

APPOINTMENTS IN CONFIDENCE

NOTE FOR THE RECORD

PARLIAMENTARY PRIVATE SECRETARY TO THE SECRETARY OF
STATE FOR SCOTLAND

At the end of a meeting on 26 January between the Prime Minister, the Secretary of State for Scotland and the Lord Advocate to discuss the succession to Mr Nicholas Fairbairn MP as Solicitor General for Scotland, Mr Younger raised the question of who should take the place of Mr Peter Fraser MP as his Parliamentary Private Secretary when he became the Solicitor General. He had in mind Mr Alex Pollock MP.

In discussion it was suggested that Mr John Mackay MP might be a better choice. He was an excellent backbencher and deserved promotion. On the other hand, it was pointed out that if he became a PPS, his freedom to speak from the back benches would be a good deal more limited than it was now and this would be a loss to the Government side generally. It was, however, concluded that subject to the views of the Chief Whip, Mr Younger should offer Mr Mackay the post of his PPS.

Yesterday Mr Younger's office approached us to seek the Prime Minister's approval to the appointment of Mr Pollock as PPS. The Prime Minister subsequently invited Mr Younger to her room in the House so that he could tell her how his choice had come to revert to Mr Pollock. The Secretary of State explained that although the Chief Whip had said that he would be equally content with either Mr Pollock or Mr Mackay as Mr Younger's PPS, there remained the earlier concern about losing Mr Mackay's voice from the back benches. Moreover, Mr Younger had the impression that Mr Pollock was not particularly busy and might welcome the responsibilities of a PPS.

The Prime Minister said that there would remain a number of subjects on which Mr Mackay could speak as a PPS. He would not need to be totally mute in the House. She was also concerned that if Mr Fraser, a lawyer, was succeeded by Mr Pollock, another lawyer, the impression might begin to gain ground with other

Scottish backbenchers that Government office in Scotland was the preserve of lawyers, and this would be unfortunate.

In conclusion the Prime Minister and Mr Younger agreed that he should offer the post of his PPS to Mr Mackay in the first instance. If Mr Mackay declined, then he should offer the job to Mr Pollock. There were one or two formalities to be cleared up by us in No 10 first before Mr Younger could approach Mr Mackay, and he should do nothing until he had the go ahead from here.

I told Mr Younger's Private Secretary this morning that the way was clear for him to speak to Mr Mackay.

AW.

29 January 1982

Parliament
FILE SW



cc: Mr. D. Wright.
Sir Robert Armstrong's
Office.
Mr. Gow.

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

3 February, 1982

I am writing to record that your Secretary of State has consulted the Prime Minister about the succession to Mr. Peter Fraser as his Parliamentary Private Secretary.

The Prime Minister agreed that Mr. Younger should approach Mr. John Mackay, and you confirmed to me today that Mr. Mackay had accepted the post. You will be in touch with us again when you have settled the timing of the announcement.

I am sending copies of this letter to Murdo Maclean (Chief Whip's Office) and to Bernard Ingham here.

M. A. PATTISON

A. Muir Russell, Esq.,
Scottish Office