

May 2, 1966
Letter, H. G. Higgins to Vickram Sarabhai,
'Australian Pugwash Committee'

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Summary:

H. G. Higgins, Chairman of the Australian Pugwash Committee, writes to Professor Sarabhai concerning an upcoming conference on "Scientific, Technical and Industrial Development in South-East Asia."

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Contents:

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AUSTRALIAN PUGWASH COMMITTEE

c/- Division of Forest Products,
C.S.I.R.O.,
P.O. Box 310,
SOUTH MELBOURNE. S.C.5,
Victoria,
Australia.
2nd May, 1966.

Professor Vickram Sarabhai,
Physical Research Laboratory,
Navrangpura,
AHMEDABAD 9. INDIA.

Dear Professor Sarabhai,

The Australian Pugwash Committee has made tentative plans to hold a South East Asia Regional Pugwash Conference in Melbourne next January. I have been in touch with Professor Rotblat about this matter and he has suggested that we go ahead with our plans, but has asked us to consult you before making a final decision. The Continuing Committee, as you are no doubt aware, discussed our proposal at its meeting last August, and agreed that the idea should be encouraged. Since that time some progress has been made, and the current proposals are as follows:--

1. The Conference would be held in Melbourne from 23rd-27th January, 1967. This is the week immediately following the A.N.Z.A.A.S. (Australian and New Zealand Association for the Advancement of Science) Congress, which is also to be held in Melbourne. A.N.Z.A.A.S. is an organization rather similar to the British Association, and we are hopeful that it may make it easier for participants to get to Pugwash if they can also attend a Congress of this nature. Specialized sessions in all branches of science will be held at the A.N.Z.A.A.S. Congress.

2. The theme of the Regional Pugwash Conference would be "Scientific Technical and Industrial Development in South-East Asia".

3. Invitations would be sent to distinguished scientists in as many of the following countries as possible:-- India, Pakistan, Ceylon, Burma, Thailand, China, Japan, Phillipines, Hawaii (U.S.), New Zealand, Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia. It is realized that some of these countries will probably not be able to send participants, but we would consider the Conference to be worthwhile if only half a dozen countries were involved.

4. We would undertake to meet the expenses of all participants while in Melbourne, or in a number of other cities, but the cost of fares to and from Melbourne, and of inter-city travel in Australia, would have to be their responsibility.

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5. All members of the Continuing Committee would be most welcome to attend the Conference.

6. Invitations would be issued directly by us, with the blessing of the Continuing Committee.

7. The number of Australian scientists and scholars attending as participants should not exceed the total number of Asian visitors. Arrangements could perhaps be made for a limited number of observers to attend also, if the number of overseas participants is small.

8. An allotment of places has been made on the basis of populations, with a maximum of three (India and China).

9. An open meeting with some of the participants as speakers would be arranged during the course of the Conference. It is hoped also to arrange for participants to meet leading Australian colleagues in their particular fields of study or research.

A number of leading Australian Scientists have been approached as sponsors for the Conference. The following have accepted:--

Dr. Walter Boas, F.A.A.
Sir Macfarlane Burnet, O.M., F.R.S., F.A.A., Nobel Laureate.
Sir John Crawford
Professor B. Y. Mills, F.R.S., F.A.A.
Sir Mark Oliphant, F.R.S., F.A.A.
Professor W. P. Rogers, F.A.A.

and we are awaiting replies from:--

Professor K. N. Robertson, F.R.S., F.A.A.
and Sir Otto Frankel, F.R.S., F.A.A.
and Dr. M. Lemberg, F.R.S., F.A.A.,
who are overseas.

I should appreciate very much having your views on our proposals. As time is getting rather short an early reply would be particularly welcome.

Yours sincerely,



(Dr.) H. G. Higgins.
Chairman.

My dear Smt. Indiraji,

Shri L.K. Jha has forwarded to me the letter dated June 21, 1966, from Shri C. Subramaniam to you, with your noting. I give below my ~~own~~ immediate comments for your kind consideration.

2. Shri Subramaniam's letter arising from the letter from Dr. George Sudarshan, which is enclosed with it raises three important questions;

- (a) The problem of the brain-drain
- (b) The problem of the Institute of Mathematical Sciences, Madras, with regard to its growth and viability, and
- (c) A proposal to establish in India at a suitable centre an International Centre for Theoretical Physics broadly analogous to the International Centre for Theoretical Physics which has been established at Trieste.

3. The problem of the brain-drain is certainly the most crucial of the three. It is shared by a large number of countries including those in Western Europe and South America. It covers not only theoretical physics, but almost all areas of science and technology. The Scientists' Pool of the CSIR is an attempt in the right direction, but by itself does not make a significant impact. It would seem to me that the problem requires to be thought through within Government, by institutions and by our scientists themselves. It calls for change of policy, administrative practices and, what is most difficult, attitudes. Many like me wear several hats and can actively get together and come up with specific proposals. I am personally deeply concerned and eager to tackle this problem. I was hoping to present to you a summary of my thinking, but am not quite ready today. I wish, however, to emphasise that the appropriate body within Government which must tackle this problem with dynamism and originality is the Scientific Advisory Committee to the Cabinet. After the death of Dr. Bhabha, SACC has mainly performed routine functions, even though Shri Dharma Vira has very ably provided continuity and every possible type of support to scientists with great

necessitate the appointment of a new Chairman for SACC. This is therefore the right time for the Prime Minister to consider this question as a first step. On my part I hope to present to SACC a detailed note on the problem of brain-drain after consultation with my colleagues.

4. Viability and continued growth of the Institute of Mathematical Sciences is important. I enclose in Annexure I a short resume of the support which the Institute has received from the Department of Atomic Energy. During the ^{last} year serious consideration was given by the late Dr. Bhabha to provide institutionalised support following the broad pattern which governs the support by DAE to autonomous scientific institutions like the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, Saha Institute of Nuclear Physics and the Physical Research Laboratory. This thinking was not brought to any conclusion up to the time of Dr. Bhabha's death. I hope now to review this question actively with Dr. Alladi, keeping in mind the most important consideration that Government's role vis-a-vis such institutions can only be supportive and not controlling in any manner. If you are meeting Dr. Alladi in Madras on the 3rd, I shall be grateful if you could kindly reiterate our thinking to have serious discussions in the near future.

5. The proposal for locating an International Centre for Theoretical Physics in India should, I believe, be considered by the Indian National Committee for Physics, which should be requested to give urgent thought to the proposal taking into account the opinion of active theoretical physicists in the country even though they might not be members of the National Committee. During the past few years a number of scientific meetings and summer schools are being organised annually in this country covering different aspects of theoretical physics. The main support has been provided by the University Grants Commission, the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research and the Department of Atomic Energy. Often eminent scientists of international repute from abroad are invited and provide an opportunity for effective interactions.

However, much more requires to be done. Since DAE along with the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, Saha Institute of Nuclear Physics, and the Physical Research Laboratory and the Institute of Mathematical Sciences has important commitment in theoretical physics, I would like to consult the scientists in these institutions, and make a separate proposal on how we view the proposal of the suggested International Centre.

6. I apologise for the length of this letter, but truly the issues raised by Shri C. Subramaniam and Dr. Sudarshan are vital and do not lend themselves to simple off-the-cuff solutions. I hope that during your visit to Bombay on the 29th, I shall have the opportunity of answering any queries or receiving any comments which you may have on the views I have expressed here.

With kin best regards,

Yours sincerely,

(Vikram A. Sarabhai)

Smt. Indira Gandhi,
Prime Minister,
NEW DELHI.