

IN CONFIDENCE

29th October, 1962

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Dear John,

Many thanks for your letter of 23 October. The manner in which theory was raised at the Board was, I would say, rather irregular. Brian Flowers told me some time ago that he wanted to raise it and of course as a Board member he has every right to do so. The real trouble, however, was Peierls' letter which arrived here so late (the Friday before the Board meeting) that we could do no more than circulate it to the Board as requested. To say the least, it was naive and tendentious in places. The whole thing would have been better dealt with first at the Physics Committee, where anyone can say anything. The Board is not the place for petty argument and I thought it best to stay as quiet as possible.

However, this is not really important. Not since the earliest days have we thought of N.I.R.N.S. laboratories as mere service stations, and even then this idea was current only among the uninformed fringes of the Board and its committees. The idea of having strong and well-led experimental teams has always been accepted, although there is room for argument about the numbers. Theory was the contentious area, because theorists, needing only pencil and paper, were supposed to be sufficiently mobile to be able to work anywhere and the Rutherford Laboratory might be expected to attract a lot of visiting theorists (which it already does!). What has become clear to those who opposed our having our own "real" (sic) theorists is that we need such people as a focus and to interact daily with experimentalists.

Although everyone agrees that we must have some good experimentalists, no one in a university wants to give up one of his own. If Dalitz had been a professor in England, some members of the Board would have taken a different view on Monday. We already have Murphy on a fixed term appointment, and he is as good an experimentalist as we are likely to find. He would like a permanent job here - and I would be delighted to take him. But Cassels regards Murphy as Liverpool property and has already offered him a job (which I am told will be turned down flat). Clearly we must take Murphy, but the situation will be delicate. I shall start by talking to Cassels, Massey and a few others.

There are some related matters which should be discussed by the Physics Committee, and we shall arrange a meeting as soon as we can. We shall need more permanent nuclear experimentalists on our own staff. The present policy is to restrict permanent appointments to about 10% of nuclear physicists, but we feel that this proportion should be increased to nearer 50%. The permanent people should be taken on at P.S.O. level, so that we can be sure they are good, and the fixed term posts used for

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young people immediately after Ph.D. and, of course, for university people on secondment or sabbatical leave at any level. There are problems of seconding university staff to N.I.R.N.S. which affect both the Electron Laboratory and the Rutherford Laboratory.

Yours sincerely,

T. G. Pickavance