

CR's ? B.



RESTRICTED

cc Richard Heffeld

PRIME MINISTER

CF - await advice from  
RH & Sir RN. BF in 2 weeks.

**BRITISH NATIONAL SPACE CENTRE**

Sir Robin Nicholson's report (copy attached) on the organisation and funding of the proposed British National Space Centre provides a clear way forward. I hope that you will endorse the main principles of Sir Robin's recommendations.

We still have much to do before we can set up the Centre: on its financial status we should explore how quickly the centre could move to trading fund status and the degree of accountability to be carried by the Director-General or by Departments. Relations with SERC and with Government Departments also need to be worked out as well as details of location and staffing etc.

We are not likely to make effective progress in establishing the Centre until a Director-General brought in from industry is in place. We envisage a period appointment of 3-5 years at Grade 2 (Deputy Secretary) level. In making an appointment we have a clear choice. We might use headhunters to search internationally for a candidate - possibly one of the expatriates working on space matters in the USA. This course is unlikely to result in a Director-General being in post before next spring. Alternatively, we might second from a British company an industrialist who would be able to take up his appointment in the autumn. In my view it is a matter of priority that we should set up the Centre as quickly as possible: for this reason I recommend we take the latter course. I hope that you and my ministerial colleagues will agree. It will, of course, be necessary for the Civil Service Commission to be involved in the selection process.

I am copying this minute to the Secretary of State for Defence, the Secretary of State for Education and Science, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, Sir Robin Nicholson, and the First Civil Service Commissioner.

will be offering  
advice.  
MEN 12/8

IPA  
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PP

GEOFFREY PATTIE

8 August 1985  
(Approved by the Minister  
and signed in his absence)

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