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THE PRIME MINISTER

18 June 1985

## REVIEW OF HIGH ENERGY PARTICLE PHYSICS

The Secretary of State for Education and Science has written to you about the review, chaired by Sir John Kendrew, of UK participation in the study of high-energy particle physics. I believe that the issues - in particular UK membership of the European Organisation for Nuclear Research (CERN) at Geneva - are important, are likely to be controversial, and may have wider implications for UK science both at home and in international collaboration.

2. I agree with the Secretary of State that the recommendations of the Report are likely to attract considerable comment, much of it hostile, both at home and in other Member States of CERN. However, I believe that the Governments of most Member States will privately welcome both the review of CERN and the recommendation for a reduction in its expenditure.

3. The summary of the report provided by DES omits the important conclusions that expenditure on particle physics is too high irrespective of the current financial problems of the Research Councils and that their recommendation of a reduction in spend on particle physics would stand even if the Science Vote were to be increased.

4. I support the Secretary of State's proposals for handling, though in view of the strong interest in the UK's membership of CERN by other Departments, in particular the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Treasury, you may wish to keep open the option of a collective consideration by Ministers of the advice from SERC and ABRC to the Secretary of State for Education and Science, perhaps in the forum of OD(E).

5. I am concerned, however, at the projected timetable. If the Secretary of State does not receive advice from SERC and the ABRC until the autumn, the ensuing uncertainties will cause problems for the bilateral discussions of the current PES round. As a member of ABRC, I am pushing for the process to be speeded up.

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

MBN

ROBIN NICHOLSON

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