

Science Research Council

Whitley Council (Staff Side)

Working Party on Future Arrangements  
for the Management of the Appleton and Rutherford  
Laboratories

CENTRAL STAFF SIDE SUBMISSION TO COUNCIL

18 October 1978

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to the relocation of the bulk of the work at Chilton and the subsequent complete closure of the site at Billon Park. The Report creates an impression that the issues involved have been subject to only superficial examination and that the repercussions on both scientific programmes and staff have been given totally inadequate consideration. In this situation the most important function of the Staff Side of the Science Research Council (which formally represents the views of all levels of non-industrial staff) is to safeguard the livelihoods of these staff and their families as well as their professional and career interests.

It is in pursuit of this function that the Staff Side have reached the conclusion that they must oppose the recommendations of the Report. Council should be made aware that after very careful examination of the assumptions and arguments presented in the Report, the Staff Side have adopted the following policies:-

1. To oppose the running down of work at Billon Park and its associated repercussions.



IN CONFIDENCE

18 OCTOBER 1978

SCIENCE RESEARCH COUNCIL

WHITLEY COUNCIL - STAFF SIDE

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REPORT OF THE WORKING PARTY ON FUTURE ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF THE  
APPLETON AND RUTHERFORD LABORATORIES: COMMENTS FROM THE CENTRAL STAFF SIDE -

INTRODUCTION

Council will already be aware that the contents of the Report of the Working Party have caused great concern amongst all the staff of the Appleton Laboratory. A first reading leads to the inescapable conclusion that although they do not say so, the two recommendations, if adopted, would lead to the relocation of the bulk of the work at Chilton and the subsequent complete closure of the site at Ditton Park. The Report creates an impression that the issues involved have been subject to only superficial examination and that the repercussions on both scientific programmes and staff have been given totally inadequate consideration. In this situation the most important function of the Staff Side of the Science Research Council (which formally represents the views of all levels of non-industrial staff) is to safeguard the livelihoods of those staff and their families as well as their professional and career interests.

It is in pursuit of this function that the Staff Side have reached the conclusion that they must oppose the conclusions of the Report. Council should be made aware that after very careful examination of the assumptions and arguments presented in the Report, the Staff Side have adopted the following policies:-

- 1 To oppose the running down of work at Ditton Park and its associated outstations.

- 2 To reject the recommendation that work should be transferred from Ditton Park to Chilton.
- 3 To oppose the recommendation that a common management structure should be introduced for the Appleton and Rutherford Laboratories.

The content and the implications of the Report will now be examined in this submission.

## 1 THE FINANCIAL SITUATION

Since its formation in 1965, the Science Research Council has not enjoyed any substantial period of stability. The UK domestic financial situation of 1974 onwards led to a fall in SRC funding in real terms and this, coupled with rapid inflation and Government cash limits have led to a decrease in the size of the Science Research Council to the extent of about 200 staff.

In spite of their reservations, the Staff Side have given an unusual measure of cooperation to their employer, the Council, in working out ways of dealing with the succession of crises during the past seven years, and it is fair to ask Council not to underestimate the value (and in the circumstances, the uniqueness) of this cooperation. It is against this background that Council should consider whether or not a major upheaval of the Appleton Laboratory is likely to produce any significant economies in the SRC during the next few years. We are aware that the Forward Look does take account of the possibility of a continuing fall in funding at the rate of about 1.7% per year in real terms during the next three years, but we also believe there are signs that the funding of the SRC has bottomed out and that some modest growth must soon appear in the UK economy and in organisations as essential to the long term future of the Country as the SRC.



