



BIRKHALL

30th March, 2005

Dear Teresa,

Earlier this month, while I was in New Zealand, I sat next to the Prime Minister, Helen Clark, at a dinner in Government House and she raised with me the work the New Zealand Heritage Trust has been doing to conserve the Antarctic huts which Scott and Shackleton built as the base for their great polar expeditions in the early years of the last century. From her description, and from others involved in the project whom I met separately in Australia, these clearly constitute a unique heritage – and I entirely agree with her evidently strongly-held conviction that all those nations connected to that heroic era of exploration should be involved in some way in the efforts to contribute to the huts' preservation.

I realize only too well that this funding issue has been raised at various levels by the New Zealanders and others, and that it poses some difficult questions – both for your Department, and for the Heritage Lottery Fund, which I gather is not constituted to help projects overseas. But, on the other hand, I thought there was something called “The Government of the British Antarctic Territory,” which must mean that there is some British Territory to be “governed!” So I am at a loss to understand how this restoration project can be correctly described as “overseas?” Whatever the case, and however futile my plea to you for a bit of imaginative flexibility in the interpretation of these rules, I just wanted to emphasize the iconic importance of these huts in those great Antarctic journeys, which will surely resonate strongly in the public

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imagination -- particularly as the centenary of these famous explorers' endeavours approaches.

I promised Helen Clark I would raise this issue with you -- so I have! But if there really is nothing that can be done via your Department and the H.L.F., do you at least know of any organizations, associations or wealthy individuals who might be prevailed upon to help? I shall investigate this possibility myself, but it would clearly assist the process if there could be some indication of whether a degree of matching funding could be available to act as an incentive?

Yours affectionately
Murray

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