

NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR RESEARCH IN NUCLEAR SCIENCE

11/2

GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held at No. 5, Old Palace Yard,
Westminster, London on 20th September, 1962.

Present: Lord Bridges (Chairman)
Sir Robert Aitken
Professor J. M. Cassels
Mr. A. E. Drake
Dr. F. A. Vick
Dr. T. G. Pickavance
Professor A. W. Merrison
Dr. J. A. V. Willis (Secretary)

An apology for absence was received from Professor D. H. Wilkinson.

1. Minutes of the last meeting

The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting held on the 29th March, 1962.

2. Matters arising from the minutes

Minute 4 (Rutherford Laboratory Restaurant): The Secretary said that he had received a letter from Mr. Drake shortly after the last meeting, confirming that there had been no change in the A.E.A.'s position about use of A.E.R.E. canteens by Institute staff.

3. Matters dealt with by correspondence

The Chairman said that after reference to the Committee by correspondence he had approved the proposals in papers 62/20 (spare vacuum vessels for Nimrod) and 62/22 (electricity substation equipment).

Paper 62/21, the general financial statement dated 30th May, 1962 had been circulated, and was taken as read.

Paper 62/24 (financial management of the helium bubble chamber project) had been circulated for information. Mr. Drake said that the authorisation to universities to place certain contracts up to £2,000, which was reported in this paper, had been looked into by the A.E.A. Contracts Branch, who would have been inclined to suggest that they should place contracts of this size. However, the action appeared to be in line with the practice of the D.S.I.R. for example, although the circumstances were not quite the same. He also noted that the contracts concerned were controlled by a project committee, which would provide an opportunity for the Contracts Branch to comment when they wished. He therefore did not propose any change in the arrangements and the Committee endorsed them.

4. Financial Statement - Paper 62/27

The Chairman said that the final figures for 1964/62 (subject to audit) showed rather less underspend than had been previously forecast, but the amount of underspend was still large - £584,000.

Among the new commitments listed in Schedule II, attention was drawn to the many large running contracts which had been placed. Dr. Pickavance said that most of the running contracts had fallen due for renewal at the same time. A great deal of work was put out in this way for design, development, manufacture, and for the services of staff. In many cases this avoided employing staff in circumstances where we could not at present be sure that

we would need them permanently or that we would be able to afford to employ them permanently. Dr. Vick said that such contracts were used in similar circumstances at the A.E.R.E. Dr. Pickavance said that because of the large total amount involved he was keeping a close watch on these contracts.

The Committee took note of the estimate shown in Schedule IV of an over-spend in the current year of £365,000 on Atlas and £421,000 on other items. With regard to the latter, some items were identified on which expenditure might fall short of the estimate, and it was agreed that no action need be taken at the moment to reduce other items. However, in the special case of stores and services from A.E.R.E., it was important to keep down expenditure, as the A.E.A. budget was also very tight on these items.

5. Estimates 1963/64 - Paper 62/28

The Committee considered the draft estimates submitted in paper 62/28. Among the comments made were the following:-

- (a) Page 1. The suggested date for transfer of the British Hydrogen Bubble Chamber to N.I.R.N.S. ownership was the end of 1963. If the Treasury insist on the capital value of it being included in the vote it will be necessary for them to provide the additional amount in the vote for the appropriate year.
- (b) Page 2. The inclusions of shadow cuts in years after 1963/64 was discussed and it was agreed on balance to be useful, because it allowed the estimate to be prepared from planned programmes, but for the final forecast of expenditure to take account of unforeseen delays.
- (c) The forecasts for subsequent years which were included in the annual estimate were becoming of less importance as the 5-year forecasts were being treated more and more seriously by the Treasury, and partly took their place.
- (d) Page 2. It was suggested that the receipts in 1964/65 should perhaps be higher because the Atlas Computer should be in operation. The Secretary said that the receipts included amounts from Atlas believed to be realistic, but it was agreed that the figures should be checked.
- (e) Page 2. The expenditure shown for the Electron Laboratory in 1963/64 appeared unrealistically high. Professor Merrison agreed, but said that he would be able to make progressively better estimates during the next 2 or 3 months. It was agreed that the Electron Laboratory must not be starved of money at this stage, but that the estimate should be revised to take account of the latest Electron Laboratory information before it was finalised with the Treasury.
- (f) Page 3, 4 and 5. It should be indicated in future returns which items have been approved.
- (g) Page 4. Dr. Pickavance said that a large and unexpected increase had just occurred in the estimate for the helium bubble chamber (item 2 of "other Nimrod plant"). A paper would be submitted to the Committee seeking an increase in the approved sum, and for the transfer of the necessary money from another item. It was agreed this paper might be submitted by correspondence.
- (h) Page 7. It was decided to use slightly lower figures for staff in post in 1964 and 1965, making a corresponding reduction in non-capital expenditure if appropriate.

