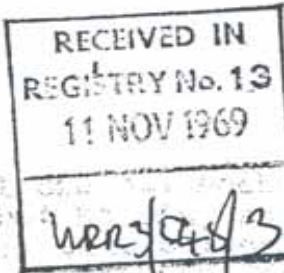


CONFIDENTIAL

Western European Department,



7 November, 1969.

I owe you a letter regarding my meeting with McDowell on 30 October. I am sorry for the brief delay, but I have been away from the Department for most of this week.

2. McDowell 'phoned just after I had returned from Belfast. He had only a few hours to spare, but had I think arranged those few hours in the hope that he could meet someone from the Office. The short time available meant that I could not arrange for others to join us, but this was perhaps no bad thing at a first meeting.

3. We had a lengthy talk over lunch, ranging over many Irish matters, and the newspaper world especially, but if I had to sum up very briefly what McDowell really had to say I think it would be that he wants to help and is willing to be used as a link. (This does not exclude the point of guidance you recorded in your letter of 2 October, but it does go rather further). I do not think he has anything specific, or dramatic, in mind; the offer is rather the result of those feelings of duty and anxiety that many who are emotionally both British and Irish must now be experiencing. (I suppose Constantine Fitzgibbon is another current example.) McDowell himself said he had hitherto, for obvious newspaper reasons, tried to keep free of those constraints that follow if a newspaperman forms an honourable alliance with the official world, but the present situation was so serious and so different he thought he ought to offer his services. His qualifications are his contacts in both capitals, and his acceptability in Whitehall terms through his service in the Judge Advocate General's department.

4. I said we were grateful for this offer, and we would certainly bear it in mind. However, there was no attempt in Dublin to ostracise you or dramatise a conflict by cutting the obvious diplomatic links. But after years of relative quiet we were faced with a new situation, and in deciding how best to handle it obviously we were glad to learn of possible new resources. I promised to return his hospitality on his next visit, and he seemed content.

His Excellency
Sir Andrew Gilchrist, K.C.M.G.
British Embassy,
Dublin.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

5. McDowell did not seek ammunition for use against his Editor, but he did, as you forecast, mention rather apologetically that Editor's excessive zeal. He also told me that he knew Sneddon, of the Belfast Telegraph, who is a contact of Oliver Wright's, and who was once briefly lent to the Irish Times by Lord Thompson to advise on the paper's finances.

6. At the moment I think it would be useful, so far as we in the Department are concerned, to keep in touch with McDowell, to keep him briefed in general terms, and to encourage him to forward the moderates' cause in his paper. This is very much what you had in mind. Beyond that I cannot see a go-between role for him, but that would be more a matter for you to suggest if you found doors closed to you.

7. I am sending a copy of this letter to Oliver Wright in Belfast.

(W.K.K. White)

c.c. Mr. John Peck
Mr. Allinson (PUSD)

CONFIDENTIAL