

SCIENCE RESEARCH COUNCIL

Forward Look 1966-70

Note by the Chairman

As has become usual in the civil science field, the Council will have to submit to D.E.S. a forecast of expenditure for the next five years. The Forward Look is the main financial instrument for the determination of policy and, once the forecasts are agreed by D.E.S. and the Treasury, they are regarded as firm for the first year (thus setting the framework of Estimates) and as carrying a decreasingly firm commitment for succeeding years.

The forecasts are required by May at the latest since this year the Forward Look figures submitted by all Departments will provide the basis for the Government's major re-assessment of expenditure and the planning of development in all fields. Departments have been asked to submit forecasts in two parts:

- (a) the cost of existing commitments; and
- (b) the cost of new proposals for expenditure.

Since the two bases would not in the Research Council field isolate a manageable number of clear policy decisions for Ministers to take in the context of the whole of public expenditure, D.E.S. have asked that the Research Council should also indicate what would be their programme if allocations increased:

- (a) at 4% a year (growth hoped for in national income and estimated for Government expenditure);
- (b) 10% a year which compares with the fastest growing public programmes outside science; and
- (c) 16% a year which corresponds, on dubious assumptions about price increases, to the rate of growth of civil science expenditure over the last five years. This rate may be reduced when full calculations have been completed although it is about the rate of growth envisaged by the last A.C.S.P. report.

The Establishments and the London divisions have been asked to prepare forecasts on the basis of para 2. I propose that we should interpret "existing commitments" in the Establishments as the proper use of facilities



now in use or under construction with due allowance for maintenance and replacement and the execution of approved programmes. In considering minor and group research grants and training awards existing commitments should be related to the growth of University staff and student numbers.

I have been invited to discuss our future programme with the Council on Scientific Policy on 30th April so that they can advise the D.E.S. on the whole Forward Look to be submitted for civil science. To meet this time-table, forecasts of expenditure over the next five years will be submitted to the first formal meeting of the Council. If the pattern of the Forward Look submission to D.E.S. cannot be settled at that meeting, the Council may wish to hold a special meeting for the purpose late in April.

I regret having to rush this most important job - we cannot hope to complete a proper examination of the many policy issues likely to arise from the forecasts in the time available. We should, however, be able to give a broad assessment of the consequences of the different rates of growth of our funds. This will, I think, be essential if our views are to be taken into account in the Ministerial review.