



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

26 January 1988

N L Wicks Esq CBE
No 10 Downing Street

Dear Nigel,

ECONOMIC SUMMIT: SCIENCE

You rang me about Escritt's letter of 22 January. I have been trying to talk to you on the 'phone but our paths do not cross.

When John Fairclough raised this matter with me towards the end of last year I advised strongly that he should consult Sir R Armstrong. I said that the history of attempting to organise discussions between Chief Scientists in the Summit context had not proved very rewarding. And I underlined that the Prime Minister was averse to anything that looked like "institutionalising" the Summit machinery. Escritt's letter to you is presumably a belated reaction to this advice.

The issues which Fairclough raises are real ones. And there may be substantive and mutually satisfactory bargains to be struck over collaboration on major scientific projects, eg CERN and the Americans' Super-Conducting Super-Collider. It is just possible that these bargains could best be struck at the highest level (President Reagan launched the space station idea at the London Economic Summit: absit omen).

However because of the sensitivities involved the approach, if any, must be very delicate. In any case the Prime Minister is not particularly enthusiastic at present about scientific collaboration. I therefore think that it would be better as a first step for you, rather than John Fairclough, to have a word with Mrs Ostry when she is here next week. If this shows that the Canadians are really "ready to carry things forward" from the chair, then we will be faced with a fact with which we will have to deal. We can develop our attitude in slower time, in preparation for the Sherpas meeting at the end of next month. And we can secure the Prime Minister's agreement to our proceeding. You will want to reply to Escritt fairly soon. For obvious reasons I am copying this letter only to Geoffrey Littler.

We spoke!

Yours ever,

Roderic

R Q Braithwaite