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o/r

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Principal Private Secretary

22 December, 1983

Dear Brian,

During the Prime Minister's talk with the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary this evening, they referred to Mr. Robin McLaren.

The Prime Minister said that she was disturbed about the number of sources from which there had been adverse reports on Mr. McLaren. She felt that the number of reports made it incumbent on the Government to make thorough inquiries.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary said that he had himself seen Mr. Murray-Jones and had sought the view of Sir Edward Youde who had no reason to doubt Mr. McLaren's loyalty. Sir Edward Youde had not felt able to seek an assessment from Mr. Colvin because of the latter's association with an American bank. But it was relevant that Lord MacLehose had specifically asked for Mr. McLaren to go to Hong Kong and had had a high opinion of him.

If it was agreed that, if further inquiries were to be made into the allegations in Lord Cromer's letter of 15 December, it would be necessary to seek Lord Cromer's permission for an approach to his son; and I was asked to seek Lord Cromer's consent for this. The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary said that he would find out more from Sir Edward Youde about why the latter felt unable to approach Mr. Colvin. The Prime Minister said that she assumed that a thorough check had been made about the security papers on Mr. McLaren's background to ensure that nothing adverse was shown; and the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary said that he would confirm this.

Yours ever, Robin Butler

P.S. There have been two developments since I dictated this letter. First, you have told me that the check referred to in the last sentence has been carried out. Second, I have spoken to Lord Cromer who confirmed that there was no objection to his son being approached, indeed that his son was expecting it. I will leave it to you to set action in hand on this.

B. Fall, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

FERS.