

*File  
Booker Prize*

12 December 1972

A J H Williams, Esq  
36 St Thomas Drive  
Hatch End  
Pinner  
Middlesex

Dear Mr Williams

Thank you for your letter of 29 November concerning the 1973 award of the Booker Prize for Fiction.

While sympathising with the comments in your letter, I should point out that the determination of the winner has nothing to do with the company. An independent panel of judges, chosen for its knowledge and experience of the literary world, is appointed to select the winning book and the company is in no position to overrule the judges' decision. If it were, the prize would not be acceptable to the publishers. It is a different matter for literary critics however who are in no way obliged to agree with the judges' choice.

Once the Prize has been awarded, the winner is perfectly free to do with it whatever he chooses. Your directors naturally do not agree with Mr Berger so far as his criticisms of your company are concerned, but to start a public debate with him would have given the impression that the company was on the defensive. (Also, the finances are in the hands of trustees and not, at the time of the award, under the control of the company.) By refusing to be drawn into a confrontation and by accepting its obligations in a calm, relaxed and dignified manner, your company minimised any adverse effect on its business and reputation and has, in fact, earned considerable credit.

By no stretch of the imagination can it be said that we 'proceeded to stroke this snappish writer', and these words in the Sunday newspaper are completely unfounded.

Yours sincerely

Peter Smith  
Public Relations Adviser