

Education

Pls. have earlier papers  
cf say not theirs

JS  
cc Tsy



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

31 March 1980

The Prime Minister has read your letter of 28 March about SSRC funding, and she is now content for Mr. Macfarlane to write to Professor Wright on the lines proposed in your letter of 6 March. She still believes, however, that there is scope for further economies in the SSRC programme, and she would be grateful for a copy of SSRC's latest Annual Report.

T. P. LANKESTER

Robert Green, Esq.,  
Department of Education and Science.

TOR



ELIZABETH HOUSE,  
YORK ROAD,  
LONDON SE1 7PH  
01-928 9222

FROM THE SECRETARY OF STATE

M A Pattison Esq  
10 Downing Street  
LONDON  
SW1

*Am. Smith*  
*In the light of this further information,*  
*are you content for Mr Neil McFarlane*  
*to write as 28 March 1980*

*originally proposed*  
*at Flag A?*

*Yes - but there is*  
*a good deal more*  
*room for economy!*  
*Any I have =*

Dear Mike,

Thank you for your letter of 7 March about the Social Science Research Council (SSRC).

When the present Government took office, the SSRC's projected grant-in-aid for 1979/80 was £16.5m at 1979 survey prices. The grant-in-aid for 1980-81 is now to be £1.8 million less. Mr Carlisle announced in Parliament the new figure of 14.7m for 1980/81, together with the grants-in-aid of the other research councils, last December. (In the 1980/81 Estimates this figure will appear as a cash figure of £19.75m out of a total Science Budget of some £400m).

For 1981/82 my Secretary of State, on the advice of the Advisory Board for the Research Councils (ABRC), will further reduce the SSRC grant-in-aid by £0.7 million (at 1979 survey prices) to £14 million. Thus the SSRC's grant-in-aid for 1981/82 will be 15.2% less than that inherited by the Government for 1979/80.

Under its Charter, the SSRC has to give some financial support to research into all the main disciplines which come under the rubric of the "social sciences". These include many disciplines affecting national needs, and this point is illustrated by the attached tables containing for 1978/79 a breakdown by disciplines of SSRC's expenditure, and the main subjects for which SSRC entered into new research commitments.

About half the SSRC's grant-in-aid goes on postgraduate training because the Council is the main body which supports training at this level for the social sciences. The relevant subjects cover the wide span of disciplines listed in Table I, and in many of them the SSRC is in effect responding to the needs of industry, commerce, and the public sector, for highly trained specialists. In 1978/79

out of 1,393 SSRC postgraduate awards, 445 were in education, management and planning, 404 were in various "mainstream" social sciences and statistics, and the remaining 554 included psychology, economics and political science. In its 1980/81 awards the SSRC has reduced allocations in those subjects where there is a reduced demand for academic staff and increased it in those where manpower demand is strong, ie management and industrial relations, and education.

The SSRC has a new chairman, Mr Michael Posner, who has made a start in redirecting the SSRC's efforts to match the nation's needs more closely and has shown himself responsive to the broad guidance given to him by the Secretary of State and Mr Macfarlane last Summer. It will take time to complete this process and Mr Carlisle recognises that, as a legacy of the past, certain weaknesses eg on postgraduate training and some (minor) lunatic research projects will still catch the headlines.

In judging how much of the Science Budget to give to the SSRC after 1980/81, my Secretary of State feels that he should rely heavily on the ABRC which consists of eminent scientists predominantly from the natural sciences. He will shortly be discussing this question with Sir Alec Merrison, the Board's Chairman.

Yours ever

*Robert Green*

R J GREEN  
Private Secretary

TABLE I

BREAKDOWN OF SSRC'S EXPENDITURE IN 1978-79 BY  
DISCIPLINE, IN PERCENTAGE TERMS

	<u>PERCENTAGE OF</u> <u>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</u>
Management and Industrial Relations	15
Economics; Economic and Social History	16
Education	8
Computing; Statistics; Linguistics	4
Human Geography and Planning	6
Political Science and International Relations; Area Studies	8
Psychology	13
Sociology and Social Administration	11
Social Anthropology; Law and the Social Services	4
Miscellaneous (including SSRC's Research Units)	6
Central Administration	<u>9</u>
	<u>100</u>

TABLE II

NEW RESEARCH COMMITMENTS ENTERED INTO BY SSRC IN  
1978-79; MAIN GROUPINGS: ACTUAL  
EXPENDITURE/COMMITMENT

	<u>£000</u>
1. Economies, Statistics and Computing	1,592
2. Management and Industrial Relations	1,302
3. Energy and the Environment	665
4. Education and Child Development	1,576
5. Population, Migration, Health	818
6. Social Organisation and Social Services	2,654
7. Other Research, including Political Studies	497
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	9,104
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BIF/4-3-80

7 March 1980

The Prime Minister has seen your letter to me of 6 March, about the Social Science Research Council.

She has commented that she has a lot of sympathy with the view that we just cannot afford anything like £16.5 m. on this work at present. She has expressed considerable surprise that this figure has been cut back by no more than £0.4 m. for 1980-81, and she remains to be convinced that there is not scope for a considerably higher cut in the light of others which have been necessitated by the Government's policy on public expenditure.

U She would, therefore, be grateful if your Secretary of State would reconsider the advice which he has tendered.

M A Pattison

R J Green Esq  
Department of Education and Science

JRG

PRIME MINISTER



FROM THE SECRETARY OF STATE

M A Pattison Esq  
10 Downing Street  
LONDON SW1

*Mr Carlisle's reaction to  
Esmond Wright's letter on  
SSRC.*

ELIZABETH HOUSE,  
YORK ROAD,  
LONDON SE1 7PH  
01-928 9222

*Agree that Mr Macfarlane  
should write as proposed  
overleaf? - you have acknowledged*

*MAP/3*

6 March 1980

*Dear Mike,*

Thank you for your letter of 8 February enclosing copies of a letter which the Prime Minister has received from Professor Esmond Wright about the Social Science Research Council, and for her reply. Mr Carlisle has asked me to offer the following comments.

