

cc: Lord Hardinge ✓

JMM. CONFIDENTIAL

Mr. Harold Macmillan

18th March, 1969

A.D. Maclean

THE BOOKER PRIZE

You may have heard that Booker Bros, McConnell, the big sugar, rum etc. group, have been investing in authors e.g. Ian Fleming, Agatha Christie and Georgette Heyer in the last few years. They are now giving a large annual prize of £5,000 for the best novel published in the preceding year. The judges are:

Bill Webb, Literary Editor of the Guardian. Chairman.

Dame Rebecca West

Stephen Spender

Frank Kermode, Professor and Literary Critic.

David Farrer, Publisher, Secker and Warburg.

They plan to announce the winner and present the Prize on the evening of Tuesday, 22nd April at The Draper's Hall. It is proposed that the announcement is made at 8 p.m. when there will be short speeches by the President of the Publishers Association (Peter du Sautoy), the Chairman of Bookers and Stephen Spender as Chief Judge. This will be followed by a buffet supper.

Bookers, having failed to get H.M. The Queen to present the Prize, would be very pleased if you would care to do so. They would hope that you would speak for four or five minutes.

I think the Booker Prize is an altogether admirable idea, and they are spending a lot of money and taking a lot of trouble over it. We know that Muriel Spark's *THE PUBLIC IMAGE* is one of the six finalists, but it seems unlikely that she will get it. I don't think they would have asked you to present the Prize if the winner was a Macmillan author. I hope, however, that you will feel able to accept the invitation.

I attach some notes about the Prize together with a copy of a letter which George Hardinge wrote to Michael Adeane when they were approaching the Queen.