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MR WICKS

25 April 1988

ECONOMIC SUMMIT

*FILE WITH NWV*

Thank you for copying to me your letter of ~~8~~ April to Rodric Braithwaite. You asked about discussions among Summit Government Science Advisers.

2. Richard Escritt wrote to you fully on these issues on 22 January and mentioned the informal discussions which I had in the margins of the meeting of OECD Science Ministers in Paris last October. I have also seen your replies to him of 28 January and 5 February.

3. Since then there has been a meeting in Frankfurt at the invitation of the German Presidency of my colleagues from the four European Summit countries - Germany, France, Italy and the UK together with the European Commission - to discuss principally the Japanese initiative on the Human Frontier Science Programme. Richard Escritt's letter of 29 March (attached) reported the outcome within Whitehall.

4. Other than this, we have had some contact with my Canadian opposite number, Bruce Howe who was here in February to discuss the Radarsat project with the DTI. He had told me generally of his intention to call his Summit opposite numbers together informally but his last word was that this was likely to be after the Toronto Summit rather than before.

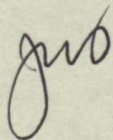
5. My Canadian colleague's perception of the problem is very similar to my own. As the costs of large scientific ventures increase, the way forward must increasingly be to share those costs among international partners. The difficulty is how to achieve this. Such big decisions are by their nature highly political but Ministers who must take them are bound to be cautious about long term commitments and to be sceptical of excessive scientific ambition. These difficulties should not mean that we ignore the need; but we

should certainly be cautious in tackling it. My understanding was that my Canadian colleague's intention was to hold a discussion which was to be decoupled from the Toronto Summit itself. Any consensus ideas which did emerge would need to be considered further in capitals. Only if appropriate would they be brought forward to some future Summit. This seems to me the right way forward. Summit scientists should meet informally from time to time and if the Canadians, who will be in the Summit chair until the end of the year, are prepared to issue an invitation after Toronto I should myself welcome it.

6. Turning to Toronto, the only scientific issue which seems likely to come forward is the Human Frontier Science Programme. The Japanese are lobbying hard for this to be on the agenda. You will wish to consult the Department of Education and Science as they are in the lead. My view is that we should be prepared for the Japanese Prime Minister to make his own report to the Summit on how the HFSP will be implemented following the lengthy discussions which have taken place between scientists and officials in participating countries. But there are no aspects of the Programme which Summit leaders need discuss, least of all the idea of financial contributions, on which no consensus exists among the Summit countries. The US, Canada and we think that, as an indication of their serious intent, the Japanese should be shouldering the burden for the first few years. The French and Italians have some sympathy with this view, but the Germans and the Commission are keen to be much more active.

7. The above should give you what you need for the meeting in Paris in May. But if you require more guidance, perhaps it would be easiest if we had a word.

8. I am copying this letter to Robin Butler, Geoffrey Littler and Rodric Braithwaite.



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