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*CF to note*

10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

11 December 1979

*Mr. A. Henderson*

Thank you for your letter of 24 November. I am afraid that it contains a number of inaccuracies.

First, it is not correct to say that Professor Blunt was offered immunity from prosecution by officials without Ministerial authority. As the Attorney General and I explained in our speeches in the House on 21 November, the then Attorney General authorised the immunity, and the then Home Secretary was kept aware of developments in the case.

Second, it is not true that officials took steps to place Professor Blunt in Buckingham Palace. He had been Surveyor of The Queen's (originally The King's) Pictures since 1945. The question in 1964 could only be whether he should be removed. The view was taken that to remove him would put at risk the purposes which the offer of immunity was intended to achieve - above all, his co-operation in the continuing inquiries of the security authorities. If that was a reasonable view to take in 1964 - and I am not disposed to find fault with it - clearly it held good for as long as the inquiries to which his co-operation could be expected to make a contribution.

/ Third,

*JS*

Third, Professor Blunt did not forfeit his knighthood on my recommendation. Awards in the Royal Victorian Order are in The Queen's personal gift, and are neither conferred nor forfeited on the Prime Minister's recommendation.

I have given the House a full account of the facts of the case in my answer to your Question on 15 November and in my speech on 21 November. I cannot answer for reasons and motives for what was decided and done in Administrations for which I am not answerable.

I share the view expressed by the Leader of the Opposition in our debate that an inquiry into the Blunt affair, so long after the event, would be unlikely to serve a useful purpose. What we should be concerned with is the future. I am satisfied that the arrangements that govern relations between the Security Service and Ministers, as I described them to the House, are as they should be. I am not persuaded, therefore, that there is a sufficient case for setting up an inquiry.

*Yours sincerely*  
*Roger Dainton*

Ted. Leadbitter, Esq., M.P.

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