

XXXXXXXXXXXX Rowstock 377
Ext: 7

7c
10th December, 1959.

IN CONFIDENCE

Professor N. F. Mott, F.R.S.
Department of Physics,
University of Cambridge,
Cavendish Laboratory,
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Cambridge.

Dear Mott,

Thank you for your letter of 30th November. It is clear that we must try to have as many as possible of the Institute research staff on fixed term appointments, and I think that there will be little difficulty in getting good people up to the age of 28 or so at the beginning of their term. My difficulty is that there will need to be a small number of more experienced people (e.g. of the Stafford class) who may be unwilling to come for a fixed term; they will normally be people with family responsibilities and, if of the calibre we need, will have no difficulty in getting permanent jobs elsewhere. The "academic freedom" which is supposed to exist in a research laboratory will be of dubious value in the case of these senior staff, who will have to help to run the machines, help the university visiting teams, and help to manage the laboratory. Most of these will have little time for personal research; the laboratory is really a large experimental factory.

Nevertheless, we should attempt to attract senior people on fixed term appointments and we may succeed to a limited extent. Some of the remaining small number could well be "double hatted", either with the Authority or a university. I think that not all could be "double hatted", because those with the biggest share of the organisational duties at the Rutherford Laboratory would have insufficient free time to be of any value to the university as such.

The difficulty concerning expensive university machines remains. There must continue to be university accelerators, if only to act as bases from which the more active nuclear physics schools may make effective use of central Institute laboratories as members of their own universities, and not as people indistinguishable from the Institute's own staff. Your hypothetical question about the new professor in Manchester is very apt; he would have to make do with what existed before he arrived, so far as major installations were concerned. Wilkinson is in a different position, of course, because there is no usable machine in Oxford, but if he should leave during the useful life of his electrostatic generator his successor would have to be chosen from those willing to use this machine.

I agree that it is no longer possible for a professor to go where he likes and then to build a big machine there. It is important to support the best physicists with the facilities which they need for their work, but it will be necessary to look at the whole programme nationally simply because it is expensive in both men and money. In doing this it will be important to consider the claims of major universities who have a stake in (in this case) nuclear physics, and in the whole process the chosen men are bound to find that their opportunities are limited to the chosen places.

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Professor H. F. Mott, F.R.S.

The National Institute can only help this situation by providing an environment for the really huge machines which may be necessary, to be used on a national basis. It is going to be difficult to decide which projects are merely "big", and which are "huge", but it would be fatal to the universities to centralise all nuclear research facilities in national laboratories.

As you probably heard, Wilkinson's scheme for Oxford was passed by the D.S.I.R. Sub-Committee last week, subject to minor reservations.

Yours sincerely,

T. G. Pickavance