2. Despite its title, the subjects which contain the word "social", namely social anthropology, sociology and social administration, between them accounted for only 10 per cent of the total value of SSRC's research grants in 1978-79. The Council also supports research in economics, education, human geography and planning, linguistics, management and industrial relations, psychology and statistics. All of these subject areas are, in my Secretary of State's view, of unquestionable importance to the solution of national problems and Mr Carlisle feels that the subject balance of SSRC activities is defensible in relation to the Council's Charter objectives.

3. It is true that SSRC's administration costs are, in percentage terms, higher than those of the other Research Councils. But there are good reasons for this. Compared with the other Councils, a much higher proportion of its budget is used in awards to postgraduate students (many of them for essentially vocational training) and these are expensive to administer; many of its research grants are for amounts of less than £10,000, which make them disproportionately costly to administer; and it has fewer large Institutes and Research Units (whose administrative costs tend to be concealed in their overall costs).

4. That having been said, the Secretary of State has in fact cut the SSRC's grant-in-aid in real terms. The process of reduction began in the last year of the previous Government and was reinforced in June 1979 with a further cut of £1.5m or over 8%, a substantially greater proportionate cut than was applied to any of the other Councils. This has been followed by a further reduction of £0.4m for 1980-81. For the years after 1980-81, the Secretary of State is still considering advice on guidelines for each of the Research Grants recently given to him by the Advisory Board for the Research Councils; but he thinks it likely that SSRC will be cut further in 1981-82.

5. All this has, we believe, served also to teach the Council's staff a lesson in humility. The new Chairman and chief executive, Michael Posner, has displayed from the outset a practical approach to the Council's work which could certainly not be described as "self-important".

6. The Parliamentary Under Secretary, Mr Neil Macfarlane, has seen this correspondence. He is an old friend of Professor Wright, and proposes to write to him along the following lines:

"The Prime Minister has shown me your letter of 30 January concerning the role of the SSRC.

When we took office last May we conducted a close appraisal of the Research Councils, and the SSRC was no exception. We have cut the grant in aid in real terms by £1.5 million in 1979/80, and £0.4 million 1980/81. I am however greatly encouraged by the work of the Chairman, Michael Posner, who has displayed a much more practical approach to his duties and is well aware of what work needs to be done to review the role of this Research Council. I believe Mr Posner is widely respected, but equally I am well aware of the wider views of many people in the UK who regard social sciences with a degree of scepticism.

As Junior Minister responsible for the Research Councils I am anxious for the programme of rationalisation to continue".

I have a lot of sympathy  
with the view that we just  
can't afford anything like  
£16.5m on this work at  
present. I am aware  
that it has not been  
cut back by more than  
10% - i.e. 15% - 17. Clearly  
there is some scope here  
in the light of other cuts which  
DES knows about - full well.  
ms

Yours ever,

Robert Green

R J GREEN  
Private Secretary





1966 MAR 15 10 40 AM '66

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B/F 6.3.80

10 DOWNING STREET

Education

From the Private Secretary

8 February, 1980.

Dear Robert

I enclose a copy of a letter from Professor Esmond Wright to the Prime Minister about the Social Science Research Council. I am also enclosing a copy of the brief acknowledgement which the Prime Minister sent.

She would be interested to have Mr. Carlisle's comments in due course.

Please do not give this exchange too wide a distribution

Yours ever  
Mike Pattison

R.J. Green, Esq.,  
Department of Education and Science.



TSIC

Mr. Pattison

10. DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

7 February 1980

Dear Esmond,

Thank you for your letter of 30 January,  
and your good wishes.

I have taken note of your comments about  
the SSRC, and I shall ask Mark Carlisle to  
have a careful look at it.

Yours

Professor Esmond Wright

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VES



10 DOWNING STREET

PRIME MINISTER

Professor Wright suggests  
that SSRC should be squeezed.

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I understand that '79/80  
provision is a total of £16.515m.  
after a cutback of £1.5m.

Within the total, the running  
costs of Headquarters amount to  
£1.797m., and a further £0.739m.  
goes on a number of research  
units, although these expenses  
are largely those of the research  
staff at the units.

Would you like to acknowledge  
as in the attached draft?

6 February 1980

*MAP*

C.R.

1. Correct addressee's name
2. Return to me to pass to  
DES. *MAP 7/2*

Tel. 387 5534/5

UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

# Institute of United States Studies

Director: Professor Esmond Wright  
Secretary: Dr Howell Daniels

31 Tavistock Square  
London WC1H 9EZ

Rt Hon Margaret Thatcher  
10 Downing Street  
LONDON  
W1

30 January 1980

RS/2

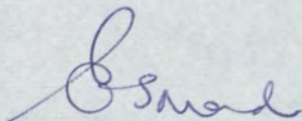
Dear Margaret

Forgive the intrusion.

But if you are looking for cuts in education (as I know - and hope - you are, despite noises from Vice-Chancellors) please have a cold and clinical look at the S.S.R.C. I know no academic I respect who has any respect for it. Not just the absurd projects (it is almost a safe rule in academia that anything with the adjective "social" before it is merely bubble and froth) but the absurdly large and self-important bureaucracy who staff a large building in the Temple. Cuts here of a remorseless kind would warm a lot of hearts!

You are doing absolutely splendidly. Just keep it up through the long, long haul.

Warmest regards,



Professor Esmond Wright