

28th November, 1963.

To: Management Committee members:

This paper has not been circulated  
to the Steering Committee

NI/63/23

Comm/4(b)

NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR RESEARCH IN NUCLEAR SCIENCE

GOVERNING BOARD

01570

The Trend Committee's Report as it affects the N.I.R.N.S.

Note by the Chairman

On 29th October the Board set up a Committee consisting of myself, Dr. Adams, Professor Cassels, Professor Flowers and the two Directors, to study the Trend Report and to take any immediate action which they thought desirable on behalf of the Board, and to make recommendations to the Board.

We held two meetings at which we discussed the relevant recommendations of the Trend Committee and a letter dated 28th October from the Minister of Science, a copy of which is enclosed.

It will be seen that the Minister asked that any recommendation should be made quickly. The Committee was in general agreement as to the lines on which we should concentrate, and a reply was prepared and despatched, a copy of which is enclosed. I trust that the Committee will be in general agreement with what I wrote.

There are three main points which require discussion in the Board.

1. It seemed to the Committee that the most important point was that nuclear physics should not be part of a Division of S.R.C. which also included mathematics and physics generally. The reasons for this are stated in the letter to the Minister and do not I think require further elaboration.
2. We should have preferred a position whereby N.I.R.N.S. are responsible for financial administration direct to the Minister of Science and not to the S.R.C. (Such a solution need not have been inconsistent with the overall demands for money for nuclear physics being considered by the S.R.C.)

But it is quite clear that the Minister of Science and the Treasury are very determined on the S.R.C. as a whole constituting a grant-aided body, which would deal with all the bodies within its sphere: and that its relation to the Minister of Science and the Treasury should be on the same lines as those of other grant-aided bodies, e.g. the M.R.C. and the A.R.C.

It was evident from the enquiries which I made that we should not be successful in combatting this view. We have therefore concentrated our attention in making the point that S.R.C. should allow the same discretion and delegation in carrying out their financial supervision as the A.E.A. and the Minister of Science have allowed.

This is an important point. The trouble is that so much in these matters depends not simply on the constitution but on the way the business is run. We must hope that S.R.C. is staffed by people who will have sensible ideas and a reasonable outlook.



3. The third point concerns the constitution of the Board in charge of the Nuclear Physics Division of S.R.C. It has been clear to me for some time that in the new set-up we shall need a smaller body, most of whose members will have to spend a considerable time on the work.

It has also been obvious to me for some time that, as and when we pass from the constructional period to full operation of the N.I.R.N.S. Research Establishments, any advantages which a lay Chairman might be held to have had in the early stages of the Institute, would be wholly outweighed by the desirability of having a nuclear physicist as Chairman. This we can take for granted, but there will be other points about the constitution of the Board in the new set-up about which I am sure discussion by the Board will be very helpful.

Perhaps the Board will say whether they would be willing that further discussions should be carried out by the same Committee, or whether they would wish others to be added to it.



COPY

OFFICE OF THE MINISTER FOR SCIENCE

2, Richmond Terrace,  
Whitehall,  
LONDON, S.W.1.

28th October, 1963

My dear Bridges:

Thank you for your letter about the Trend Report. It will be published on 30th October, with a foreword by myself, stating that the presence of Government Officials on the Committee does not mean that the Government has taken decisions yet; and that we shall consult the bodies affected before we do so. It will therefore be open to your Board to make representations to me, but I shall want to have them within four to six weeks - and the sooner the better.

As regards the relationships of NIRNS to the proposed Science Research Council, this will have to be worked out. I agree with you that the present NIRNS Board would be too high-powered for the new circumstances. But I would certainly envisage that the Science Research Council would have a Committee which would deal with nuclear physics (CERN, NIRNS and Grants), and that one of its main functions would be to supervise the Institute's policy. It would, I presume, be composed mainly of nuclear physics experts, with a few members of the main Council. There would, I should expect, also be a Managing Board for the NIRNS itself and Advisory Committees, with the universities well represented on them.

