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A. McQueen Esq.,
c/o British Bank of the
Middle East,
Beirut.

WITH THE COMPLIMENTS

OF

H.M. AMBASSADOR

BRITISH EMBASSY,
BEIRUT.

April 23, 1957.

No. _____

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Copied _____

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In spite of the great efforts made in recent months by the Board of Governors of the English School, and by their architects, it has, I fear, been becoming increasingly evident that it will not be possible to open the School in September 1958.

2. First, the question of finance. The initial contribution pledged by the United Kingdom Government was offered on the understanding that it would be made up by contributions from other sources; and as you know, a number of appeals for funds was to have been made in various parts of the world. The initial response from the Rulers of the Persian Gulf principalities was generous; but in West Africa and Lebanon it was disappointing; and subsequent events delayed the issue of an appeal in the United Kingdom and the renewal of attempts elsewhere. On the other hand, the very tentative early estimates of the probable cost of the School have proved on examination by experts to be far too low. In fact, there is too great a gap between what we have and what we need for us to be able to go ahead at present with assurance; and no guarantee can yet be obtained that this very considerable gap (of over £300,000) will be filled.

3. Secondly, the very important and lengthy process of finding first-class teaching staff has not yet been begun; and continues to be held up by uncertainty over whether the School will be allowed to teach the sort of curriculum for which it is designed. No headmaster of the required calibre will be prepared to commit himself to a post where his talents and training may be frustrated; and it is already late to find a headmaster to leave his present post to take up a new one in January 1958 - as he must if he is to have the influence he should have in the School's formation. Moreover, when the problem of the equivalence of the British and Lebanese examinations has been solved, there will be a good deal of work to do in planning curricula (with the assistance of the new Headmaster) suited to Lebanese boys, within the pattern set by the British examinations.

4. Thirdly, the United Kingdom authorities have pointed out that nothing is as yet known about the cost of running the School and whether it will be able to be self-supporting, particularly in the early years when it will not have reached full strength. They feel that this too must be worked out if a true estimate of the cost of the School is to be arrived at. Moreover, it is essential that the question of water supply, approach road, electricity and telephone services be decided upon. As you know, the School is relying on the Lebanese authorities to make available to the School this assistance.

5/.....

Dr. Joseph Hitti,
Chairman of the Board of
Governors of the English
Secondary School for Boys
in the Lebanon,
Rue Clemenceau,
Beirut.

5. I have to inform you therefore that the United Kingdom authorities have decided that there would be no point in making budgetary provision in the financial year 1957-58 on the assumption of the School's opening in September 1958; though of course, when the problems referred to above have been solved, their original pledge still stands.

6. This is not, I think, a reason for discouragement. The architects themselves, who have been working under high pressure to fulfil an exacting commitment, are conscious that this pressure is abnormal and could be harmful; and they would welcome more time. The extra time will also be useful in that we shall avoid having to seek and choose staff under the pressure of urgency.

7. What I now suggest is that the architects should continue to refine and develop their plans until these are complete and ready for invitation to tender. Secondly, I am asking the British Council to go in detail into the running expenses of the School and make an estimate of its budget. Thirdly, plans are afoot for the launching of the delayed appeal for funds in the United Kingdom; and I suggest that on the basis of the very much clearer idea we already have of the appearance, situation and nature of the School, the Board of Governors should turn its attention to organising appeals in the Lebanon, West Africa and any other area which they may consider would be fruitful.

8. Meanwhile, the Board may rest assured that the United Kingdom authorities still wholeheartedly support the School; that they and the British Council will continue to give every possible help in the planning and preparation of the School; and that I myself shall spare no effort to help the project forward.

9. I am sending a copy of this letter to each member of the Board of Governors.

(G.H. Middleton)