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10 DOWNING STREET

*From the Principal Private Secretary*

PERSONAL  
SIR ROBERT ARMSTRONG

CHIEF SCIENTIST, CPRS

You minuted the Prime Minister on 21 September 1981 about your search for a successor to Dr. Ashworth as Chief Scientist CPRS, and she raised the subject briefly with you after E this afternoon.

My impression was that you had satisfied her in your short exchange with her this afternoon on the question of finding an offsetting saving elsewhere at Deputy Secretary level, but when I asked her to confirm this this evening before replying to your minute, she said that she was not convinced that the CPRS needed a Chief Scientist. Rather, she thought that there might be a better case for attaching Dr. Ashworth's successor to No. 10. I said that I saw considerable difficulties about doing this, both in terms of generating work of the kind which somebody of Dr. Nicholson's quality would expect and of staff numbers.

The Prime Minister then reverted to the misgivings about some of the CPRS's recent products which she had expressed earlier in the week apropos their paper on pay. She went on to make some further comments which I should like to report to you orally.

I suggested to her that the best way of proceeding on this subject was to raise it when she, you and I discussed the idea of a Prime Minister's Department during the visit to Melbourne, and she agreed with this.

G. A. WHITMORE

23 September 1981

FILE

*you Mack*

SIR ROBERT ARMSTRONG

Chief Scientist, CPRS

You had a further word with the Prime Minister this afternoon about the proposed appointment of Dr. Nicholson as Chief Scientist, CPRS.

The Prime Minister said that she was content for you to offer him the appointment on the terms agreed in discussion.

C A WHITMORE

24 September 1981

*MM*

Can't consider before

Prime Minister

Shelley reduction in  
found  
Ref. A05589

PRIME MINISTER

When you announced Sir Robert Armstrong  
as Deputy Secretary level, you said that you hoped an  
Armstrong's name at the same level could be found  
elsewhere. Sir Robert Armstrong believes that this compensation  
reduction will be found in the Chief Scientist, Home Office  
Chief Scientist, CPRS post, but this will not be for a little  
time. Sir Robert Cotton does not think he can displace Sir  
Armstrong, the present Chief Scientist, while the case of Sir Cliff, the  
scientist, still has to be brought to a conclusion. Ash

As you know, Dr John Ashworth has left the CPRS to become Vice  
Chancellor of the University of Salford. With your agreement we have been  
looking for possible replacements, this time at Deputy Secretary level.

2. Between us Mr Ibbs and I have canvassed a wide range of opinion about  
possible successors, and two names came up more strongly than any others.  
They were those of Professor Michael Ashby FRS (Professor of Engineering  
Materials, University of Cambridge) and Dr Robin Nicholson FRS (Managing  
Director of Inco Europe Limited and formerly Professor of Metallurgy,  
University of Manchester).

3. It quickly became clear that Professor Ashby did not wish to be considered  
for personal reasons. We have, therefore, been pursuing Dr Nicholson.

4. Dr Nicholson is 47. He is extremely highly regarded in the scientific  
community (indeed, he was the President of the Royal Society's first choice when  
we discussed possible candidates with him). And he has, from our point of view,  
the great advantage of having had seven years in industry, and of having a strong  
interest and experience of the application of science in industry.

5. Apart from these qualities he has an extremely lively mind and an  
attractive personality.

6. Both Mr Ibbs and I think that we shall do well to get him, and that he  
would make not just an effective but a distinguished contribution to CPRS and to  
scientific advice at the centre of Government.

7. He would come to us on secondment for three years; and we are hoping  
that we should be able to persuade him to come before the end of the year given  
that Dr Ashworth has already left us. Certain technical problems - such as  
pension arrangements - remain to be sorted out but subject to that I hope that we  
should be in a position to make an announcement shortly after your return from  
Melbourne, probably in the week beginning 12 October.

8. I attach a copy of Dr Nicholson's entry in Who's Who.

RA

ROBERT ARMSTRONG

21 September 1981

NICHOLSON, Robin Buchanan, PhD; FRS 1978; Managing Director, Inco Europe Ltd, since 1976; b 12 Aug. 1934; s of Carroll and Nancy Nicholson; m 1958, Elizabeth Mary, d of late Sir Sydney Caffyn; one s two d. Educ: Oundle Sch.; St Catharine's Coll., Cambridge. BA 1956, PhD 1959, MA 1960. University of Cambridge: Demonstrator in Metallurgy, 1960; Lectr in Metallurgy, 1964; Fellow of Christ's Coll., 1962-66;

Prof. of Metallurgy, Univ. of Manchester, 1966. Dir of Research Lab., Inco Europe Ltd, 1972; Dir, Inco Europe Ltd, 1975. Mem., SRC, 1978-. FIM, MInstP. Rosenhain Medallist, Inst. of Metals, 1971. *Publications*: Precipitation Hardening (with A. Kelly), 1962; (jtl) Electron Microscopy of Thin Crystals, 1965; (ed and contrib. with A. Kelly) Strengthening Methods in Crystals, 1971; numerous papers to learned jls. *Recreations*: family life, gardening, music. *Address*: Whittington House, 8 Fisherwick Road, Whittington, near Lichfield, Staffs WS14 9LH. T: Whittington 432081. *Club*: MCC.



*Guest  
meal  
Wm  
y/ro*

**PROFESSOR JOHN M ASHWORTH**

**DSc, FIBiol.**

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**University of Salford**

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*From the  
Vice-Chancellor*

Professor J M Ashworth  
DSc, FIBiol

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Telephone 061-736 5843

Telex 668680 (Sulib)

Dear Willie,

A note to tell you that I have now completed my move from the CPRS, Whitehall and the Civil Service and am now settled at the above addresses.

Yours sincerely,  
John Ashworth.

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