



MO 26/3/1L

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE  
 MAIN BUILDING WHITEHALL LONDON SW1

Telephone 01-930 7022

2 10th July 1986

*Prime Minister*

*Professor Caldwell is  
 clearly an honourable man.*

*See Nigel.*

*N.C.V.*

*10.7*

THE CALDWELL INQUIRY

*FILE WITH NEW*

Thank you for your letter of 7th July about the appointment of Professor Caldwell to head the inquiry into warship hull design.

I am sorry to have to tell you that, as Ian Andrews forewarned you on Tuesday evening, following Press comment on his appointment, Professor Caldwell has concluded that he should resign from the inquiry. He has given a great deal of thought to his position, and consulted a range of opinions including those of an eminent QC; Clive Whitmore has also spoken to him about his decision. Professor Caldwell feels that however small may be the significance of his present or past associations with British Shipbuilders or the National Maritime Institute (as described in my previous letter), or indeed with the Ministry of Defence, there will probably remain in the minds of the public as well as some professional people a residual doubt as to his impartiality. This could only undermine the authority of any report he would produce; and for the debate to drag on thereafter would be in no-one's interest.

This is a very disappointing development. We are bound to respect Professor Caldwell's views and accept his resignation. But he was exceptionally well qualified to conduct the inquiry, on which he had already started work, and it will be hard to find another chairman as good, especially in view of the way that Professor Caldwell has been treated and the risk that the same tactics will be employed against any other chairman to whom the Giles party choose to take an objection.

Nigel Wicks Esq  
 10 Downing Street



We are now considering other names, but it may take time to persuade another suitable person to undertake the inquiry and we should not delay in announcing Professor Caldwell's resignation. We therefore intend to make a statement, probably in reply to a PQ in the House of Lords, on the lines of the enclosed draft.

Yours sincerely,  
John G. H.

(J F HOWE)

**CONFIDENTIAL**

UNTIL RELEASED

DRAFT REPLY TO PQ/PRESS RELEASE

I [Minister DP] announced in the Defence Debate that Professor John Caldwell, President of the Royal Institution of Naval Architects, had agreed to lead the inquiry into the issues raised by the report of the Committee chaired by the noble and gallant Lord Hill-Norton, about the relative merits of different hull forms for naval frigates. Following that announcement there was some public comment about Professor Caldwell's connections with the National Maritime Institute and with British Shipbuilders. Needless to say we had satisfied ourselves that these did not involve any conflict of interest for Professor Caldwell as chairman of an independent inquiry. He was not involved with model tests of the S90 hull form, and British Shipbuilders now have no commercial interest in warship design; and Professor Caldwell has not previously been involved in the debate about "short fat" hull forms. Therefore we were and are satisfied that he would bring to this inquiry the proper and necessary degree of impartiality as well as exceptional professional knowledge.

However, Professor Caldwell has told us that the comments which have been made about his appointment are likely to leave in the minds of the public as well as some professional people a residual doubt as to his impartiality; and that since this could only undermine the authority of any report he would produce, he has concluded that his correct course is to resign from the appointment, with the greatest regret.

I [We] share Professor Caldwell's regret. The inquiry must now be held up until another and equally well-qualified person can be found who is prepared to lead it. I [We] will make a further announcement in due course.

**CONFIDENTIAL**

NAT IND  
SHIPBUILDING  
PT 11