- (i) General The Chairman warmly welcomed an offer by Mr. Drake to go through the estimates in detail with the Institute staff.

Subject to the above points, and to any necessary minor amendments resulting from discussion with Mr. Drake, the Committee approved the draft estimates.

6. Revised five-year forecast: 1963/68 - Paper 62/29

The Chairman said that this paper was a revision of the 5-year forecast previously submitted to the Committee in paper 62/2. It related to the same programme, but was adjusted to 1962/63 prices and took account of changed estimates for some items on the programme. The paper also set out to show that the forecast expenditure was not greater than the amounts of the grants which could be expected to be approved on the basis of the Minister for Science's letter dated 13th July, 1962.

The following points were made in discussion:

- (a) The Treasury had not yet agreed on the starting figure of £6.5M. It was agreed that the Institute must continue to press for this figure to be accepted.
- (b) The separation of reactor work from nuclear physics had not yet been argued with the Treasury, and the final Cockcroft Committee report was itself not explicit on the point. On the other hand it was perfectly clear that the reactor work is not nuclear physics, and was distinguished from nuclear physics by the Cockcroft Committee. For example the A.E.A. solid state work with reactors was excluded from consideration by the Cockcroft Committee. The G.P.C. agreed that it was most important to fight the case with the Treasury for separating the reactor work from nuclear physics and not including it in the 2% limit of increase. This would make very little difference at present, but it was important in principle, and might be a point of considerable substance later on when for example a high flux reactor was required.
- (c) The Minister for Science had left for later consideration certain proposed expenditure in the fifth year on schemes not yet approved, which would bring the total expenditure in that year over the 2% level. There was some uncertainty as to which schemes should be included in this category. The Secretary said that the schemes included in this category in paper NI/GP/62/29 were those which had been previously described to the Treasury as not yet either approved or committed in principle. However there were some anomalies. For example "Nimrod improvement" was one of these schemes, and it should perhaps be held that some expenditure on this was committed in principle. It was agreed that this matter should be discussed with Mr. Drake outside the meeting.
- (d) Although the 5-year forecast was not a budget for 5 years, it would be valuable to establish an averaging arrangement, whereby if expenditure fell short in one year, the money should be available in a subsequent year.
- (e) Professor Wilkinson had written to the Chairman re-emphasising that the level of expenditure planned had been imposed on the Institute and was in his opinion seriously inadequate. It was agreed that this could be taken up very strongly with the Treasury if in future it was found that the Institute's facilities could not be properly used owing to lack of funds, but not until then.

7. The Electron Laboratory

- (a) Professor Merrison gave a short report on the progress with the Electron Laboratory. He said that a good start had been made with

a review of the building estimate, with the help of staff loaned from the A.E.A., Risley. The plant estimate was also being reviewed.

- (b) Discussion about sites had continued with the Cheshire planning authorities who were strongly opposed to both the Wood Park and the Mickledale sites but had put forward a site at Daresbury, which they were prepared to help us to get. The sub-soil at Daresbury was being investigated, and preliminary results were reasonably encouraging. The situation was excellent as regards access, but the maximum area which might be available was about 60 acres, compared with 100 acres which the Board had indicated as a desirable area to provide for possible later expansion.

The Committee examined a plan of the site and concluded that there would be ample room for all the developments of the 4 GeV electron synchrotron which could be foreseen. They also took note of the opinion of the Cheshire planning officer that the Daresbury site if suitable geologically, could be in use at least nine months before either of the others because of the planning difficulties.

It was agreed that the question of the adequacy of the size of the site should be referred to the Board, and that if the soil survey gave satisfactory results this should be done without delay, by correspondence if necessary.

