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DEPARTMENT OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY
1-19 VICTORIA STREET
LONDON SW1H 0ET
TELEPHONE DIRECT LINE 01-215 5422
SWITCHBOARD 01-215 7877

Secretary of State for Trade and Industry

14 March 1985

The Rt Hon Sir Keith Joseph Bt MP
Secretary of State for Education and
Science
Department of Education and Science
Elizabeth House
York Road
LONDON
SE1 7PH

NBPM
MMA 14/3

D Keith.

INCREASING THE OUTPUT OF ENGINEERS AND TECHNOLOGISTS

Thank you for your letter of March 8th.

2 I agree that it is important for us to make a rapid start to this exercise, and I am therefore content with your proposal that we give immediate approval to bids of clear academic excellence, where industry has also given a high grading for industrial relevance. My reservation is that your proposals include a small number of courses which, though they scored an alpha with the UGC, were rated only beta by industry. Given the very limited amount of money available I would suggest these be left over to phase 2. The reduction would I believe be only 55 students, 20 of them postgraduates, and I would be a little unhappy about giving these approval now in the absence of whole-hearted industrial support.

3 I am content too with your proposals for handling phase 2. Again, I have only one slight qualification, and this is that the Open University is less constrained by the normal academic timetable than the other proposals and I hope they can be given an early decision - though I accept this cannot be within the timescale envisaged for phase 1.

4 I welcome your proposal that we should talk to Sir Robert Clayton and the members of the IT Skills Agency, both about involvement of the polytechnics and about the potential industrial contribution to the Switch generally. I am sure it is important to keep up the pressure on industry and not leave it entirely to the universities, and it would be a demonstration too of our support for the ITSA and of the importance we attach to it.

JH3BLV



5 On the question of an announcement, it would be helpful if this could be sooner rather than later. The UGC have already been told of our decision in confidence, and it is a little awkward that in our dealings with industry (for example, in the context of the IT Skill Shortages Committee) we cannot yet refer to it. I would therefore favour an announcement as part of the Budget statement.

6 I am sending copies of this letter to the recipients of yours.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Norman Tebbit', with a stylized initial 'N' and a horizontal line underneath.

NORMAN TEBBIT

Science & Technology : Science Budget A2.



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