8. The War of Ideas

Summary

Two influences helped reshape the nutrition campaign in the early years of World War II. One was McDougall’s new responsibility at Australia House for ‘political warfare’. The other was America. McDougall’s thinking developed along three intertwining paths: the idea for an international body to promote nutrition; the overwhelming need for British–American cooperation; and ways to harness the nutrition idea to the needs of wartime propaganda.

Bruce and McDougall visited the United States briefly in 1938, and discussed the idea of McDougall, Orr and Hall for an international food institute. The experience gave McDougall some understanding of how the approach might appeal to Americans and the importance of American–British collaboration. In London both men worked to incorporate the nutrition approach into positive and constructive war aims, and into British domestic policy. McDougall’s major memorandum of 1940, ‘Notes on the Re-statement of Our Aims’, written after the fall of France, stresses the need for Anglo–American collaboration in the new world order and draws upon ideas from the United States.

Roosevelt’s call for ‘freedom from want’ provided a new impetus for their arguments. The US Ambassador, John Winant, became a valuable ally in London and in Washington. When McDougall returned to Washington in 1941, he had the support of Vice President Henry Wallace, and senior officials in the Departments of Agriculture, Health and State. Plans for a formal agreement and a conference between US and British Empire experts in 1942 were agreed, but prevented by events following Pearl Harbor. McDougall’s ideas were influenced by a briefing in London on political warfare and the need for effective material to persuade peoples of occupied and enemy countries that the allied nations offered something positive. His seminal memorandum ‘Progress in the War of Ideas’ was written in response to that need.

The Approach of War

A proposal by McDougall in 1938 for an organisation to promote nutrition policies owed much to the models of the Empire Marketing Board and Imperial Agricultural Bureaux in the 1920s. In discussions with Orr and Hall, a new idea was added: the involvement of financial and industrial groups in an
'International Food Institute…to promote the increased consumption of food along the lines indicated by the newer knowledge of nutrition’. The functions of the institute would include interpreting in economic terms and then popularising scientific literature on nutrition and ‘seeking ways to reconcile national policies on agriculture and commerce with policies for sound nutrition’. It would work closely with the Economic Organisation of the League of Nations, the Imperial Bureau of Nutrition at Orr’s Rowett Institute and the national nutrition committees being formed as recommended by the League resolution on nutrition. It would not engage in publicity, ‘indeed its work would have to be objective’, but development of ‘nutrition consciousness’ and stimulation of demand would benefit many interests, including banks, shipping companies, food exporters and suppliers of fertilisers, tin plate and gas. All might contribute to its support, much as they might allocate funds for advertising.1

McDougall took this idea with him on a visit to Washington in December 1938, accompanying Bruce on the first leg of a visit to Australia. Apart from a brief time in New York after the Ottawa conference, it was McDougall’s first experience of the United States.2 They found the Administration ‘prepared to take a marked interest’ in the nutrition approach. Bruce detected ‘latent keenness’ in talks with Henry Wallace and with Norman Davis, foreign policy and financial adviser to the President and head of the American Red Cross. McDougall met key officials in the Departments of Labor, Agriculture, State and Health. State Department officials were ‘prepared to see the significance’ of a larger US role in an international campaign to increase nutrition consciousness in Europe and its likely impact on greater consumption. Wallace understood its implications for the reorientation of agriculture and US exports, but his officials were more interested in its relevance to disposal of surplus produce. McDougall learned about experimental schemes to dispose of surpluses to the poor by means of subsidised low prices, cheap milk deliveries to certain areas, school lunches and food stamps. Surgeon-General, Dr Thomas Parran, hoped ‘our visit would enable him to take up the question with the President and he hoped to make health the main objective and yet to secure support of Mr Wallace and his Department’. On his way home, McDougall visited philanthropic institutions in New York. Stacy May of the Rockefeller Institution suggested the food organisation idea might be put to the institution’s European headquarters in Paris, and stressed the importance of demonstrating clearly its objectivity. He offered to fund a visit by Orr to the United States if it were requested by a US government body.3

