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22 March 1983

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MR HATFIELD

cc: Mr Flesher ✓  
Mr Stubbs  
Mr Goodman  
Dr Goldstone  
Mr Stone

VERSAILLES WORKING GROUP ON TECHNOLOGY, GROWTH AND EMPLOYMENT

As requested in Mr Fletcher's note to you of 28 February, I attach a draft Arranged Question and Answer to cover the publication of this Report as a Command Paper presented to Parliament by the Prime Minister.

The proposed answer draws from:

- (a) the wording of the Versailles Declaration;
- (b) the Prime Minister's statement on her responsibilities for science;
- (c) the summary of the Report as printed in the Command Paper;
- (d) the Prime Minister's comments on the Report as per her letter to President Mitterrand.

The general idea I have followed is to try and indicate interest on the Prime Minister's part but without commitment. I realise I may have got some of the phraseology wrong in the part which deals with putting the Report before Parliament - no doubt you can correct this.

Finally we understand from the French that the meeting of Sherpas agreed that the Report would be released at 12.00 GMT on Friday, 25 March. Thus the PQ should be scheduled for Friday.

MBN

ROBIN B NICHOLSON

- Q. To ask the Prime Minister what has been the outcome of the Working Group on Technology set up after the Economic Summit held last year in Versailles.
- A. The Declaration of the Heads of State and Government and the Representatives of the European Communities at the Economic Summit held at Versailles in June 1982, referred to our decision to set up a working group of representatives of our governments to report to us on the opportunities and challenges presented by modern developments in science and technology.

The Working Group consisted of officials of our governments and the European Commission. It met for the first time on 20 August 1982 and completed its report, entitled "Technology, Growth and Employment" on 26 January 1983.

My interest in this report stems not only from its origin at the Economic Summit but also from my responsibility to the House for broad scientific and technological issues involving several Departments. I have decided to present the report to the House today as Command

This report considers the part played by technology in stimulating economic growth and employment. It mentions the history of technology in influencing social and industrial life, and identifies areas where significant benefits have arisen.

The report recognises that in spite of these benefits the application of technology may sometimes be resisted by the public. It considers this issue, and suggests further studies to improve understanding and thus derive the greatest advantage for society.

The report discusses the role of Governments and of the private and public sectors of industry in stimulating technological developments and economic growth. It points out that technology

is becoming increasingly pervasive in the world economy and in society and that there is a need for Governments to be aware of the influence of science and technology on their policies in both a national and international environment.

The report concludes that there is increasing scope for countries to collaborate in scientific and technological programmes, with mutual benefit to those taking part. It proposes a number of co-operative projects in various fields.

I believe that the report is a valuable commentary on the important role of science and technology in the major economic and social issues which we face in the world today. It contains a number of interesting ideas and proposals which we shall want to examine more closely both nationally and in the appropriate<sup>international</sup> fora. I am looking forward to discussing the report at the next Economic Summit in Williamsburg, USA, in May this year.

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