

Prime Minister ①

You are meeting administrators to discuss
the "Switch" on Tuesday. Sir Keith
would like to have colleagues' agreement
that the best polytechnics should be included
in the programme before that meeting. Correct?
15 May 1985

PRIME MINISTER

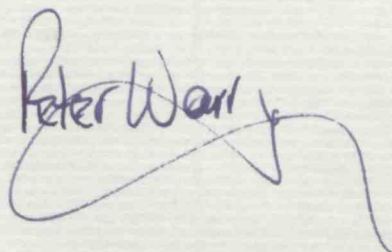
MEP 17/5

ENGINEERING AND TECHNOLOGY PROGRAMME

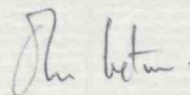
Yes ms

We agree with Keith Joseph that it would be sensible to
include the best polytechnics in the new Programme for
engineering and technology. Our contacts lead us to believe
that the exclusion of the polytechnics has caused
considerable industrial and local authority resentment; and
some of the best departments in these applied fields are
said to offer more industrially useful courses than many of
their university counterparts.

We recommend that you should accept Keith's recommendation.



PETER WARRY



OLIVER LETWIN

Confirmed EH and DES that
PM correct.

MEP 20/5



DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

ELIZABETH HOUSE YORK ROAD LONDON SE1 7PH

TELEPHONE 01-934 9000

FROM THE SECRETARY OF STATE

The Rt Hon Norman Tebbit MP
 Secretary of State for Trade
 and Industry
 1-19 Victoria Street
 LONDON SW1

14 May 1985

Dear Norman,

ENGINEERING & TECHNOLOGY PROGRAMME

I wrote to you and other colleagues on 8 March setting out proposals for the first phase of this Programme and, following general agreement, an announcement was made shortly before Easter. You had earlier raised the question of possible public sector involvement in the Programme and I therefore proposed in my letter to seek advice as to whether industry would support such involvement from Sir Robert Clayton and members of the IT Skills Agency.

I consequently met Sir Robert and members he selected from the Agency on 7 May. In your absence, John Butcher attended from your Department. As you may already have heard from him, Sir Robert Clayton and his colleagues gave clear and unequivocal advice to the effect that they would see merit in a small number of polytechnics with strong departments receiving a relatively small proportion of the resources still remaining for this Programme - even though this would necessarily be at the expense of some provision in the universities. Beyond that, there were different views on some issues, but they tended to believe that the emphasis for the remainder of the programme should be on quality of provision and not on achieving the maximum numbers at minimum cost (though they recognised that both quality and cost-effectiveness were important factors to be taken into account). They also favoured general rather than highly specialised first degree courses. They did not exclude the possibility of assistance under the Programme for the separate initiatives at Salford and Cranfield and saw merit, prima facie, in the type of novel distance learning techniques being adopted at the Open University. As you know, these are all proposals before us for the second phase of the Programme and I therefore accepted readily Sir Robert Clayton's offer to supply early further advice both on centres of strength in the public sector and on these other proposals.

/cont'd...

This advice does, of course, mark a departure from the earlier advice by the Engineering Council. In a separate meeting with me recently the retiring Chairman, Sir Kenneth Corfield, and the Director had the opportunity to amend their earlier advice, but, while recognising the sensitivity of the public sector question, they did not offer a clear line on it. In the circumstances, I believe it would now be proper to act upon the clear message we have received from Sir Robert Clayton and his colleagues - a message I would expect to hear repeated when the Prime Minister meets industrialists later this month. And in view of the speculation this issue has aroused, I plan to make known publicly, through a low key announcement, on which I will consult you and relevant colleagues, our general intention to include some public sector institutions in the Programme. I shall assume you and other colleagues will be content unless I hear to the contrary by Tuesday 21 May.

Officials and a representative of the ITSA are meeting, as you will know, to develop proposals for later stages of this Programme. They will clearly have to offer us a package which leaves room for good universities, well-supported by industry as well as the polytechnics and other special cases. Separate procedures involving the National Advisory Body will be needed to handle the public sector involvement and I am asking officials to put in hand the necessary groundwork to enable bids to be invited from institutions once we have guidance from Sir Robert Clayton and his colleagues on the course areas where he feels polytechnics can offer particular strength. I shall make further proposals to you and others in due course about the remainder of the Programme (including on the sum of resources to be committed to the public sector).

