

PA/SUKO

Secret + Personal

14/7/53
Morgan from Rendle

I am sorry it has taken me so long to reply to your letter x/560/3309 of 5th May, but the situation here was even more complicated than you had any reason to suspect, and I felt that ^{as far as possible} having become involved, I might as well try to get the whole matter cleared up, and avoid the need for further correspondence, further uncertain delays. Your letter was very welcome as it gave me a good opportunity to intervene in a situation which was worrying me considerably, but which was rather difficult to tackle unaided; with it, I was able to go direct to Brown, and speak frankly about not only his problem, but [REDACTED] activities in general.

2. On the subject of the particular project in question, you will have gathered from my signal 060700Z/7, that ~~Defence~~ the first hurdle lies with Defence. (Clearly, [REDACTED] gave you no indication of this, and undoubtedly DSB should have ^{clarified} ~~made~~ the situation earlier, but we have been in a state of considerable confusion owing to uncertainty about our financial future.) Briefly the position is this: the Dept. of Supply has undertaken certain functions on behalf of DSB, one of which was to advise, from the scientific and engineering standpoint, on questions relating to the types of equipment operated by your Dept. ~~Their main purpose was to~~ give Supply proposed, as a first step, to send a number of officers to you to gain general experience, and to report back on ^{the} problems of ~~installing~~ constructing, installing and maintaining such equipment, so that DSB would know where it stood, if and when it decided to place an order. You have ~~clearly~~ obviously been led to believe that there is no question of the order materialising.

3. Unfortunately, that is far from being the case. There is no doubt in the minds of the senior people at DSB that this equipment would be vital in time of war. The decision however does not rest with DSB. The Director has to ~~prepare~~ make a case ~~forward~~ in detail to obtain approval of the Minister for Defence for his project; and approval, in prevailing circumstances, would certainly not be given if the case rested solely on ~~hypothetical~~ ~~the~~ ~~hypothetical~~ hypothesis of war-time benefits. In addition we need to be able to say (a) how it will affect DSB's current tasks (b) what will be its implications in terms of staffing. (e.g. will it replace any of DSB's present ~~man~~ man-metres, or will it,

by providing us with a new field of endeavor, simply lead to a demand by NH for more staff?)

(c) What will it cost?

(d) How much room will it take up? (The significance of this may escape you - but we have very little space to spare even since our recent establishment, and any expenditure on e.g. strengthening the floors of our somewhat fragile ^{as it stands} accommodation has to be very carefully considered.

(e) Possible date of delivery.

4. The answers ^{to} ~~to these~~ questions ~~will be sought~~ ^{either} ~~from you~~ by Supply ~~or from us~~ (a) and (b) must be provided by H, and Ricketts is, as you know, already in correspondence with Hugh Alexander on the subject. The answers to (c) and (d) are expected from Supply. The sum involved is quite considerable in proportion to DSB's annual budget and the tendency, also, is to 'cut us down rather than to allow us any room for expansion. The case has, therefore, got to be sound at all points, and will probably take some time to prepare. ~~In this connection, it would~~ ~~be~~ ~~most~~ ~~desirable~~ ~~if~~ ~~someone~~ ~~fully~~ ~~qualified~~ ~~to~~ ~~discuss~~ ~~our~~ ~~needs~~ (I would hope that someone fully qualified to advise us will be among those attending the September conference.)

5. If, ^{after} ~~when~~ the case for the project is assembled and approved ~~by~~ ^{by} Defence ~~and~~ ^{will then place an order (taking} ~~Supply's technical advice into account)~~ ^{Supply} ~~to~~ ~~proceed~~ ~~with~~ ~~construction~~. ~~What~~ ~~he~~ ~~has~~ ~~heard~~ ~~from~~ ~~me~~. Brown is not at present prepared to commit himself finally ~~and~~ ^{as to} where the machine should be constructed, but left me in no doubt that he would have to have a much more convincing story from [REDACTED] if he were to be persuaded that the work should be done in Australia.

6. On the specific point of Watson, Brown is naturally rather reluctant to agree ~~at~~ ^{at this} stage to Watson remaining ~~in~~ ⁱⁿ the year. If we are in fact not going ahead with the project, he feels it might be better to withdraw him and send him back at some later date. However, after my assurance that DSB could speak with much more assurance ~~and~~ ^{and} about September, he was quite prepared to let Watson stay for a further six months, subject

the position
to review at the end of that period

Incidentally, Brown has the impression that Robinson and Watson are the only staff employed on the project, and that you have none of your own? Is this really so? I would be grateful to know what the situation really is, as CCHQ might be suspected of wanting to retain Supply personnel purely for your own base advantage!

7. As regards the mathematician, Supply are now in the process of recruiting a man whom we have not seen, but whose paper qualifications seem all right. If the green light is given to the project, this man (Jelley) would be made available to DSB, and attached to you as proposed. However, until the decision is made, I feel it would be unwise, on security grounds alone, for the man to be set to you.

8. Now, a word about [redacted] himself. He is of course a highly irresponsible character, whose inability to listen is only matched by his capacity to improvise as he goes along. No one at DSB is really qualified to make a sound assessment of his technical ability (though most of us have had some fairly strong opinions of the subject!), and ~~consequently~~ it was therefore felt that he should settle down at Salisbury with his section, and be judged by Supply in the company of other experts before we made any further move. Brown has now had time to form his own opinion, and is a very worried man. He is also a very determined man, and the one of two things is likely to happen; either [redacted] will go altogether, or he will be replaced as Head of Telecommunications Division by a more stable character. Until his situation is cleared up, Oxford is ~~in fact~~ ~~virtually~~ ~~as~~ ~~the~~ ~~head~~ ~~of~~ is going to control these activities of T Division very closely indeed.

I would be grateful if his information ~~was~~ ~~was~~ could for the time being be given limited circulation within CCHQ, as it is still not public knowledge here. I do, however, feel that you and other Heads of Dept concerned should know ~~that~~ the way the wind is blowing, since I can imagine you have watched developments at Salisbury with more than a little misgiving.

For a start they were all, very naturally, at sea; [redacted] eccentricities were not designed to improve things quickly, but nevertheless they have taken a keen interest in their responsibilities towards DSB, are continually seeking advice, and now know where they are heading.

While on this subject, I think you might like to know that I personally have formed a very high regard for Brown, as the controller of 'T' Division activities, and for all the personnel within the Division (apart from the present Head!). Oxford has so far not come into the picture very much, but we shall be seeing a lot more of him in the near future. My opinion is that, and that [redacted] is for the first time under control, the Division will form a very useful, if small, adjunct to our Organisation. I should be sorry if the unfortunate impression which [redacted] has undoubtedly given led to any prejudice at home against the activities of the Department of Supply as a whole.

10. In view of the complexity of the situation, I am sending a copy of his letter to Hugh, and I would be very grateful if you could discuss it with him, possibly with a view to giving me some pointers for inclusion in our 'Case to the Minister'.

Copy to: Director
C H O'D Alexander Esq.