

WO910

PRIME MINISTER

Prime Minister  
Content to recommend the three  
experts Sir Robin progress? If so,  
a draft letter to Chancellor Kohl is  
attached for your signature?  
3 February 1986  
MEW

GERMAN CONFERENCE ON BIOETHICS

In 1984, Prime Minister Nakasone convened a conference on "Life Science and Mankind" which was intended to discuss the social, legal and ethical questions arising from the rapid scientific developments in biology and medicine. You were asked to nominate three people from the United Kingdom to attend the conference in a personal capacity. Dr Sydney Brenner, Director of the Laboratory for Molecular Biology at Cambridge, Sir Stuart Hampshire, then Warden of Wadham College, Oxford and Dr Arthur Peacocke, then Dean of Clare College, Cambridge were nominated. The conference was successful and I was told that Dr Brenner and Sir Stuart Hampshire made outstanding contributions.

2. In 1985, President Mitterand convened a follow-up conference in France. The subject was again "Bioethics" but concentrated on the medical opportunities offered by DNA diagnosis and splicing techniques in embryology. Dr Brenner and Sir Stuart Hampshire were again our two experts but you agreed to me filling the third place because of the relevance of the subject to the Warnock report and Mr Enoch Powell's embryo research bill.

3. Dr Brenner was again the outstanding scientist at the meeting (despite the presence of several Nobel Prize winners) and Sir Stuart Hampshire the outstanding philosopher - they did great credit to the United Kingdom by their contributions.

4. You now have a request from Chancellor Kohl to nominate three people to a conference to be convened in Germany in April on "Neurosciences and Ethics". Separately the German Science Counsellor has written to me saying that Governments can also decide whether they would wish to send one observer to the Conference. I shall certainly recommend to my successor that he, personally, accepts this latter invitation which allows all three nominated places to go to experts.



5. My advice is that Dr Brenner and Sir Stuart Hampshire are again nominated in view of their extraordinarily broad knowledge of the field and their outstanding performances at the previous conferences. I suggest that the third place goes to Professor David Marsden MB, FRS, Professor of Neurology at King's College Hospital. Professor Marsden attended your Chequers discussions on advances in science in summer 1984 and made an excellent contribution on his research on brain chemistry and the treatment of Parkinson's disease.

6. The only other issue I should draw to your attention is whether the United Kingdom should offer to host a conference in 1987. My recommendation is that we should not. It is not clear to me that there is need for this series of "Bioethics" conferences to be established on an annual basis and be linked solely to the Economic Summit countries. Further, if there is to be a conference in 1987, it would be natural for a North American country to be host after Japan, France and Germany.

7. A draft response to Chancellor Kohl is attached.

*RBN*

SIR ROBIN NICHOLSON  
Chief Scientific Adviser



W0909

MR ADDISON

3 February 1986

GERMAN BIOETHICS CONFERENCE

Further to my minute of 20 December 1985, I attach a minute to the Prime Minister giving advice on who she might nominate to attend the German Bioethics Conference in April. Also attached is a draft reply from the Prime Minister to Chancellor Kohl.

2. If the Prime Minister accepts my advice, I would be grateful for a day or to two to elapse before the letter to Chancellor Kohl is sent so that I can ensure the availability of Sir Stuart Hampshire and Professor Marsden. I have consulted Dr Brenner on the other nomination and know that he is available. There is no cost to HMG in making these nominations. The reference to the Tokyo Summit picks up Kohl's last sentence.
3. The question of the attendance of a Government observer can be handled between my office and the German Science Counsellor in London.
4. I am copying this minute and attachments to Sir Robert Armstrong.

*RBN*

SIR ROBIN NICHOLSON  
Chief Scientific Adviser



00  
W0866

MR ADDISON - No. 10

20 December 1985

MSA

dated  
4.12.85

Attached is a letter to the Prime Minister from Chancellor Kohl which has been delivered to my office by the German Science Counsellor here in London. It refers to the third in a series of "bioethics" conferences which have been held successively in Japan, France and now Germany. I have been responsible for making proposals to the Prime Minister for the UK representation at the previous two conferences and if you agree, I will do this again. I do not think there is any need to put this in front of the Prime Minister until I come back with proposals. I have acknowledged receipt of the letter to the German Embassy.

RBN.

SIR ROBIN NICHOLSON  
Chief Scientific Adviser