

PRIME MINISTER

(11)

Women Into Science and Engineering

GG CF

PPD PDC

15/3

Last December Robin Nicholson sent you the attached note about Women Into Science and Engineering Year (WISE 84). The year is a joint initiative by the Equal Opportunities Commission and the Engineering Council. Dr. Nicholson recommended that you should accept a suitable invitation to take part.

We have now received two such invitations. You agreed to decline the first (to give a lecture at Surrey University) on diary grounds.

The second invitation comes from Lady Platt of the Equal Opportunities Commission. She asks you to launch a WISE engineering bus, which will contain a travelling exhibition for schools. This approach is supported by Rio Tinto Zinc and the National Westminster Bank. Details of the launch have yet to be settled but you would probably be asked to take part in a brief ceremony either at Downing Street or at the House.

This need not take a lot of your time. Agree, in the light of Robin Nicholson's advice, to accept in principle, subject to our finding a convenient date, and to the launch being at Downing Street rather than the House?

Yes mb

Dms

14 March 1984

PRIME MINISTER

Prime Minister

For information at this stage. We can expect a request later for you to be associated with a specific "WISE" event.

WOMEN INTO SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING YEAR - WISE '84

Done
15/12

David Young has recently pointed out that future skill shortages may be the factor which limits technological change and economic recovery in the later years of this decade.

2. The principal under-utilised skill resource in this country is women. A paltry 2 per cent of the scientific and technological workforce are women and even today women account for only 21 per cent of people taking first degrees in science and technology (of whom only one-third are in engineering).

3. It is against this background that Women into Science and Engineering, 1984 (WISE '84) has been formed as a joint initiative of the Equal Opportunities Commission and the Engineering Council. These organisations believe that science-based and engineering industry can no longer afford to neglect the talent and ability that women have to offer. Already there are skill shortages in electronics and a more general concern among employers over the quality of skilled workers available. The situation will worsen as the economic recovery strengthens.

4. The Equal Opportunities Commission attributes the under-representation of women in science and engineering to:

- i. a differentiated school curriculum where science is often regarded as a boys' subject
- ii. careers advisers not encouraging girls to pursue technical and scientific activity
- iii. attitudes of trainers and employers.

5. The WISE 1984 programme is to be launched on 17 January at the London Press Centre, when there will be presentations by Baroness Platt, Chairman of the Equal Opportunities Commission and Sir Kenneth Corfield, Chairman of the Engineering Council. The campaign will be aimed at teachers, pupils, parents and engineering employers, and will provide posters, leaflets and publicity in teachers' journals, teenage and adult magazines.

6. The programme will include school-industry link schemes, residential courses or conferences for schoolgirls at universities and polytechnics, lectures and seminars in schools, universities and professional institutions, and an 'engineering bus' to visit all local education authorities in 1984, to give advice to girls on engineering.

7. I believe that WISE '84 is a worthwhile initiative deserving encouragement. It is sponsored by reputable organisations, the programme is well planned and the objective accords with the Government's overall industrial strategy. I hope you will feel able to give some personal encouragement to WISE during 1984 and I would be happy to advise on specific requests which you receive.

ABN

ROBIN B NICHOLSON
Chief Scientific Adviser

Cabinet Office
12 December 1983

PRIME MINISTER

Women into Science and Engineering

In the attached note Dr. Nicholson recommends you to accept two invitations connected with "Women into Science and Engineering Year". The first is the invitation from the Vice-Chancellor of Surrey University to deliver the Leggett Lecture in May/June. The second is an invitation which we can expect shortly from Lady Platt for you to launch "an engineering bus" which will contain a travelling exhibition.

Before we received Dr. Nicholson's minute, you had in fact signed a letter to the Vice-Chancellor of Surrey declining the invitation to deliver the lecture. I have held this back.

As you know you already have a very full programme of speaking engagements, and you may feel that - notwithstanding Dr. Nicholson's advice - it would be wiser to decline the lecture. If so, we could simply send off the letter you have already signed. You will wish to consider Lady Platt's invitation when we receive it, but at first sight this does sound a possible way in which you could lend your support to the Wise Year without committing too much time.

