

CONFIDENTIAL

MS
Prime Minister ②

To note. You may like to look at the record of the 19 October meeting which is attached

AT 11/3

PRIME MINISTER

REVIEW OF HIGH ENERGY PARTICLE PHYSICS

Now that you, Geoffrey Howe and Peter Rees have consented to my agreeing that the ABRC and SERC should make this review the way is clear for an announcement. I thought I should let you and colleagues know that I propose to do this by written Parliamentary Answer on Thursday 22 March. At the same time I would announce publication of the ABRC's 1983 advice. I am also taking the other steps outlined in my minute to you of 5 March.

Colleagues have raised some detailed points about the review which I am considering and about which I will, where necessary, be in touch with them separately. But Geoffrey Howe, in his minute to you of 13 March, raised a major matter which deserves comment here, namely his anxiety about the effect of setting up a review on our European partners. I fully understand and respect his anxieties. Indeed, it would cause me no pleasure at all to see the UK withdraw from CERN. Its work is of the highest scientific quality - research at the frontiers of knowledge - and our scientists and engineers have made a very distinguished contribution to it. For the UK to cease to do science in this area would be a distinct sacrifice of our cultural heritage. Even so, I think that we must now be willing to contemplate the possibility.

In paragraph 5 of his minute, the Foreign Secretary points out that our contribution to CERN is not a large sum by comparison with what the Government spends on defence research and development. That is indeed true, as I pointed out in my minute to you of 15 September 1983 on maintaining the strength of the science base. We discussed my minute with Michael Heseltine and Peter Rees at No 10 on 19 October and it was felt that the case for expanding the Science Budget had not been made out.

My decision now to agree to a review of our involvement in HEPP was strongly influenced by that outcome - because the total cost, some £50 million a year, is by no means small when related to the cost of new scientific opportunities in other fields which the Research Councils are now unable to fund from the resources that the Government has allocated to them.

I am sending copies of this minute to Cabinet colleagues, and to Sir Robert Armstrong and Dr Nicholson.

KJ

16 MARCH 1984

SCIENCE + TECH. Science Base
Sept 83

