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5 December 1984

PRIME MINISTER

SELLAFIELD DISCHARGES

At the meeting you chaired on 24 July, it was agreed that further reductions in discharges of liquid radioactive waste from Sellafield should be made, over and above those reductions which would result from changes already in train. Of the several options discussed, it was agreed that further changes should be made which would reduce alpha discharges to 17 curies per annum and beta/gamma discharges to 8,000 curies per annum. The Secretary of State for Energy was asked to explore with the management of BNFL the scope for achieving these reductions earlier than 1992 (the year originally envisaged for this option).

2. BNFL's reaction has been to agree to a nominal speeding up of the timetable. BNFL is able to bring the new plant into operation by mid-1991, but does not want to commit itself to a specific date for the achievement of the discharge reductions. This wish has been granted in the wording of the draft Written Answer. In effect, BNFL has moved rather less than one-third of the way from Option 1 (implementation of these reductions by 1992) to Option 2 (implementation of the same reductions by 1989).

3. My advice is that the timetable proposed by Mr Waldegrave, and the wording of the draft Written Answer, should be accepted; it would be counterproductive to try and push BNFL to speed up the timetable any further at this stage. However, I believe that it should be made crystal clear to the new management of BNFL that it is expected not to let the new timetable slip but to achieve the target discharge levels at the earliest date, preferably before the end of 1991.

4. At the meeting of 24 July, it was also agreed that there should be a low-key announcement after an interval. I therefore

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advise that Mr Waldegrave's proposals for the handling of an announcement are accepted.

5. I am copying this minute to Robert Armstrong.

RBW

ROBIN B NICHOLSON
Chief Scientific Adviser

Cabinet Office
5 December 1984

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Eno. Affairs: Sellafield July 80 .

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