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## DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

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FROM THE SECRETARY OF STATE

John Coles Esq  
Private Secretary  
10 Downing Street  
LONDON  
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22 July 1982

Dear Mr Coles,

## BRITISH ANTARCTIC SURVEY

... As requested in your letter to me of ~~13~~ July, I attach a suggested draft letter for the Prime Minister to send to Sir Alec Merrison.

The proposition in the draft letter is in line with the conclusions in the note accompanying your letter. The actual size of the Science Budget was necessarily left open but, in the light of the meeting, my Secretary of State is clear that the ABRC and NERC expect the £5m to be additional to a Science Budget at least at the level of the plans for science already announced. It follows that the extra cash required for BAS each year should be met as an agreed addition to the Department's programme; and that the case for additional cash for the Science Budget, to support activity and permit starts on new projects in areas of greater scientific priority (to which Sir Alec Merrison referred), is unaffected and remains to be pursued in the forthcoming Survey.

I am sending copies of this letter and enclosure to John Holmes, David Omand, John Kerr and David Wright.

Yours sincerely,  
*Imogen Wilde*

MRS I WILDE  
Private Secretary

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DRAFT LETTER FROM PRIME MINISTER TO SIR ALEC MERRISON, COPY TO SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EDUCATION AND SCIENCE, SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DEFENCE, SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS, CHIEF SECRETARY, AND SIR HERMANN BONDI

I was grateful to you and Hermann Bondi for coming to see me the other evening with Keith Joseph to discuss the British Antarctic Survey. ~~[I agreed to write to you confirming the conclusions which we reached.]~~

2. We agreed that there were valid strategic reasons for expanding the BAS so as to increase our presence in Antarctica and to ensure that we are in a strong position in the region by 1991 when the Antarctic Treaty may be reviewed. You and Hermann Bondi <sup>considered</sup> ~~persuaded me~~ however, that ~~on~~ on scientific grounds, an expansion of BAS could not command a high priority in relation to other important and potentially successful areas of science; and that, in making decisions about the allocation of the Science Budget as a whole, and of NERC's share of it, the scientific rather than strategic judgements <sup>should take precedence</sup> ~~rightly take pride of place~~. You also explained that the Science Budget, even on level funding, is already under pressure because of increased costs facing the Research Councils and because of the number of first-class scientific projects competing for science funds. Hermann Bondi made the point that, within NERC, the £1 million transferred to NERC in 1967 for the BAS had over the years been safeguarded against many attempts by other scientific interests to reduce it, and now stood at £5.6 million after allowing for indexation.

3. I agreed that the right solution would be for the Government to earmark £5m annually for BAS as an addition to the Science Budget. I recognise that expansion of BAS on this scale will inevitably take time. I understand that the additional sums required in the first two years are still being discussed between FCO, DES and NERC, but are likely to be £1m-£2½m in 1982-83 and £4m-£5m in 1983-84, dependent on the speed of build up and the phasing of capital expenditure. ~~[Thereafter the sum would be £5m indexed annually.]~~

4. I am sending copies of this letter to Francis Pym, Keith Joseph, John Nott, Leon Brittan and Hermann Bondi.

Reference .....

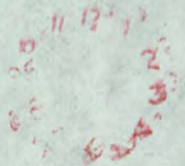
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CODE

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22 JUL 1982



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