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9th July, 1979

RF/EP

Dr R.K. Harris,
School of Chemical Sciences,
University of East Anglia,
Norwich,
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Dear Robin,

I am writing to you in your capacity as chairman of the N.M.R. Discussion Group about the question of scheduling of International NMR meetings. As you know, there have been several discussions about this problem over the years and more recently at the 4th European Experimental NMR Conference in Autrans/Grenoble.

The two main protagonists are now the NMRDG and the E.E.N.C., with a temporary perturbation next year from the International Society of Magnetic Resonance (ISMAR) combined with AMPERE. Our view is that future meetings of ISMAR will be unlikely to clash with European NMR meetings, and that AMPERE is so much more physical in concept that it does not represent a particular competitive challenge.

However, judged by the York and Autrans meetings, the NMRDG and the E.E.N.C. have evolved into major international meetings attracting several hundred participants and demanding a certain continuity for future meetings. Although in principle the NMRDG program is more concerned with chemical applications, and the E.E.N.C. with techniques, the participants hardly make this distinction, and many of the speakers take a similar broad view of the scope of the meeting. A certain symmetry has therefore arisen, the main difference now seems to be that the NMRDG meets in Britain while the E.E.N.C. will probably stay on the Continent (having had one meeting in England already).

As outgoing chairman of the E.E.N.C. committee, I try here to represent the committee's viewpoint. We feel that both conferences are now large, international and financially viable, and that many NMR spectroscopists would want to attend one or the other each year, were the meetings to be scheduled on alternate summers. We also feel that the present 3-year cycle of the NMRDG makes it extremely difficult for the E.E.N.C. to schedule meetings

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that do not clash, because of our shorter cycle (18 months or two years). The 18-month cycle involves Easter-time and November meetings, which are difficult for University people. The two-year cycle inevitably clashes with the three-year cycle of the NMRDG.

We would therefore like to ask the NMRDG committee to consider the possibility of meeting every two years in future rather than every three. The interest is already there among potential participants; indeed both conferences will soon have to set limits on attendance whatever happens about the scheduling. The E.E.N.C. would then settle into a similar two-year cycle on the alternate summers. This need not reduce the lead-time for planning the meetings, since no change need be made until the summer of 1983.

It is in fact the longer term planning of the NMRDG (backed by the Chemical Society organizational facilities) which makes it look to some continental Europeans that the British scientists are "dictating" the schedule of the European E.N.C. I think such misunderstandings should be resolved as quickly as possible, and unfortunately the only simple solution seems to be this change which we are urging on the NMRDG.

The E.E.N.C. committee have decided to plan for the 5th conference to be held in the early spring of 1981 (a makeshift solution to the potential clash in the summer) and for the 6th conference to be held in the summer of 1982. We would hope to be able to start a new two-year alternating cycle after that.

I can confirm that I can attend your meeting at 11am on August 7th in Burlington House, but I thought you might like to circulate this letter beforehand.

Kindest regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Ray".

Ray Freeman