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1900 Extn. 368

CON/POL/134

24th August, 1962

Mr. F. A. Tatford,
Director of Contracts,
United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority,
11, Charles II Street,
LONDON, S.W.1.

Dear Tatford,

G.P.C. Paper NI/GP/62/24

Thank you for your letter of 20th August. I am sorry that this question was not discussed with the Authority beforehand; it certainly should have been. However, it seems to me that no new principles are involved; universities are being allowed to order equipment under E.M.R. Agreements as they already do under similar agreements with, for example, A.E.R.E. Universities placing orders under such arrangements also pay the bills, and the supplier deals with the university throughout just as he does when the funds originate from the U.G.C., a D.S.I.R. grant, or an Authority E.M.R. Contract.

The two bubble chambers arose from scientific initiative in the universities, and have large elements under the control of senior university people supported by university groups. This is in accordance with the purpose and policy of N.I.R.N.S. But both projects are subject to overall control by management committees chaired by N.I.R.N.S. staff. The operation of the E.M.R. agreements, covering the university share of the work, is also supervised by the management committees. It is of course advantageous for N.I.R.N.S. to be involved in the preparation of tender exercises for major plant and to use the expertise and the services of the Authority Contracts Branch, and this is always done. For smaller items it is often better for the university staff to use their own local machinery for ordering and progressing. This reduces delays in communications, substantially reduces the load on N.I.R.N.S. in interpreting requirements to the Oxford Office, and puts the university people more in control of their own work. Incidentally the universities often get more favourable treatment than a Government Department or Agency.

When universities do similar work using public funds supplied through D.S.I.R. they are free to place orders up to an agreed maximum, above which the written agreement of D.S.I.R. to the terms of contract must be obtained. The limit is often as high as £10,000. We have been embarrassed by unfavourable comparisons between ourselves and D.S.I.R. made by university staff, and have been involved in considerable unproductive work to boot.

I hope this clears up most of your doubts, but if you wish to talk about them I shall be glad to join in.

Yours sincerely,

T. G. Pickavance

c.c. Dr. J. A. V. Willis
Mr. L. B. Mullett
Mr. A. Miller