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THE PRIME MINISTER

3 May 1989

Dear Mr. Weaver.

Thank you for your letter of 16 March floating the interesting idea of a "World Centre of Competence on Ozone" at Cambridge. It was further heartening evidence that the message of the London Conference on 'Saving the Ozone Layer' is being well received by industry as well as governments.

There is certainly much more research to be done particularly through wider international co-operation. Indeed, at the Government's suggestion, a Co-ordination Unit for Stratospheric Ozone Research has been set up in Cambridge from the beginning of April this year to help develop and co-ordinate a programme of stratospheric ozone research within the EC and EFTA countries. Already, considerable progress has been made in understanding stratospheric chemistry and this will continue to underpin the further steps to be taken internationally through the Montreal Protocol to the Vienna Convention on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer.

The message of the London Conference is especially addressed to the first meeting of Protocol Parties in Helsinki next month. I hope further progress can be agreed at the second meeting next April when the Parties meet in London.

pm

Powerful computing facilities are, however, already available to some of those carrying out research work on stratospheric ozone and it is not clear that we need a computing initiative of the magnitude you suggest to further ozone research alone. In particular, we must at the same time consider the question of climate change, which is related to the ozone layer issue, but presents us with an even more difficult and wide-ranging problem. The increasing levels of carbon dioxide and other trace gases, including chlorofluorocarbons, are currently estimated to lead to a global warming of between 1.5°C and 4.5°C over the next 50 to 100 years. Our first priority must be to reduce the uncertainty in these estimates. For that we need improvements to be made to climate models to enable them to include in more detail the many complex physical processes that occur in the atmosphere and oceans.

The Government is therefore currently reviewing its efforts on climate change research including the need for enhanced computing capacity. If any such enhancement is required, IBM would of course have the opportunity of tendering.

In the meantime, I have passed your imaginative proposal to the Secretary of State for Environment for further consideration and Officials from his Department will be in touch to arrange to discuss your ideas further.

Yours sincerely

Raghu Shanley

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