## 2 PROGRAMMES OF THE APPLETON AND THE RUTHERFORD LABORATORIES

All staff (including administrative and technical as well as scientific staff) have in the past given their full support to new activities as they have been introduced. They have often accepted personal inconveniences and major changes in career direction in order to give this support. This has happened because in most cases it has been possible to convince staff that the changes would be in their long term interests as well as those of the Council. Recent examples of this have been the Schmidt Telescope and UKIRT projects of ROE, where there have been enthusiastic contributions from staff even at the cost of considerable personal inconvenience, the loss of NINA and the major effort on the new NSF and SRS at Daresbury and the considerable changes in work patterns caused by the closure of NIMROD at Chilton to make way for the SNS, the LASER facility and other new scientific programmes. Staff of the Central Office have also accepted the disturbance caused by the move from London to Swindon.

The staff at Ditton Park are no less willing than their colleagues elsewhere to give their support to changes of programme. Like other staff they simply look for reasonably convincing arguments that such changes are in the long term interests of the science and of the SRC. They have made a valuable contribution both to the work on radio propagation and ionospheric research (which they have carried out for many years and which is internationally recognised) and also through the large range of work in support of the space science programmes of the Universities.

The Staff Side is concerned about the long term future of some parts of the Appleton Laboratory programme, in spite of the recognised excellence of the work done in the past. Council will be aware that when invited to submit evidence to the Working Party, staff representatives of the Appleton Laboratory identified a large number of possible projects in the areas of radio propagation, ionospheric science and geophysics which could be undertaken by the Laboratory and which it is understood in most cases were regarded by the academic and user communities concerned as worthy of support. It is disappointing that so far no provision has been made for funding this work. The Report of the Working Party refers to provision by the Engineering Board in the Forward Look limited to the current level of £770K (68 man years) per annum. Further thought should be given to seeking ways of funding these



proposals on the basis of their scientific desirability.

### 3 RECRUITMENT IMPLICATIONS

In the Report of the Working Party there is no mention of the extreme difficulty that the Rutherford Laboratory have faced for a number of years when attempting to recruit staff for certain essential support and ancillary activities. This is especially true of staff in the skilled and semi-skilled industrial grades. The Staff Side does not represent such grades and has no authority to speak on their behalf, but it has a very positive interest in the problem that arises from a permanent shortage of these important groups as their support contribution is essential to the success of the work of the Laboratories. It is well known in the area that the other public sector employers on the Harwell/Chilton campus, with whom the SRC are in competition as employers, pay considerably higher rates to their industrial grades of staff and skilled craftsmen, than the Civil Service rates paid by the SRC. Industrial grades are employed on non-mobile terms so that very few are likely to choose to go to Chilton if there is a decision to move the Appleton Laboratory. The outcome would be a loss of experienced long-service craftsmen and an even more disastrous permanent shortage of craftsmen at the Chilton site.

There are further serious problems in connection with recruitment procedures and practices which do not appear to have been understood by the Working Party. A particular problem would arise in connection with the recruitment of non-industrial staff as a consequence of the provisions of the Science and Technology Act of 1965. In this Act, Parliament have provided in Schedule 3, Sections 1(1) and 1(2) that obligations, rights and agreements, whether written or unwritten, that were in operation in predecessor bodies (in this case, NIRNS for the Rutherford Laboratory) shall have effect as if the SRC had been a party to the agreement. In the case of NIRNS, which was not a Civil Service body, these early agreements were fully contractual. Another part of this Schedule (Sections 4(1)(a) and 4(1)(b) provides that the UKAEA Superannuation Scheme (and as a consequence, the contractual agreements relating to conditions "shall continue to apply" to new recruits for



activities taken over from NIRNS.

Council should be aware that there is Official Side disagreement with the Staff Side on the legal interpretation of this part of the 1965 Act and on its implementation. The Staff Side believe that there has been a long history of pressure from the Civil Service Department to force Council to fall into strict conformity with Civil Service practises, including superannuation and other conditions of service. The predecessors of the SRC Staff Side won a hard fought battle during the passage of the 1965 Act to retain the right to AEA Superannuation for all staff at ex-NIRNS Laboratories. This right was bitterly opposed by the Treasury (CSD), but as a result of the Ministerial assurances given to a delegation of Staff Associations during the Parliamentary debates, the Act included the above provisions. These recognised the illogicality and administrative difficulty that would have arisen from offering any conditions other than those of the UKAEA to staff and recruits on the Harwell/Chilton site.

