

June 22, 1939.

My dear Brian,

Many apologies for not replying sooner to your letter of June 14. I have a number of excuses to offer, the principal being that I didn't have sufficient time (or perhaps sufficient energy) to write the letter I wanted to write. A further reason, so far as this week is concerned, was that P.F. told me on Monday of his intended visit to you and I was anxious to learn more of your views of the present situation.

I feel sure, however, that you will overlook the delay in writing and that I can come "to grips" straightaway. The purpose of my Half-Yearly Report, which I was under no obligation at all to submit, was to awaken a lethargic Council to a sense of responsibilities and to bring home to them the gravity of the League's financial plight. I attempted to outline the principal causes, as they appeared to me, of the League's failure to make the progress expected of it and among these causes I placed the apathy of the majority of the Council itself. I suggested, rather charitably perhaps, that this apathy was more apparent than real and was explained partly by lack of direction at the head, that is by absence of a Chairman who would energise the members or canalise their energies into the proper channels.

I may have over-rated the readiness of inactive members to help, even if they ^{were} directed (or requested) by a Chairman, but I think you will agree that any Hon. Sec. who takes a serious view of his responsibilities, is bound to miss the co-operation and advice of an active Chairman and that in the absence of a Standing Committee his position is a very difficult one. For that reason alone, I felt obliged to draw attention to the handicaps imposed on the League by the existing arrangement and my remarks", I assure you, were not in the least directed against you but against the situation in which you as an unwilling Chairman were only the nominal head of an Organisation which in reality you should be directing.

I realise, however, that I was guilty of discourtesy to you in not informing you beforehand of my intended remarks and I offer sincere apologies. The fact is that my report was prepared rather hurriedly and was completed only 15 minutes before the appointed time for the Council meeting. In other circumstances and with more experience, I should have acted differently. The discourtesy in other words was altogether unintentional and I plead in self-justification, too, that I allowed a genuine eagerness to organise the League's affairs on a proper basis to over-ride the tact which an Hon. Sec. might have been expected to display. Above all, I was aware of your attitude to the duties of a Chairman, which you defined very clearly at our initial meetings, when you accepted the Council's invitation. You pointed out, I remember, that the only after strong protest... Chairman's job was necessarily the most important in an Organisation of the kind and would make demands upon the occupant which you could not possibly meet. You told me later in a phone conversation of the views you took of Dublin's unwillingness to finance the

Organisation on an adequate scale and gave to understand generally that you could see little hope for the League (and consequently ~~for~~ little justification for your remaining on as Chairman) unless Dublin altered its attitude. Mr P. Fitzgerald has in your absence taken the chair at Council meetings and acted as adviser of the Office, but has not had the time (or freedom) required for carrying out the duties which you defined at the Charing Cross Hotel as those which would fall to the lot of the Chairman. True, some of these duties are being discharged by Mr. Barry-Walsh, but up to recently most of his time has been taken up by work connected directly or indirectly with the organisation of branches and his task is all the more difficult in that he has only a small panel of speakers upon which to call and that over one-half the members of the Council are not pulling their weight.

Sunday, June 25

You will understand then, Brian, why I considered it necessary to speak of certain weaknesses in our Organisation and why among these I included the absence of an active Chairman. I have regretted all along that we could not have the benefit of your co-operation even in a limited way, say, by your attendance at occasional Council meetings. I must say, however, that I have not been in agreement with your view that Dublin should be prepared to back us on a large scale. Rather, I have held that our Council should first of all prove itself ~~as~~ worthy of financing by making a vigorous effort of its own to put the Partition issue before the British public. Once it had put up a decent showing, its position in relation to Dublin -and by Dublin I mean the Irish Government- would be immeasurably

stronger. I had not calculated, however, on the apathy of the Irish people generally on the Anti-Partition issue or perhaps it may be truer to say on the scepticism of our people as to the good likely to accrue from "informing British public opinion in favour of the abolition of Partition." Certainly, the course of Irish history affords little justification for any great confidence of the possibilities of an educational campaign, but it seemed to me last December that with Munich still fresh in public memory, with the international outlook so unsettled and with Britain's obvious desire for a close understanding with the United States, conditions were more favourable than at any time in the past and that an Organisation formed on broad lines such as ours might make a useful contribution to the removal of the Border.

This is now only of academic interest, however, and some hard thinking will have to be done about the future. For that reason, I would like very much to have an opportunity of getting your considered views and more particularly to learn what you have in mind by "Wind up the League in its present form."

Meanwhile, I am very glad to learn from P.F. that you are willing to defer your resignation for the time being and assure you of my appreciation of the services you rendered us at our two principal meetings.

Kind regards and best wishes,

Yours very sincerely,