Agree we decline the lecture, and consider Lady Platt's invitation sympathetically when it arrives?

DMB

11 January 1984

May 1 June is
a very bad time for us
because of 2 Anniversaries, for
one of which we are hosts
i. Repetition

10 January 1984

PRIME MINISTER

WOMEN INTO SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING YEAR - WISE 1984

My minute dated 12 December 1983 indicated why I believe that WISE '84 is a worthwhile initiative deserving your encouragement. Its objectives are supportive of the Government's overall strategy.

2. In considering the invitation from the Vice-Chancellor of Surrey University for you to deliver the Leggett Lecture, you should know that a letter is on its way from Baroness Platt, Chairman of the Equal Opportunities Commission (a co-sponsor of WISE '84), asking whether you might consider giving both the lecture and being involved in the launch of an 'engineering bus' (to which the Department of Trade and Industry have contributed funds). The 'bus' will contain an exhibition giving advice to girls on engineering and will visit schools in all local education authority areas. Baroness Platt's letter will elaborate on this venture.

3. The 'bus' idea seems an imaginative one and I understand that the suggestion will be to launch it from the House of Commons forecourt or Downing Street. I recommend that you accept this invitation.

4. The lecture would, of course, make much more significant demands on your time but it would, however, provide an opportunity for you to pick up some of the themes of your Lancaster House Seminar on Science, Technology and Industry. I have in mind themes such as the need for all children (both boys and girls) to have a basic familiarity with science and engineering so that we become a more technologically

aware society; the need for better university/industry links and for better partnerships between university scientists and business entrepreneurs to create new industries; the value and protection of intellectual property rights; and the importance of applying the UK's science and technology skills to make our industry competitive in world markets. As the lecture is due to take place roughly a year after the Seminar and the location is an important technological University which recently won the competition for the Racal Chair in Information Technology, it would be a useful time and place to reinforce these messages of the Seminar. I hope you will feel able to accept this invitation, and I would of course be pleased to be involved in the lecture's preparation.

5. I am copying this minute to Sir Robert Armstrong.

RBN

ROBIN B NICHOLSON
Chief Scientific Adviser

- 2 -

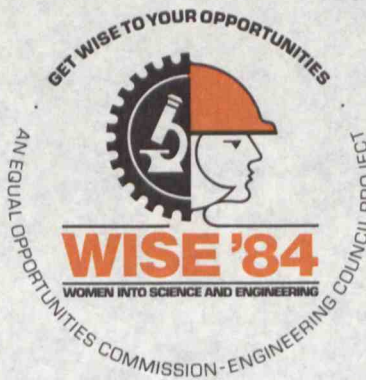
10 January 1984

SCIENCE + TECH: Women into Science

Sec 83

10/11 JAN 1984





Equal Opportunities Commission



Overseas House, Quay Street, Manchester M3 3HN. Tel: 061-833 9244

BP/MB

12th January 1984

R14

The Rt. Hon. Margaret Thatcher MP,
Prime Minister,
10 Downing Street,
LONDON

Dear Mrs Thatcher

The Equal Opportunities Commission and the Engineering Council are co-operating to designate 1984 as 'Women Into Science and Engineering (WISE) Year', with the aim of encouraging more girls and women to consider careers in the areas of engineering, science and technology, and I enclose a copy of a WISE Information Paper.

Letters have been sent to all schools, post-school educational institutions and local education authorities in Great Britain, and to over two hundred companies, and there has been a most encouraging response to this initial approach. Over fifty projects are planned for 1984, ranging from 'science weeks' in primary schools to polytechnic and university conferences, and several companies are producing special recruitment literature to mark the occasion.

Your desire to create a stronger industrial base to aid our economic recovery is a fundamental part of your policy, which I wholeheartedly support. It is essential that the potential skills of girls and women are not lost to industry through their own lack of awareness or because of inadequate information or encouragement. Industry requires the highest possible skills at all levels, and a fundamental principle of the WISE campaign is to attract girls and women to possible careers across the whole spectrum of technology related industries.

