**Item: AIB.APL.Z.255.1939.pdf**

**Transcript**

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 prin-

cipal being that I didn’t have sufficient time (or perhaps suff-

icient 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 prin-

cipal 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 ~~the~~

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.

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I may have over-rated the readiness of inactive members to help,

were

even if they / directed (or requested) by a Chairman, but I think you

will agree than any Hon. Sec, who takes a serious view of his respon-

sibilities, 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 Organ-

isation 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

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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 connect-

ed directly or indirectly with the organisation of branches and

his task is~~a~~ 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 necess-

es

ary to speak of certain weakness/ 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, condit-

ions 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,

Your very sincerely,