

MASTER SET



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cc Oliver Letwin

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

14 March 1984

Dear Elizabeth,

Science Budget

When your Secretary of State came to see the Prime Minister today he suggested that in order to help her understand the difficult issues of priorities within the Science Budget, she should have a tutorial with the scientists most closely concerned rather than receiving reports second-hand through him. He recommended that the Prime Minister call a meeting with Sir David Phillips, Professor Kingman and Dr. Nicholson. He, Mr. Brooke and Mr. Hancock could also attend.

The Prime Minister wondered whether it would be right to confine the discussion to a narrow group which excluded scientists from a number of disciplines. An alternative would be a lunch or dinner for the Chairmen of all the Science Research Councils plus Sir David Phillips, Sir Henry Chilver and Professor Huxley. Your Secretary of State pointed out that discussion with this larger group would serve to keep the Prime Minister abreast of developments in scientific research but would not be the best way to talk about priorities. There would be a tendency for the different Chairmen to argue in defence of their areas, which would tend to undermine the work of the adviser particularly in defining priorities. It was agreed that there were two separate objectives which might lead to different meetings. Your Secretary of State agreed to reflect on this.

Your Secretary of State then raised the question of the low level of awareness in schools of the economic facts of life - among pupils, teachers and those teaching teachers. An earlier meeting of Ministers had considered what could be done to correct this. As a Minister, he was putting proposals to the Curriculum Council, the aim of which would be to ensure that there were some teaching of economics in schools in a practical rather than theoretical way. He regarded this, however, as a limited initiative.

He was also considering with Lord Cockfield and Sir Christopher Lawson what more could be done. Sir Christopher had proposed that an assessment, using opinion survey methods, be made of economic awareness in schools, and how this compared with experience on the Continent. When this was available Sir Christopher would discuss

/ the results

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the results with your Secretary of State and Lord Cockfield to see what practical steps could be taken to tackle the problem. Sir Christopher thought that business would be happy to finance this proposal which might cost £10 - 20,000.

The Prime Minister was content with this suggestion but was sceptical about what new the survey might reveal.

Your sincerely

Andrew Turnbull

(Andrew Turnbull)

Miss Elizabeth Hodkinson,
Department of Education and Science