#### 4 PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH A MOVE - EFFECT ON STAFF

It is a fact of life that the current social and economic situation is such that in almost every case a compulsory move would cause great hardship. All the direct and indirect expenses incurred are very high and are not adequately covered by the allowances that are paid by the employer. This is not always obvious from knowledge of the size of these allowances, but those who already have experience of compulsory moves have found that the indirect costs far exceed those expected. It is often forgotten that in employment generally, where moves are accepted by employees they are largely related to promotion and career advancement. This element is absent in the present situation.

#### House Purchase

Housing is bound to create serious difficulties for any staff who are moved. Members of Council will be aware of the very high costs in the Thames Valley



commuter area which includes virtually all parts of SouthOxfordshire and North Berkshire within the twenty mile radius catchment area of the Harwell/Chilton campus transport system. It is true that there is much speculative housing development for those who can afford to pay the high prices (which it should be noted are considerably higher than those faced by Council staff moving to the Swindon area). These high prices will put such houses out of reach of most junior staff. This situation has not been improved by the influx of Europeans for the JET project who are now willing to pay astronomical prices for houses.

#### Rented Housing

The Staff Side believes that there would be a considerable need for rented housing, especially if appreciable numbers of non-mobile staff decided they were able to transfer. The SRC inherited about a hundred houses built by NIRNS for Rutherford Laboratory staff, but it is thought that there has been little addition to this stock since it came under SRC ownership and it is unlikely that many of these houses could be made available to staff from Ditton Park. In addition, a considerable number of houses owned by the UKAEA have been made available to SRC staff. There is little chance of this number being increased as the UKAEA now need more houses for staff of the European JET project at Culham. The situation is no better in the area of public housing, where the local authority have recently applied for an additional allocation in order to meet the demands of the JET programme.

#### Education

Staff Side do not feel there is any need to remind Council of the considerable problems caused by disturbing the education of children through compulsory moves between schools. These problems have been greatly increased by the financial constraints which reduce the ability of Local Education Authorities to provide additional school facilities in areas where an influx of population creates additional demands.



#### Problems of existing Non-Mobile Staff

In the event of a move, non-mobile staff would have a number of unattractive options. They could volunteer to go to Chilton, but in most cases this would be unattractive for a variety of reasons and in many cases impossible. The housing and educational problems have already been referred to. A second option would be to transfer to other public sector work in the Slough area, if acceptable work was available. This would only be possible if the SRC conducted a considerable amount of negotiation with other bodies to make arrangements for such transfers. The cost in transfer value, and compensatory payments would be considerable and could only be estimated when the number of staff involved was known. A third option would be to accept redundancy. Here again the cost could only be determined when numbers were known. The Working Party have attempted to estimate these costs, but with so many unknown factors, such estimates are likely to be unreliable. Council should not underestimate the extent to which redundant staff would be unable to obtain further employment.

#### Problems for Mobile Staff

In recent years there has been a large increase in the percentage of families in which both husband and wife have full-time jobs. Increasingly these jobs are of a career nature. Problems are bound to arise when one of two married people has a mobility obligation. There are many instances of this situation among staff of the Appleton Laboratory and in most cases a compulsory move of one of the two is bound to cause hardship and distress. It is likely that this would produce an effect completely opposite to the desirable sentiments of staff rapport and goodwill referred to in the Working Party Report.

#### 5 THE DESIREABILITY OF A MOVE

The Staff Side believe that it is important to keep in mind the reasons for which the Council (and its facilities) exist. The Working Party has



quoted a statement that the primary purpose of Council is "to sustain standards of education and research in Universities". There is no reference to the original source of this quotation, which owing to frequent repetition in recent years, seems to have acquired the authority of Holy Writ.

