



HOUSE OF LORDS  
LONDON SW1A 0PW  
30<sup>th</sup> January 2008.

Dear Mr. Dacre,

Thank you very much indeed for your letter. I am sorry not to have replied before but your letter appears to have disappeared somewhere between Kew and Westminster.

I am afraid that none of the dates that you mention is very easy for me and to be frank I don't have very strong views about the 30 year rule.

If pressed, I guess that I would favour some reduction in the 30 Year period, perhaps by ten years. This may be thought too short. The period was intended to preserve confidentiality during the life times of people for whom publication of confidential material might prove embarrassing. But frankly I think we overdid that argument; I don't think that the job of national archivists should be to preserve public figures from embarrassment; and any way with people living longer even 30 years might not be sufficient to deal with the personal embarrassment issue.

I am not really bothered about the embarrassment to Government or other institutions. They tend to do quite enough to embarrass themselves as it is.

When I consider my own experience as both a Minister and a Colonial Governor I cannot think of anything that I would find too awkward if it were to be revealed today. I think it would help historians to do serious work if they were able to look at the Foreign Office archives on Hong Kong sooner rather than later.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Patten of Barnes", written over a horizontal line.

Dictated by Lord Patten and signed in his absence

Paul Dacre Esq.,  
30 Year Rule Review,  
c/o The National Archives,  
Kew,  
TW9 4DU