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10th February, 1971.

Dear Mark,

I am very sorry to hear that you are ill, although you probably won't get this letter until you are better. I hope that you are fully recovered now.

I just wanted to drop you a note to explain why the rest of the Booker Prize Committee had gone ahead and put a letter in the Times Literary Supplement in answer to the letter from the eleven publishers the previous week. This is because we felt it needed some sort of answer otherwise the publishers appear to have made their case and we appear to have nothing to say in reply. The letter, a copy of which I enclose, is not particularly vitriolic. It simply makes the point that we had (as one might expect) with a Committee as knowledgeable as ours) thought about the problems raised by the eleven publishers but decided after some heart-searching that changing the timing was justifiable because of the results it might bring for all publishers.

Had you been well, of course, we would have had a meeting and you might have persuaded the rest of us that it was wrong to put in a letter or we might have persuaded you that it was right. All I am concerned with is that you do not think that we tried to ride rough-shod over your views. We thought about it carefully, but decided on balance to send in a letter. But of course, we did not quote your name.

I look forward to seeing you soon.

Yours sincerely,

(J. N. Murphy)