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From the Private Secretary

MR UNWIN
CABINET OFFICE

SPACE

Thank you for your minute of 14 May about space,
which I have shown to the Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister has commented that there
cannot possibly be a decision on this before
the election.

DAVID NORGROVE

15 May 1987

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DSH

P 02689

MR NORSGROVE

SPACE



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From: J B UNWIN
14 May 1987

*You will wish to be aware, though
I hardly think you would want to reach
a decision before the Election.*

Dev 14/5.

As I mentioned to you, my personal advice to Mr Channon has been that it would not be appropriate for him to bring forward new proposals on space at this stage. It would certainly be extremely difficult to arrange any formal meeting (E(A)) to consider them; and I doubted very much whether in any case the Prime Minister would wish to consider any further proposals at this stage, not least in view of the large amounts of extra public expenditure agreed this week for other purposes. I thought the same considerations applied also to the European R&D framework, although Ministers will no doubt need to take a fresh look at this prior to the European Council at the end of next month.

2. Mr Channon accepted this advice but said that he was anxious that the Prime Minister should be aware that Mr Pattie had succeeded in securing promises of another £10 or £11 million for the space plan from industry; and that unless a quick decision is taken to put more Government funds into space (Option 3 appears to be the bottom line) the Director General of the British National Space Centre, Mr Roy Gibson, would almost certainly resign in the coming weeks. He had already sent an undated resignation letter to Mr Pattie and such a resignation could cause the Government some embarrassment during the election period.

3. I said that I thought the Prime Minister was already aware of these two points but that I would register them again myself. If, therefore, you think the Prime Minister is in any doubt on these points, I should be grateful if you would convey them to her.



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4. I did incidentally urge Mr Channon to use all the available arguments to persuade Mr Gibson to hold on. The extra money that DTI itself had agreed to find, together with the promises above from industry, already added up to a not insignificant addition to the existing plans.

J B UNWIN

Cabinet Office