

PRIME MINISTER

Salford University

I think you should be aware that John Ashworth and Sir Robert Telford of GEC are launching a "Campaign to promote the University of Salford" at a press conference in London on Monday.

Salford is the university hardest hit by the UGC cuts. They are losing 44% of their current grant. The campaign appears to be designed to put pressure on the UGC and on the Government to restore part of the cut, to draw attention to the fact that Salford is very much a technological university of the kind we need if industry is to flourish, and to persuade industry to provide an alternative source of funds.

John Ashworth is of course making it clear that he will speak as the Vice-Chancellor designate. But he continues as Chief Scientist in CPRS until 1 September; so, his remarks (which are fairly hard-hitting against the UGC) are likely to get a good deal of publicity.

At first, when I heard about this, I thought we should try to persuade John from taking part in this exercise. But on reflection, I think it would put him in an invidious position with the university if he does not participate. Furthermore, while it is possible that the media will interpret his participation as an attack on the Government, in fact his and the other campaign sponsors' real criticism is against the way that the UGC appear to have victimised Salford.

I have told DES about all this. They have confirmed that Mr. Carlisle has no intention of overriding the UGC's decisions on the allocation of grant.

17 July 1981