

April 21, 1954

Letter from Roger Makins to Lewis L. Strauss

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Summary:

Roger Makins of the British Foreign Office writes to Lewis Strauss of the American Atomic Energy Commission regarding a change in policy to allow Britain to share nuclear information with members of the British Commonwealth.

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Text of letter from Sir R. Makins to Mr. Lewis L. Strauss, dated April 21, 1954.

You asked me at the meeting with you on April 12, at which the Canadian Ambassador was also present, to confirm in writing the gist of my remarks on the subject of Article 7 of the modus vivendi of January 7, 1948. This article is as follows:-

"In the interest of mutual security, classified information in the field of atomic energy will not be disclosed to other governments or authorities or persons in other countries without due prior consultation."

2. Her Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom have scrupulously observed this condition. They consider, however, that circumstances have changed since this provision was drawn up. In January 1948 there was virtually no information which was not of joint Anglo/American/Canadian origin. In the intervening years the United Kingdom has, as a result of its own research and development, obtained a large amount of information in areas which have not been the subject of any exchanges of information with the United States.

3. Accordingly, Her Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom, who have been approached in this matter by certain members of the British Commonwealth, regard it as reasonable that they should under proper security safeguards, be free to pass on to such members information developed exclusively in the United Kingdom. It is indeed doubtful whether such information should be regarded as falling within the scope of Article 7 of the modus vivendi. Information identified as being of Anglo/American origin would, of course, continue to be covered by the Article.

4. You will observe that Her Majesty's Government are not proposing the amendment of the modus vivendi nor any extension of the areas within which, under its provisions, information can already be passed to members of the British Commonwealth. This letter deals only with information of British origin in areas which have not been the subject of exchange and technical co-operation between the United Kingdom, Canada and the United States.

5. I should be grateful if you on your side could confirm your agreement that the attitude adopted by the United Kingdom in this matter is reasonable.

6. I am sending a copy of this letter to Mr. Arnold Heeney.

Foreign Office
April 26, 1954