Since the main task of the Science Research Council will be to support scientific research in the universities, and provide expensive facilities when necessary, I do not think you need fear that NIRNS will lose its close connection with university people, or their confidence.

Yours:

H

The Rt. Hon. Lord Bridges, G.C.B., G.C.V.O., M.C., F.R.S.,  
Goodmans Furze,  
Headley,  
Epsom,  
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COPY

GOODMANS FURZE  
HEADLEY  
EPSOM

28th November, 1963.

Dear Minister,

1. I have now had an opportunity to consider with some of my colleagues on the Board of N.I.R.N.S. the relevant paragraphs of the Trend Report and of your letters to me of 17th and 28th October, 1963.

2. We welcome the proposal that there should be closer co-ordination of the support given to nuclear physics through N.I.R.N.S., through U.K. participation in C.E.R.N., and through grants to universities.

3. The responsibility for N.I.R.N.S., for the U.K. participation in C.E.R.N., and for grants for nuclear physics to universities, should, in our view, be assigned to a single Division of S.R.C. which should not be charged with any responsibilities outside this field. The setting up of such a Division would avoid the duplication of effort which results from the present arrangements, and would enable clear directions to be given over the whole range of government expenditure on nuclear physics.

4. Moreover the scale of expenditure which would fall on the proposed Nuclear Physics Division of S.R.C. is very considerable. Today the U.K. government expenditure on nuclear physics amounts to about £12 million of which just over two-thirds is required for N.I.R.N.S. N.I.R.N.S. is of course responsible for administering (three) large laboratories containing much complex equipment, and employing over 1,000 people. These laboratories differ from Government research stations inasmuch as, although they have publicly-employed directors and staff with their own research programmes, they are provided specifically for universities. The universities direct their own work in the N.I.R.N.S. laboratories but as programmes develop this becomes inextricably linked with work in their own departments and at C.E.R.N. In financial terms, nuclear physics will be the heaviest responsibility of the S.R.C. This reinforces our view that nuclear physics will be a sufficiently large responsibility to justify a separate Division of S.R.C.

5. It is clear that a Board constituted on the lines of the present Board of N.I.R.N.S. would not be the best instrument to look after the proposed Nuclear Physics Division of S.R.C. We suggest that this Division should have a Board charged with responsibility for all the functions listed in the second paragraph of this letter. This Board should be small in number and should meet frequently. The selection and appointment of Board members should take account of the heavy responsibilities and duties which will fall to them. In particular the Chairman's appointment might well have to be half-time. He should be a nuclear physicist since he will have to represent the Division within the S.R.C.

6. It is for consideration what financial powers should be given to a Board constituted on these lines, within the S.R.C. framework, to enable it to carry out its duties effectively. Much will depend on the financial powers granted to S.R.C. and to the extent to which S.R.C. will be willing to delegate to the separate Divisions. If we may say so, N.I.R.N.S. relationship with your Office and through your Office with the Treasury, has enabled prompt decisions to be taken and has allowed reasonable freedom in minor matters. We believe that the system has worked economically and efficiently. We greatly hope that these qualities will be preserved under the new scheme of things.

/7. Apart from ...

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7. Apart from financial arrangements there will be many administrative details which will require settlement. For example, it will be necessary to settle the underlying basis of the staffing of the N.I.R.N.S. laboratories, bearing in mind the need for preserving the flexibility of the existing very favourable relations with the universities. We have no doubt, however, that these questions can be satisfactorily solved on the basis of the establishment of a separate Nuclear Physics Division under a Board constituted on the lines proposed.

8. We are not of course attempting to claim any specially privileged position for nuclear physics and we welcome unreservedly the opportunity which would be afforded by the new arrangements to make a more coherent pattern in the organisation of science.

Yours very sincerely,

Bridges