- (c) The Secretary reported that contract placing arrangements for the Electron Laboratory had been discussed at a meeting between the Director of Contracts, A.E.A., Professor Merrison and himself. It had been agreed that a contracts officer with the necessary staff would be detached by the A.E.A. to work with the Director of the Electron Laboratory and to place contracts, up to approximately £5,000 in value. Larger contracts would be placed by the A.E.A. Contracts Officer in Risley. Mr. Drake said that this arrangement was similar to that being made for the A.E.A.'s own establishments.

8. Interim financial powers of the Director of the Electron Laboratory

The Chairman proposed that as an interim measure the Director of the Electron Laboratory should be given power to commit expenditure within approved estimates up to £1,000 on any item, (but not including amenity items), and up to £10,000 on any item at the Chairman's discretion after consulting the Chairman.

This was agreed by the Committee.

9. Lecture Theatre at the Rutherford Laboratory - Paper 62/23

In the discussion of paper NI/GP/62/23 Dr. Vick said that there were a number of detailed points in the design which he thought should be discussed further outside the meeting. Dr. Pickavance welcomed this suggestion and agreed that there were several points which needed some further consideration. Another comment made was that the comparison of cost with that of the Cockcroft Hall which was made in the paper was not quite a fair one since the Cockcroft Hall included more facilities than the proposed Lecture Theatre. Dr. Vick also confirmed that the Cockcroft Hall was very heavily booked and that the A.E.R.E. themselves frequently had to book halls outside the Establishment.

After the discussion the Committee agreed that there was a case for the Lecture Theatre and agreed in principle to the proposals in paper NI/GP/62/23 subject to discussion of details with Dr. Vick outside the meeting. They authorised the preparation of detailed plans and a firm estimate which is to be submitted to them for approval in due course.

10. Hostels for University Visitors - Paper 62/25

The Committee examined plans of the situation of Chilton House and the adjacent Lime Tree House site. The latter is at present being conveyed from the Authority to the Institute for housing. The Secretary said that a substantial requirement of hostel accommodation for university visitors would certainly arise beyond the 24 places at the Coseners House. This additional requirement was estimated at about a further 24 places. The present proposal was to buy and convert Chilton House into a hostel to take 12 visitors at a cost of £17,000. There were possibilities of converting the derelict Lime Tree House to take an additional 12 bedrooms. However, in correspondence on the subject members of the Committee had suggested that it would be more economical to extend the Coseners House, perhaps partly by buying another house nearby to use as bedrooms. A scheme had therefore been developed for an extension of the Cosener's House for 12 additional guests, and the cost of this would be about the same as the Chilton House scheme for the same number. Planning approval was however not certain.

The Committee discussed the various possibilities, including the possible conversion of Chilton House into four flats and concluded that a closer examination and comparison of all the possibilities was needed. In the meantime, however, they were impressed by the potential value of Chilton House owing to its nearness to the Laboratory and its situation adjacent to other Institute property. They approved its purchase provided that this could be negotiated at a price acceptable to the District Valuer.

11. Additional Office and Laboratory Requirements at the Rutherford Laboratory - Paper 62/26.

The Committee considered the detailed case submitted in paper NI/GP/62/26, and approved in principle the proposal to provide an electronics block of 15,000 sq. ft. and an office block of 12,000 sq. ft. They approved the preparation of detailed plans and estimates, after the consideration of points mentioned below. Firm estimates are to be submitted to the Committee for approval later.

The following points were made in discussion:

- (a) The paper was not quite correct in implying that the A.E.R.E. Electronics Group had to move because the P.L.A. Groups wanted this space. The reason was that the A.E.R.E. Group had outgrown the space available.
- (b) The possibility of accommodating some or all of the A.E.R.E. Electronics Group in a new Electronics building on the A.E.R.E. site should be discussed further with Dr. Vick outside the meeting.

12. Extension to Building R.18 at the Rutherford Laboratory - Paper 62/31

The Committee considered paper NI/GP/62/31 and approved in principle the proposal to extend building R.18 at an estimated cost of £47,700. They noted that one section (phase 1) of this extension which is urgent has been approved by the Chairman, and that if necessary it can be completed independently. They approved the preparation of detailed plans and estimates which are to be submitted for approval before phase 2 of the work is carried out.

13. Stores and Storage buildings - Paper 62/30

The Committee took note of this paper.

J. A. V. Willis,
Secretary.

Rutherford High Energy Laboratory,
Harwell, Didcot, Berks.

20th September, 1962.