...../

The Rt. Hon. Margaret Thatcher MP

We would be very honoured if you were able to demonstrate your support for WISE '84 by undertaking two engagements, both of which would be arranged to fit in with your busy programme.

This year's Leggatt Lecture at the University of Surrey will be related to WISE'84, and I know that the Vice-Chancellor intends to invite you to present this lecture. If you were able to accept this invitation, you would obviously make a significant impact upon a prestigious and influential academic audience.

WISE'84 does not relate solely to girls and women with high academic qualifications, however, and in an attempt to increase the interest of all girls at school, we are planning to have a WISE Engineering Bus equipped with video facilities, computer hardware and careers information, which will visit schools throughout Great Britain during the campaign. We have purchased a bus, with the financial support of Rio Tinto Zinc and the National Westminster Bank, and this will soon be undergoing the conversion process. I am sure that interest in the Engineering Bus would be greatly increased if you were able to launch the vehicle on its inaugural journey.

The Equal Opportunities Commission and the Engineering Council would be honoured if you were able to undertake the engagements outlined above, and I would be pleased to meet you or your officials to discuss these events in more detail if you felt that such discussions would be helpful.

Yours sincerely

Platt J. H. R. D.

Baroness Platt of Writtle

Enclosure - WISE white jacket information paper

Equal Opportunities Commission
Overseas House
Quay Street Manchester M3 3HN

Telephone 061-833 9244



From The Baroness Platt of Writtle,
C.B.E., M.A., C.Eng., M.R.Ae.S.,
Chairman.

BP/EMM

21 March 1984

David Barclay, Esq.,
The Private Secretary,
10 Downing Street,
LONDON.

28/3

Dear Mr Barclay

Thank you for your letter dated 16 March.

I am delighted that the Prime Minister has agreed to launch the WISE Bus, and I am sure that her support will increase significantly the interest in, and impact of, WISE '84. I look forward to the event with great pleasure.

I have asked Mr. Knowles, my Assistant Chief Executive and the Co-ordinator of WISE '84, to liaise with you over a date for the launch, and he will be contacting you in the near future.

Yours sincerely

Platt

Baroness Platt of Writtle

Science & Tech 12/83

WISE

22 MAY 1984





10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

16 March 1984

The Prime Minister has asked me to thank you for your letter of 12 January. I am very sorry that because of an oversight in this office you have not received a reply before now.

In your letter you kindly invited the Prime Minister to undertake two engagements. As I am sure you will know, the Prime Minister has had to decide with regret that she is unable to accept the invitation from the Vice-Chancellor of Surrey University to deliver the Leggatt Lecture. She would however be very pleased to take part in the launch of the WISE engineering bus, provided of course that we can find a mutually convenient date and time. The Prime Minister hopes that it might be possible for the launch to take place here at Downing Street, if that is acceptable to you.

BF | Perhaps you could kindly arrange for someone from your office to contact me or my colleague Caroline Ryder to discuss the detailed arrangements. Both Caroline and I can be reached on 01-930 4433.

David Barclay

The Lady Platt of Writtle, C.B.E.

File ECL
Caroline: to remind.
PE
23/3

CS

Equal Opportunities Commission
Overseas House
Quay Street Manchester M3 3HN
Telephone 061-833 9244



**Equal
Opportunities
Commission**

Your reference

Our reference

EAH/EMM

Date

12 March 1984

David Barclay, Esq.,
10 Downing Street,
LONDON.

Dear Mr. Barclay

I understand from Victoria Harrison in the Cabinet Office that Mrs. Thatcher has not received the Commission's letter of 12 January 1984. I enclose a copy herewith, and I hope it may be possible for the Prime Minister to "launch" the Equal Opportunities Commission's "WISE" Bus.

I look forward to hearing from you in due course.

Yours sincerely

Elizabeth Harris

Elizabeth Harris (Miss)
Private Office

Enc.

BP/MB

12th January 1984

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Prime Minister,
10 Downing Street,
LONDON

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Baroness Platt of Writtle

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