

PRIME MINISTER

University of Salford

I sent you a minute 10 days ago about the campaign to promote the University of Salford, and warned you that John Ashworth was taking part in it. John has now sent you, to my mind, a rather presumptuous letter thanking you for "allowing him to take part in the campaign" and pressing for your support for a special grant of £3.5 million for Salford. He has not copied his letter to Mark Carlisle.

On the face of it, John does have a point when he argues that the UGC should not regard as a criterion of a University's excellence the amount of money it gets from the Research Councils. He points out that Salford, while not obtaining much money from the Councils, has done exceptionally well in obtaining research income from other sources.

However, I do not think you should get any further involved in this. John is taking advantage of his position of having special access to you; and if anything were now done for Salford through your intervention, I believe it would look rather invidious to the other Universities.

May I tell John that, while you have some sympathy for the arguments that he has put forward, he should pursue his case from now on with Mark Carlisle and Keith Joseph?

27 July 1981

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I just don't see how I can do what John Ashworth wants. Every other university in a similar position would use the same tactic - not