I might remind colleagues that the Prime Minister's meeting with employers on 21 May will concentrate on their contribution in cash and kind to favoured educational institutions.

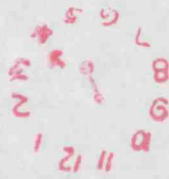
Copies of this letter go to the Prime Minister, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Secretaries of State for Defence, Employment, Scotland and Wales, the Minister without Portfolio, the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, Sir Robert Armstrong and Sir Robin Nicholson.

Emm.
/Ken.

Science + Tech

A3

Budget



14 MAY 1985

cc No



Pdhy Unit Ane?

Y SWYDDFA GYMREIG
GWYDYR HOUSE
WHITEHALL LONDON SW1A 2ER
Tel. 01-233 3000 (Switsfwrdd)
01-233 (Llinell Union)
6106
Oddi wrth Ysgrifennydd Gwladol Cymru

WELSH OFFICE
GWYDYR HOUSE
WHITEHALL LONDON SW1A 2ER
Tel. 01-233 3000 (Switchboard)
01-233 6106 (Direct Line)
From The Secretary of State for Wales

The Rt Hon Nicholas Edwards MP

22nd May 1985

Ken Ker

ENGINEERING AND TECHNOLOGY PROGRAMME

Thank you for copying to me your letter of 14 May to Norman Tebbit about the engineering and technology programme.

Attached

I am pleased to know that you now consider that the polytechnics should receive a proportion of the resources available under Phase 2 of the programme. We have only one polytechnic in Wales but I understand that it has close links with some major companies, such as Thorn EMI and STC, and could be expected to put forward a good case for support. However it does not come within the remit of the National Advisory Board and could not be included therefore in the procedures involving the NAB which you mention in your letter. Whether or not it would be necessary for the Wales Advisory Body to become involved is a matter which, if necessary, can be decided at a later date.

/ I am copying this letter to the Prime Minister, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Secretaries of State for Defence, Employment and Scotland, the Minister without Portfolio, the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, Sir Robert Armstrong and Sir Robin Nicholson.

for
Nor

The Rt Hon Sir Keith Joseph Bt MP
Secretary of State for Education and Science

22 MAY 1985



POLYTECHNIC OF THE SOUTH BANK

MEMORANDUM

To THE PRIME MINISTER

Copies for information to SIR ROBERT CLAYTON/ SIR KEITH JOSEPH

From The Deputy Director

Date 17th May 1985

Meeting with Industrialists on 21st May to discuss the DES
Ref. £43 million Engineering and Technology Programme

Preliminary

There is no university or polytechnic in the country which can match our achievement in boosting engineering enrolments over the past five years. So it is surprising that no one has consulted us or NAB about the 'switch'!

Problem

The output of graduates in high technology disciplines is not keeping pace with the expanding needs of industry (Chancellor of the Exchequer, announcing the £43million programme in his Budget speech).

Analysis

In the longer term we need to increase the number of students taking Mathematics/Physics/Computer Science etc. in the 6th Form. Meanwhile we need to persuade a higher proportion of existing sixth formers to enrol on certain courses, including Electronic Engineering and Computer Science.

Solution

Lots of students of subjects such as Business Studies or Economics have the 'A' level qualifications needed for entry to engineering courses. UCCA and similar statistics confirm this. We need to persuade more sixth formers with the right 'A' levels to try an Engineering degree course.

Action

Ask Sir Keith Joseph to revise the 'Mandatory Awards' legislation so that suitably qualified sixth formers can have a go at certain engineering courses without losing their rights to a student grant if they decide to change their minds and switch to another course later. Then mount a publicity drive to ensure that the message gets through to careers advisers and students that certain engineering courses carry a valuable 'double option' in terms of mandatory award entitlement.

Results

Changing the mandatory award regulations might increase enrolments by 10%. The extra cost of student grants to students who change their minds after say one year could be a premium worth paying - and they will be 'more technological' even if they end up as accountants!

P.S.

Perhaps part of the £43m should be earmarked to teach civil servants the difference between a 'switch' (as in Social Science → Technology) and a 'syphon' (as in Polytechnic → University) - the actions taken so far will simply waste money tempting potential students and hard won staff from Polytechnics like South Bank to the Universities with which it competes!



Rankin?

Polytechnic
of the
South Bank

*Pl. p.c. or
initial file.
NSPM.*

With the Compliments of
The Deputy Director

Borough Road London SE1 OAA
Telephone 01-928 8989