

NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR RESEARCH IN NUCLEAR SCIENCE

GOVERNING BOARD

Minutes of the meeting held at No. 5, Old Palace Yard, Westminster,  
London on 9th December, 1963.

Present: Lord Bridges (Chairman)  
Sir Robert Aitken  
Professor J. M. Cassels  
Sir John Cockcroft  
Professor P. I. Dee  
Professor B. H. Flowers  
Sir Alan Hitchman  
Sir William Hodge  
Sir Harry Massey  
Sir Harry Melville  
Sir William Penney  
Sir John Wolfenden  
Professor A. W. Merrison  
Dr. T. G. Pickavance  
Dr. J. A. V. Willis (Secretary)

Apologies for absence were received from Dr. J. B. Adams,  
Professor F. W. R. Brambell, Professor C. F. Powell and Dr. E. M. Wright.

1. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The Board approved the Minutes of the meeting on 29th October, 1963.

2. THE TREND REPORT

The Chairman asked for a general discussion of the position of the Institute as it would be if the recommendations of the Trend Committee were implemented, and for any comments on the letter which he had written to the Minister for Science after consultation with the committee set up at the last meeting. (A copy of this letter was appended to paper NI/63/23). The following points were made in the discussion:

2.1 The Chairman was asked whether under the proposals made in his letter the present Institute would disappear, and the management of their laboratories be transferred to a Nuclear Physics Division of the S.R.C. In reply, he agreed that the proposed Nuclear Physics Division would need a rather different governing body from the present Institute.

2.2 Sir Robert Aitken suggested that it would be more logical to transfer the functions of the N.I.R.N.S. to the university system rather than to the S.R.C. He emphasised the close connection between the training of physicists and research both in university laboratories and in the Institute's laboratories. The principle whereby the basic cost of research in universities was borne by the U.G.C. while additional earmarked grants were made by the Research Councils, was well understood and accepted, and indeed was endorsed in the Trend Report (para. 53). But the proposal to include the Institute in the S.R.C. conflicted with this principle because nearly all the funds for nuclear physics research including much of the basic requirement would thus come through the S.R.C. channel. Sir Robert therefore suggested that the Institute, with their present functions and Royal Charter should move into the University system and be financed by the U.G.C. like a university, although not necessarily on a quinquennial basis.

Several comments were made on this suggestion:-

- (a) It would be difficult for a body financed in this way also to make the grants for special researches in nuclear physics, and to be responsible for the scientific aspects of the United Kingdom's relations with C.E.R.N.; responsibilities which many Members thought should be combined with the responsibility for the Institute's laboratories. The difficulty over grants was that the giving of earmarked grants was contrary to U.G.C. practice; the difficulty over C.E.R.N. was that it would bring the U.G.C. into international politics. Sir Robert said that his proposal had not been intended to include the giving of these new responsibilities to the Institute.
- (b) Sir Robert said that his proposal would be applicable also in any other field of research where facilities were required for common use for one reason or another; oceanography might be an example.
- (c) It was pointed out that the Institute like universities would often require funds for particular developments at short notice, and that the U.G.C. financing system was not intended to meet this situation. One suggestion was that the Institute, like other university institutions, would apply to the S.R.C. for grants in such cases.
- (d) Sir John Wolfenden said that he thought there would be difficulties in financing N.I.R.N.S. like a university institution through the U.G.C., because of the scale and specialised nature of the Institute. Because the Institute had essentially a single purpose, grants to them would be fully earmarked, and if it was impossible to give the grant asked for, the Institute would have less scope than a university to meet the situation by changes of programmes. Further, the U.G.C. would not be in a position to judge the Institute's financial demands.

2.3 It was suggested that under Sir Robert Aitken's plan it would be easy to ensure that the Institute's laboratories developed the right sort of collaboration with universities, but the method of financing would be unsuitable. On the other hand under the arrangements suggested in the Chairman's letter to the Minister the financing would be on a more appropriate basis but it was necessary to make sure that a proper relationship with the universities was maintained. The essential for this was that the Board should consist largely of university people and should have real power.

2.4 Everything would depend also upon the nature of the S.R.C. itself. It was to be a grant-aided Council, not part of the Civil Service, but it was important that the interchange of staff with universities, stressed by the Trend Committee, should be a reality, and that the university members of the S.R.C. and its Committees should be able to devote a substantial amount of time and effort to it. They could be expected to do this, for say 2-3 year spells, only if the organisation was such that their influence was really effective.

