

PRIME MINISTER

You will remember that you are meeting a number of industrialists on 21 May to discuss the "switch", and the increase in resources for technical education in universities.

Sir William Barlow, Chairman of BICC, has responded saying that he will not be able to attend, but suggesting two further people who should be approached: Sir Henry Chilver, Vice-Chancellor of Cranfield, and John Whyte, Chairman of Plessey Telecommunications. DES advise that Sir Henry Chilver would be an inappropriate choice, because he is an academic rather than an industrialist. John Whyte's links with the National Electronics Council (which Sir William Barlow believes to be an important body in this area) would be helpful, but not in themselves a compelling reason for inviting him. However, he could certainly be approached in his capacity as a major businessman.

If you are content with this advice, there is a draft letter to John Whyte for signature attached. I will then respond to Sir William's letter to Robin Butler accordingly.

Mark Addison

Have signed
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MARK ADDISON

4 April 1985



10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

15 April 1985

Dear Mr. Whyte.

You will know of the concern voiced in many quarters and especially by business about the need to increase the output of graduate engineers and technologists. Attention has been drawn to this, in particular, by the Engineering Council and in the first report of the Committee on IT Skills Shortages under the chairmanship of John Butcher at the Department of Trade and Industry.

The Government has been considering these representations very carefully and you will have heard that we have announced our intention to redeploy some resources for this purpose. I enclose a copy of the Department of Education and Science press notice. We envisage a special programme costing about £43 million over the three years 1985-86 to 1987-88. I am sure you agree that this programme will be worthwhile only if it receives sufficient industrial co-operation and support of the kind offered by the industrial members of John Butcher's committee. The first phase of the programme affecting student intakes in October 1985 will be launched soon - details should be announced next month. Future phases, and the success of the programme generally, will depend crucially on the willingness of industry to play an active part.

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I would like to discuss this new initiative with you (and with the others on the enclosed list). I particularly wish to learn how far industry would contribute to such a programme by providing:

- (i) more help with equipment;
- (ii) more help with teaching staff - this is vitally important because it is doubtful whether our higher education institutions will be able to recruit qualified staff in sufficient numbers;
- (iii) more placements for students on sandwich courses;
- (iv) active help with the design of relevant courses;
- (v) a readiness to offer worthwhile initial jobs and subsequent careers to the graduates.

I and my colleagues would also be very interested to hear your views on the following questions:

- (a) which type of graduate is likely to be in greatest demand - for example, should we give priority to electronic engineering or to software engineering or aim for a broader spread? And is the demand principally for university graduates or does industry find graduates from the better polytechnics equally (or perhaps more) useful for many purposes?
- (b) how should co-operation between industry and the chosen higher education institutions be organised? Should it be organised centrally, for example, through the IT Skills Agency, the

Scottish Development Agency, Government Departments and the UGC; or would it be better for each participating company to "adopt" one or more participating institutions?

- (c) would industry be willing to sponsor more students? This is likely to be a very effective way of influencing the career choices of pupils at school and encouraging more young people to study maths, physics and technology.

Finally, if there were time, I should like to take the opportunity to seek your views on what more could be done - and I know a lot is being done already - to change the attitudes of parents, teachers and pupils towards careers in business.

I hope you will be able to meet me, Keith Joseph and other colleagues on Tuesday, 21 May at 1000 hrs in No.10 Downing Street. Would you please let my office know if you can come.

Yours sincerely
Margaret Thatcher

John Whyte, Esq., C.B.E.



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

15 April 1985

SWITCH MEETING ON 21 MAY

The Prime Minister has considered Sir William Barlow's suggestion that two further people should be invited to this discussion. She has accepted your advice and has accordingly written to John Whyte asking if he would like to come.

(Mark Addison)

Miss Elizabeth Hodkinson
Department of Education and Science

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10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

15 April 1985

Thank you for your letter of 25 March to Robin Butler. The Prime Minister is sorry you will be unable to attend the meeting on 21 May, and was very grateful for your interesting suggestions.

The meeting is intended to consist as far as possible of individual industrialists speaking for their companies. Sir Henry Chilver is certainly one of many academics with an interest in the area, but the Prime Minister does not think it would be appropriate to single him out for an invitation. On your point about the National Electronics Council, although the Prime Minister is seeking to avoid representative bodies, she will be taking up your suggestion and inviting Mr Whyte in his capacity as a businessman who also usefully covers the NEC interest.

(Mark Addison)

Sir William Barlow

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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

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FROM THE SECRETARY OF STATE

Mark Addison Esq
Private Secretary
10 Downing Street
LONDON SW1

3 April 1985

Dear Mark,

MEETING OF INDUSTRIALISTS, 21 MAY 1985

Thank you for your letter of 27 March, covering one of 25 March from Sir William Barlow.

Sir Henry Chilver is very much a prospective supplier with a vested interest comparable to normal universities and to the special proposal of Salford. We would therefore regard it as inappropriate to invite him.

We are not in general looking for representatives of the proliferation of bodies in this field. The National Electronics Council is worthy but not really a major force. It would seem inappropriate to invite HRH the Duke of Kent, but we would be entirely happy to see Mr Whyte invited as a relevant business man who usefully covers the NEC interest.

I attach a draft letter you may care to send to Sir William Barlow.

Yours,

Elizabeth

MISS C E HODKINSON
Private Secretary

DRAFT LETTER FOR MR BUTLER (NO 10) TO SEND TO SIR WILLIAM BARLOW (BICC)

MEETING ON MAY 21, 10 DOWNING STREET, IT EDUCATION

Thank you for your letter of 25th March, ^{to Peter Butler} The Prime Minister ^{is} will be sorry that you are unable to attend, ^{and he is grateful for your interesting suggestions.}

You made two useful suggestions. The meeting is intended to consist as far as possible of individual industrialists speaking for their companies.

Sir Henry Chilver ^{is} is one of many academics with an interest in ^{the work} making provision ^{out the PM does} and I do not think it would be appropriate to single him out for an invitation.

^{On} Your reference to the National Electronics Council was helpful. Although ^{the PM is} we are seeking to avoid representative bodies, ^{he will be taking up your suggestion and} we are inviting Mr Whyte

as a business man who usefully covers the NEC interest.

23 APR 1965



