

4th June 1981

Dear Master,

I am happy to say that I am not acquainted with N. P. Farage, of MSRY—happy, because judging from the reports I have received he is not someone with whom I would wish to be acquainted; and because, I am, therefore, able to write on the ground of no personal prejudice, but on that concerning principle.

You will recall that at the recent, and lengthy, meeting about the selection of prefects, the remark by a colleague that Farage was "a fascist, but that was no reason why he would not make a good prefect" invoked considerable reaction from members of the Common Room. Another colleague, who teaches the boy, described his publicly professed racist and neo-fascist views; and he cited a particular incident in which Farage was so offensive to a boy in his set, that he had to be removed from the lesson. This master stated his view that that behaviour was precisely why the boy should not be made a prefect. Yet another colleague described how, at a CCF camp organized by the College, Farage and others had marched through a quiet Sussex village very late at night shouting Hitler-youth songs; and when it was suggested by a master that boys who expressed such views "don't really mean them", the College Chaplain himself commented that, on the contrary, in his experience views of that kind expressed by boys of that age are deep-seated, and are meant.

2

At the end of that meeting I had not a scintilla of doubt that after the facts disclosed to you, Farage's nomination would no longer be considered. Nor, I imagine, had my colleagues: otherwise, we would have expressed ourselves even more strongly.

But yesterday I was told by a senior boy, in terms of disgust, that Farage was indeed to be selected; and today, of course, his appointment was announced in Assembly—an announcement, I gather, which was met with disbelief and derision. To say that it is too late to reverse this decision, or that Farage's activities will be restricted to particular areas of College life, or that he will be supervised within them, is futile. His appointment will have four immediate consequences.

First, it will vastly increase his own confidence, and sense of self-justification. Secondly, he will have the privilege of listing his appointment as a prefect at Dulwich College in his university and other applications. Thirdly, his peers, according to their own views, will either adopt him as an exemplar, or, as is much more likely, regard his appointment with disillusionment and cynicism when they observe that his notorious views and behaviour, well known to both Master and members of the staff, are, as it would appear, condoned by them. Fourthly, those members of the Common Room, such as myself, who believed that a firm decision had been reached through a democratic process, will be shocked, saddened, angered, and disheartened.

3

You will appreciate that I regard this as a very serious matter. I have often heard you tell our senior boys that they are the nation's future leaders. It is our collective responsibility to ensure that these leaders are enlightened and compassionate. As you know, the national and educational press has recently given much prominence to the growing concern at the exploitation of school pupils by extremists of all kinds. A school of the stature and high reputation of Dulwich College which openly condemned the recent troubles in Brixton, and offered its facilities freely to the forces of law and order, ought not to be seen inside or outside its confines to be giving its endorsement, expressly or by implication, to budding extremists of the opposite kind.

A school which is proud of its selectiveness, conservatism, and discipline, ought not to allow these characteristics to degenerate into intolerance, political extremism, or bullying of the nastiest kind, in its pupils. The matter of the appointment of Farage as a prefect may be thought by some to be minuscule against these deep considerations. It is not so.

I am by disposition, tolerant; and in politics, moderate. But as a member of the Common Room, I find it distasteful that a boy such as Farage should have bestowed upon him the prestige of office and authority: were I a parent or a pupil, I would find it profoundly so.

In view, as I am aware, of the wide concern within the College about this matter, I am sending a copy of this letter to the chairman of the Common Room.

Yours very sincerely,

David Emms, Esq., MA,
The Master of Dulwich College.