

SUBJECT



Master
Paulward

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

MR. WRIGHT
Cabinet Office

House of Lords Select Committee: Report of the Official
Committee on Science and Technology (STO)

The Prime Minister had a word with Dr. Nicholson at 1230 today about Sir Robert's minute to her of 21 May, reference A08481.

The Prime Minister explained that she was content that Ministerial responsibilities for scientific and technological issues should remain unchanged, but she was concerned about the recommendations for improving coordination at official level set out in paragraph 5 of Sir Robert's minute. Her concern was that these recommendations would create extra work and extra bureaucracy, at extra expense, and that this expense would not be justified by any savings achieved through better coordination.

After some discussion, the Prime Minister agreed the recommendations in sub-paragraphs (a), (b), (c) and (e) of paragraph 5 of Sir Robert's minute, but with the following qualifications:

- (a) the system of Reviews of Research, recommended in sub-para (a), and the Committee of Chief Scientists, recommended in sub-para (e), would only be established for an initial one year. She would take a decision on whether or not to extend their existence in the light of a report on what had been achieved in that initial year. In particular, she would be looking for evidence that the work done on the Review of Research, and the activities of the Committee of Chief Scientists, had been cost-effective;
- (b) that the Chairman of the ABRC and ACARD should not be asked to report on science and technology more than once a year, and preferably not more than once every two years.

/The

5.

The Prime Minister was not willing to agree that Dr. Nicholson's post should bear the title of Chief Scientist, Cabinet Office.

You will now wish to amend the Government's draft response to the Select Committee's Report to take account of the Prime Minister's decisions. I should be grateful if you could let us know when you intend to publish it.

I am copying this minute to Private Secretaries to all members of the Cabinet.

W. F. S. RICKETT

11 June, 1982