2.5 Sir William Penney said that the separation of the Institute from the Atomic Energy Vote, recommended by the Trend Committee, would be welcome to the A.E.A. for two reasons: the present arrangement was misleading to the public and it was illogical for the Authority's Chairman and Member for Finance to have to answer for the Institute before the Public Accounts Committee.

The Chairman expressed the Institute's thanks to the Authority for handling their finances hitherto. He said that he had always appreciated that the present arrangement could not last indefinitely. But it

seemed unlikely that the Trend Committee's recommendations would be implemented soon enough for the Institute's finances to be put on a new permanent basis by the beginning of the next financial year. He wished to avoid having to be financed by some other body for a year as a stop gap arrangement and he would be very glad if it were possible for the A.E.A. to continue for one further year. Sir William Penney said that he would consult the Authority, but he did not know what the outcome would be.

2.6 Many questions about the organisation of the proposed Nuclear Physics Division remained to be considered: it would be very helpful to have a scheme worked out in good time for discussions with the Minister's Office. In particular the proposed mechanisms for awarding grants and for dealing with C.E.R.N. and the proposed relationship between the Division and the S.R.C. needed to be worked out. Complicated problems were involved and most of them would occur in each Division of the S.R.C.

2.7 The U.G.C. were to have a discussion on the Trend Report in ten days time. It was agreed to make available to them a copy of the Chairman's letter to the Minister, together with a note of the points made in this discussion.

2.8 Summing up the discussion, the Chairman said that he was grateful to Sir Robert Aitken whose suggestion, and the ensuing discussion, had shown that the importance of closeness to the universities had perhaps been insufficiently emphasised. But the general view seemed to be that the disadvantages of financing the Institute through the U.G.C. would outweigh the advantages. He was grateful to the Authority for dealing with the Institute's finances on the Atomic Energy Vote, and he hoped that this could be continued for a further year. He also agreed that plans for the proposed Nuclear Physics Division of the S.R.C. should now be made in more detail. Finally, a copy of his letter to the Minister, and notes of the present meeting were to be sent to the U.G.C.

The Board invited the committee set up at the last meeting to continue their work.

3. MEMORANDUM BY THE WHITLEY COUNCIL STAFF SIDE ON THE TREND REPORT - NI/63/26

The Chairman said that the Staff Side's document contained many good points; but it was noted that in their paragraph 12 they proposed that the co-ordination of support to N.I.R.N.S., C.E.R.N. and university nuclear physics grants should be carried out by an advisory panel rather than an executive body. This was contrary to the Board's view.

It was agreed that the Staff Side's report should be taken into account in preparing further recommendations.

4. PROGRESS AT THE RUTHERFORD LABORATORY - NI/63/24

There was some discussion of the need to economise by restricting the operating hours of Nimrod, which was mentioned in Dr. Pickavance's report. Dr. Pickavance said that the experimental programme was restricted by limited funds, but the restricted operating hours did not at present impose an additional limitation on experiments. The Board expressed the wish to discuss the matter again if such additional limitations should seem likely to occur.

5. PROGRESS AT THE DARESBURY LABORATORY - NI/63/25

On behalf of the Board, the Chairman congratulated Professor

Merrison and his staff on reaching the start of construction of the Daresbury Laboratory, after overcoming many difficulties.

Professor Merrison said that the contract for the NINA magnet blocks would be placed abroad. The lowest tender from a British firm was 1.7 times that of a fully satisfactory tender from a foreign firm. Further, it seemed certain that the contract for the magnet coils would go abroad for lack of a technically acceptable British tender. The Board asked Professor Merrison to write to the Board of Trade about this unsatisfactory situation, and after consulting the Board of Trade and the Authority to consider issuing a press notice about the magnet block contract, giving the reason why it was placed abroad.

6. ANNUAL REPORT

The Chairman said that a draft of the sixth annual report had been prepared, on the lines discussed at the meeting on 28th March, 1963 (Minute 9). Copies would be circulated to the Board shortly for comment.

J. A. V. Willis,  
Secretary.

Rutherford High Energy Laboratory,  
Chilton, Didcot, Berks.