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Prime Minister
c. Mr. Ingham

MR. BUTLER

c Dr. Nicholson

The Prime Minister agreed some weeks ago that we should seek to broaden the Press profile of the Advisory Council on Applied Research and Development (ACARD) and that in this connection Sir Henry Chilver might give a Press conference.

2. Sir Henry Chilver gave a Press briefing on 14th December. The Prime Minister may like to glance at Dr. Nicholson's report of that conference, a copy of which I attach.

REA

Robert Armstrong

6th January 1983

W.0801

31 December 1982

TO: SIR ROBERT ARMSTRONG

cc: Mr Sparrow
Mr Gregson
Dr Davies
Mr Courtney
Dr Miles/Mr King

FROM: DR NICHOLSON

ACARD'S PRESS PROFILE

On 14 December Sir Henry Chilver, Chairman of ACARD, was invited to lecture to the Parliamentary and Scientific Committee. He marked the occasion with a press briefing earlier the same day. This event was the first attempt to broaden ACARD's press profile in line with the approach endorsed by the Prime Minister.

PRESS BRIEFING

The press briefing was attended by about 15-20 journalists covering the major national dailies and weeklies. The BBC sent two correspondents. In addition to the briefing Sir Henry lunched with David Fishlock of the Financial Times and was interviewed by Channel 4.

Sir Henry's performance was very skilful, showing a commanding yet quiet authority. He defined a clear role for ACARD following 'Science and Government' and his main themes included the need for the exploitation of existing and new technology within industry emphasising that industry must recognise this in order to survive.

Sir Henry was very supportive of the Government line set out in 'Science and Government' and considered that the new arrangements for co-ordination of science and technology were a sensible compromise between fragmentation and centralisation. They were robust and should be workable under different administrations.

PRESS COVERAGE

~~One of the main objectives~~ of the briefing was to 'teach-in' the journalists on the role of ACARD by pointing to the way forward.

The subject was not headline-catching; even so David Fishlock's article in the FT ran to 10 column inches and focussed on the need for selectivity in spending on R & D. In a shorter report, the Guardian's Peter Large concentrated on the inability of researchers to get their ideas used.

It is too early to assess the weeklies' response to the briefing.

LECTURE TO THE PARLIAMENTARY AND SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

In his lecture Sir Henry described the new arrangements for ACARD, setting them in context and explaining how they might help in encouraging the UK to improve its exploitation of science and technology. In discussion after the lecture Sir Henry was assisted by Oscar Roith, Chief Scientist in DoI (I had an unavoidable engagement). Sir Henry dealt very capably with the discussion, taking a line sympathetic to Government approach. On several occasions he steered the discussion on to the importance of public purchasing which can assist manufacturers to produce products competitive in the world market.

CONCLUSION

The first major press briefing for ACARD since the publication of 'Science and Government' achieved its main objective of enabling the Chairman of ACARD to meet an influential group of journalists to create a better awareness of the Council's activities. Success will be measured by the press response to forthcoming ACARD reports.

RSN .

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Thank you.
I am glad this went well.

RCA
6.i.83