

IN CONFIDENCE

MR ANDREW TURNBULL

THE GRIFFITHS REPORT ON THE HOUSE  
OF FRASER

Since it looks as if this Report will come out while I am away, this minute records one tangential aspect in which I was involved.

The Inspector, Mr Griffiths (whom I met when he was Attorney General in Hong Kong) asked if he could have an interview with me. When I called on him, he told me that he was conducting the enquiry and that allegations had been put forward that Mr Richardson of Rothschilds had said that he could persuade the Prime Minister to give Professor Roland Smith a Knighthood and appoint him to a nationalised industry. The implication was that this would be a compensation to Professor Smith for losing the Chairmanship of Harrods. There were also claims that the suggestion had been made not by Rothschilds but by the other side in the dispute.

Mr Griffiths asked me whether the honours system worked in such a way that the offer of a Knighthood could have been secured in this way.

I explained to him the safeguards in the honours system, namely that names were either put forward after scrutiny by committees run by the Head of the Civil Service or, if recommendations for Knighthoods were added by the Prime Minister, they were scrutinised by the Political Honours Scrutiny Committee, a committee of Privy Counsellors. Mr Griffiths pronounced himself satisfied that,

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whether or not such a claim had been made, there were safeguards against the honours system being used in this way.

The story subsequently was published in "The Daily Mail" by Andrew Alexander, allegedly drawn from a leaked document prepared by Lonrho. Mr Richardson was quoted as saying that there was no truth in it and he authorised me to advise the Prime Minister that if the matter was raised in the House she could quote him as denying it. Parliamentary Branch will probably have the briefing but, in the event, the matter did not come up in the House.

F.E.R.B.

F E R BUTLER

3 August 1984

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