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FROM THE SECRETARY OF STATE

M A Pattison Esq
10 Downing Street
London SW1

Prime Minister

*Mr Carlisle wants a new Chairman
for GMAG, to continue its work.
Agree appointment of Sir Robert
Williams
3.12.80.*

*Why do we need to
continue it. Have the
functions not already been
laid down.
Dear Mike Can the MRC not
continue the work
- y' any in necessary?*

R: 9/1/81

GENETIC MANIPULATION ADVISORY GROUP (GMAG)

The present chairman of the Genetic Manipulation Advisory Group (GMAG), Sir William Henderson, is due to finish his two year term of office at the end of this year. He has expressed a wish not to be reappointed. In seeking a replacement, my Secretary of State has been conscious of the need to secure the services of a senior and experienced person in the medical or allied fields, who is capable of representing the UK at international conferences, is of sufficient stature to maintain public and scientific confidence in the Group, and is known to be a firm Chairman.

My Secretary of State considers it possible that the Prime Minister may have become aware of recent ill-founded speculation in the scientific press about the future of GMAG. While it is true that the Group now needs to meet less frequently than hitherto, there is still an unfinished advisory task for the Group to do. My Secretary of State understands that, at a meeting of GMAG on 19 December, there was overwhelming support among the membership for the Group's continued existence, on both scientific and public interest grounds. He endorses the Group's own view about the need for its continued existence, and feels that it is right that he should now appoint a new chairman.

My Secretary of State proposes, subject to the Prime Minister's approval, to appoint Sir Robert Williams as GMAG's next chairman, for about a two-year period. Sir Robert is by profession a pathologist and, while he has not himself been concerned with genetic manipulation, he was Chairman of the Working Party whose deliberations led to the establishment of GMAG in 1976. He will be retiring from his present post as Director of the Public Health Laboratory Service, and from the public service, in mid-summer 1981. He is a fit and vigorous 64.

Consultation has been carried out, by officials, with all interested Departments, and there is general support for the proposal. The appointment is proposed to be from 1 March 1981 (Sir William Henderson has agreed to serve on beyond the end of 1980 to ensure continuity).

It would be helpful if you could be good enough to secure the Prime Minister's approval to this appointment.

I am copying this letter to the Private Secretaries to the Secretaries of State for Defence, Social Services, Scotland and Wales, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and Minister of State, Civil Service Department.

Yours ever

Mary Bowden

MRS M E BOWDEN
Private Secretary



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Services

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

12 January 1981

do not chase

Genetic Manipulation Advisory Group

The Prime Minister has seen your letter of 31 December about the future of GMAG. (Despite its date, the letter only arrived here on 9 January).

The Prime Minister would like more information about the work of the Group, and the justification for its continued existence. She had understood that the guidelines had already been laid down, and she has asked whether the Medical Research Council could not continue any further work which might be necessary.

I am sending copies of this letter to David Omand (Ministry of Defence), Mike Tully (Department of Health and Social Security), Godfrey Robson (Scottish Office), John Craig (Welsh Office), David Jones (Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food) and Geoffrey Green (Civil Service Department).

M. A. PATTISON

Mrs. Mary Bowden,
Department of Education and Science.

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