COPR work, annual expenditure on this was currently running at £1.8 million. The Centre was doing very good work on pest control which was of great benefit to a number of countries. Expenditure on it represented an effective use of aid money.

The Prime Minister commented that it might be preferable to bring the Centre within the responsibility of the University Grants Committee or one of the Research Councils. In this way, it might be possible to reduce the aid programme, and it was questionable whether the work of the Centre would be any less effective.

The Prime Minister would be grateful for a note on whether this would be a possibility.

The Prime Minister also raised the question of the usefulness of aid programme expenditure on the Directorate of Overseas Surveys. She understood that this came to nearly £4 million per year. Mr. Marten replied that this too was cost-effective and a beneficial use of aid money.

I am sending copies of this letter to George Walden (Foreign and Commonwealth Office) and Peter Shaw (Department of Education and Science).

I. P. LANKESTER

Miss Susan Unsworth,
Office of the Minister of State for Overseas Development.