



DEPARTMENTAL MINUTE DATED 16 APRIL 2007

CONCERNING THE TRANSFER OF

THE FCO HISTORICAL COLLECTION

TO KINGS COLLEGE LONDON

Presented to Parliament
by the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs
by Command of Her Majesty
April 2007

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It is normal practice when a government department proposes to make a gift of a value exceeding £250,000, for the department concerned to present to the House of Commons a Minute giving particulars of the gift and explaining the circumstances; and to refrain from making the gift until fourteen days (exclusive of Saturdays and Sundays) after the issue of the Minute, except in cases of special urgency.

The FCO houses a collection of some 30,000 books and 10,000 pamphlets acquired on the merger of the Foreign, Colonial and Commonwealth Relations Offices in 1968. Independent appraisers have valued it at £4.5 million. The Collection, which is unique and an important part of the national printed heritage, is currently stored in sub-optimum conditions in the Main Building of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in King Charles Street. For resource reasons, the Collection cannot be properly developed nor, for security reasons, can it be made available to the wider academic community for whom it would be of significant interest and importance.

Guided by an Advisory Committee, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office proposes to transfer the Collection to Kings College London. The College has the funding, staffing and accessible premises to develop and present the Collection in the way it deserves but which the FCO is unable to do. Kings College, whose premises in Central London already house a number of first-rate collections that have close synergy with material in the FCO Collection, is willing to take the Collection and has access to funds sufficient to catalogue and exploit it in the way it deserves.

It is important that the FCO retains ultimate veto on the disposal or dispersal of the Collection but Kings College feels that its ability to fund raise on the back of the Collection will be inhibited if title is vested in the Secretary of State. The transfer, therefore, will be effected through the creation of a charitable trust with members nominated by both the FCO and Kings College and with participation by outside experts.

The Treasury has approved the proposal in principle. If, during the period of fourteen days (excluding Saturdays and Sundays) beginning on the date on which this minute was laid before the House of Commons, a Member signifies an objection by giving notice of a Parliamentary Question or of a motion relating to the minute, or otherwise raising the matter in the House, final approval of the gift will be withheld pending an examination of the objection.



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