The Staff Side certainly agree that to sustain standards in the Universities is one very important function and the record leaves no doubt about the support given by the staff towards achieving this particular aim. However it is an inescapable fact that the SRC is a body whose functions have been decided by Parliament and are enshrined in Law which can only be changed by Parliament. This legal position is set out in the Science and Technology Act, 1965, Section 1 (2) which provides that:

"The Science Research Council shall be a body established wholly or mainly for ..... the carrying out of Scientific research, the facilitating, encouragement and support of scientific research by other bodies or persons or any description of bodies or persons and of instruction in the sciences and technologies, and the dissemination of knowledge in the sciences and technology." (1)

The Royal Charter of the SRC meets these legal requirements by setting out a number of objectives in somewhat more detail, but essentially in the order required by the Act.

On several previous occasions the Staff Side has expressed its concern to Council and to Chairman that the in-house research programme is the first to be reduced when financial or policy difficulties arise. Council will be aware of the assurances given at the Whitley Council in 1970 that

"Council wished its Establishments to have vigorous research programmes initiated and carried out by members of the staff; this was essential to the proper support and development of the national programmes of research undertaken jointly with University and other workers. It was therefore essential to the well being both of University research and the Establishments themselves. The Council would only be able to make the best use of its resources through a true partnership between SRC staff and research workers in Universities." (2)



In the light of these legal requirements and of the assurances quoted above the Staff Side believe that the Working Party have overstated the desirability of a move. The Appleton Laboratory has always initiated and carried out a variety of in-house work in the fields of radio propagation and ionospheric science; this has been entirely in accordance with the above assurances and there is no reason why it should not continue efficiently at Ditton Park. The extensive interaction with other communities and disciplines is referred to in that part of this submission containing comments from the Appleton Laboratory Staff.

The Staff Side are keenly aware of the long experience of Council Laboratories in collaborating with University Groups by providing large common-user facilities and a full range of back-up support. This approach was initiated and extensively developed in the days of NIRNS, before SRC was formed and in fact it has been a major contribution to British science in this century, which has now been applied to a wide field of scientific endeavour from the original area of High Energy Physics. This is no less true for the Appleton Laboratory, which since becoming part of the SRC has also increasingly adopted a similar pattern of operation.

## 6 CAREER PROBLEMS OF ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF

The Staff Side have become increasingly aware of a number of problems of the Administrative Group of staff and it was disappointing to find that virtually no consideration had been given to these by the Working Party. There is no doubt that a move to Chilton would greatly increase staffing and career problems in this area of work. Within the past year there have been extensive discussions between the senior management of the SRC and representatives of the Administrative Group; and a report on Career Development has been produced by a Joint Working Party. The joint report was a document designed to dispel a number of long felt suspicions and the mistrust that had built up over the years, and it was felt to be a positive contribution to the operation of the SRC administrative machine.

It is now believed that if the report of the Working Party is implemented, many of the existing administrative posts will be allowed to lapse. This would have a disastrous effect on career prospects and would in fact destroy the opportunity of obtaining for the SRC any of the benefits that were bound to result from the application of the understandings reached as a result of the work jointly carried out on Administrative Group career development. This would eliminate any hope of the looked-for new confidence and trust between that Group and the SRC management.

The effect of any loss of posts resulting from a move to Chilton would be felt throughout the SRC and especially at the Central Office where there is the largest concentration of administrative staff. One obvious example of this is in the important area of Contracts administration. A move to Chilton would bring the present Contracts work from Appleton Laboratory to Chilton where at present the UKAEA Harwell Contracts organisation carry out the work on an agency basis. Career problems are created by this arrangement so that it would be important to ensure that if a move took place the Contracts work at Chilton would in future be undertaken by those staff from Appleton Laboratory whose posts had disappeared. This would be a first step towards all Contracts work being carried out in-house.



## 7 ACCOMMODATION ON CHILTON SITE

There is no possibility of rehousing the Appleton staff and their work programme within the buildings presently available at Chilton. Already there is a need to provide a new experimental building for the Laser project and although some accommodation can be made available following the merger of the major computers into the former Atlas building there are a number of contenders for this space within the existing programme outlined in the FYFL for Rutherford. In any case this accommodation is totally inadequate to house all the Appleton work.

As the SNS project is going ahead as planned the pressure on existing accommodation will be as intense as ever and the specialist accommodation released from closing NIMROD will not be appropriate to projects from Appleton.

The work at Chilton has become more diversified and there is a need to interact with a much wider range of university visitors. In addition to those who already come, mainly for discussions in high energy physics, there will be an increasing number in the fields of lasers, computing, engineering and neutron beams. Inevitably this will result in more, rather than less, pressure on accommodation.

It is evident when walking around the Chilton site that there are still a considerable number of wooden huts in which staff are housed. During the last year in the local joint Whitley Committee, discussions have taken place which have highlighted the problems in these sub-standard buildings. The Staff Side locally have produced a paper listing these buildings in order of unsuitability and this paper has been discussed with the management of the Rutherford Laboratory in a most constructive way. Some improvements have been incorporated to make the buildings more comfortable but it is recognized by both sides that these measures are only temporary and that the real problems can only really be solved by new buildings.

It should therefore be clearly understood that the staff at the Rutherford Laboratory would oppose a merging of the work of the two laboratories at the

the Chilton site if this were to exacerbate the problem of 'temporary' accommodation. We believe that it is essential before proposing such a merger that the full cost of a substantial new building programme suitable to house all the work and staff involved be accurately assessed, together with the cost of acquiring additional land if needed.

#### Cost of Additional Office Space

There is a formal agreement in the SRC that office space allocations in the SRC will not be less than those agreed in the Civil Service. When this agreement is applied to the staff of the Appleton Laboratory, office space is needed according to the attached table.

<u>Grade</u>	<u>Number in post</u>	<u>Civil Service Allocation</u> (m <sup>2</sup> )	<u>Total (m<sup>2</sup>)</u>
CSO/DCSO/SPSO etc	14	18.6 to 23.2	260 to 325
PSO/PPTO/PRIN	26	13.9 to 18.6	362 to 484
SSO/SEO/PTO I	66	11.1 to 13.9	733 to 918
HSO/HEO/PTO II/ Stores	80	9.3 to 11.1	743 to 889
SO/EO/PTO II/ PPhot.	38	7.0 to 8.4	266 to 320
ASO/CO/PTO IV/ Phot.	30	5.1 to 6.0	153 to 180
P Sec/Typist/ Machine Op/CA/ Junior Non Ind.	18½	3.7 to 5.6	68 to 102
TOTALS	27½		2585 to 3218

In addition to the 27½ non industrial staff listed above, there are 55 others, mainly in industrial grades, who would clearly need a minimum of several hundred square metres of space.

#### Cost

Using the figures of Annex II of the Working Party Report (£322 per m<sup>2</sup>), the



cost for 3218 m<sup>2</sup> of accommodation becomes £1,04 m. This figure considerably exceeds that quoted for office space by the Working Party. It takes no account of the cost of all other types of space needed.

An alternative analysis (which covers laboratory and specialist space requirements as well as office requirements) which was produced by Appleton Laboratory staff is included in a latter part of this submission.

## 8 FUTURE ARRANGEMENTS FOR MANAGEMENT

The Working Party proposals for a number of Divisional Directors responsible to a Director General makes the assumption that the Appleton Laboratory will eventually move to Chilton. The Staff Side are opposed to this and would wish to see a Director appointed to the Appleton Laboratory upon the retirement of the present Director.

The Staff Side would welcome the appointment of an outstanding scientist as Director and looks forward to seeing an announcement from Council at the earliest opportunity.