1 NLA, MS6890/4/5, ‘Food Policies in Relation to Economic Activity and Appeasement, part 2’, 21 November 1938.
2 Mr Hume Dow, son of then Australian Trade Commissioner in New York, D. McK. Dow, recalled taking McDougall to see the Empire State Building in 1938. Discussion with W. Way, 1985.
3 NLA, MS6890/3/2, undated letter to Orr and Hall, written in mid-Atlantic and typed in London.
McDougall spent the return voyage to London considering how progress might be quickened and the idea widened to appeal to a transatlantic audience. The proposed organisation might halve the time needed to achieve adequate food policies: an estimated 25 years for more advanced countries might be reduced to 10, and a much longer period for less developed areas could be reduced to 25. In deference to concerns encountered in New York, he now added that it would be ‘essential to secure a governing body of such eminence as to ensure the complete objectivity of the Commission’s work’. Fresh from his encounters with the US Department of Agriculture, he emphasised that, although public health was the primary justification, increased economic activity would ‘produce a general reorientation of European agriculture…the only permanent solution of the world wheat problem’. And, in a nod to the policy of the Secretary of State to liberalise international trade, he wrote:

A revival of international trade in foodstuffs will favourably affect transport, international finance, and generally all the industries that supply farmers. The need for increased consumption is the justification for policies intended to increase international trade. The policies here advocated are indeed the true fulfilment of those of Mr Cordell Hull.

‘Closest collaboration’

Soon after Germany annexed Czechoslovakia in March 1939, McDougall wrote, in a long letter to reach Bruce during his return journey, ‘your days in Washington might be made of the utmost importance to the whole future of the British Empire and of our civilisation’. Roosevelt and Hull seemed to be influencing public opinion with their efforts to preserve peace: ‘I feel that you perhaps might initiate large scale policies which, if you found they appealed to Washington, you could urge upon London and this might lead to the closest collaboration between the Empire and USA, whether it is to be war or peace.’

In the event of war, Britain should immediately invite allied and neutral countries to draw up the basis for a just peace. Preparation should be made before hostilities began:

If the U.S.A. can see that the British Empire is not only engaged in fighting for her own ‘vital interests’ but also for a peace based on justice, and if there is the clearest evidence of this from the very first moment of the war, then we can rely even more emphatically than is now the case upon American support and participation.

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5 Ibid., pp. 4, 6.
In a period of tension short of war there should also be a declaration by ‘the great “have” countries’, combining firm resistance to aggression with a declaration of intent to remove the legitimate grievances of poorer countries.

McDougall added new thoughts to this familiar ground. Henry Wallace had secured legislation in 1938 for a domestic ‘ever-normal-granary’: stockpiles to prevent food shortages in times of poor crops, ensuring fair prices in times of surplus and protecting consumers from high prices in times of shortage by releasing stored surpluses. Wallace continued to promote the idea for use on an international scale.6 McDougall suggested buffer stocks of problem raw materials and foodstuffs be internationally administered and financed, and used to moderate prices. His talks in Washington had broadened his perspective, beyond redress of colonial grievances and increased food consumption to the ‘far more important’ question of bringing about ‘a correlation between the productive capacity, either of separate countries or of the world, and the physical requirements of populations’. Establishment of the food commission could give practical expression to a declaration that the governments of Britain, the United States and other creditor nations were prepared to assist other countries develop resources and access external supplies. McDougall concluded from his discussions in Washington that the proposal would find considerable support in the United States. Declaration of such a policy could ‘prove of the utmost importance’ to peace. While it would not please the Nazis, it could help ‘a Germany that had turned away from aggression towards co-operation’ and it might be acceptable to Mussolini.7

In 1939 there was no separate Australian representation in Washington. Bruce’s talks, on instruction from Canberra, were largely limited to the more urgent business of seeking US assurances for support for the British Empire in Europe and in the Pacific. Cordell Hull did show ‘he was aware of the work I was doing on the economic side and expressed his admiration of it’, while Norman Davis expressed admiration for Orr, who was then in Washington. Davis promised to put Bruce’s suggestion for a committee to report on nutrition to Roosevelt, ‘when he got the opportunity for a long and quiet talk with him’. Bruce limited his points to the domestic advantages of a nutrition policy. He did not canvass McDougall’s suggestions for British–American cooperation and a food organisation.8

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6 Samuels, Henry A. Wallace and American Foreign Policy, pp. 46–7.
7 NLA, MS6890/3/2, McDougall to Bruce, 14 April 1939.
8 For Bruce’s report to Canberra, dated 8 May 1939, and his records of interview with Davis and Roosevelt on 3 and 4 May respectively, see DAFP II, 82, and attachments 1 and 2, pp. 108–12. A record of his conversation with Hull is in NAA, M104/1, 7(4) (1939).
Political Warfare

At Australia House, the High Commissioner presided over representatives of many Federal Government departments. The External Affairs Liaison Office, located in premises close to the British Cabinet Offices, had been created in 1924 by Bruce as Prime Minister, to be his ‘eyes and ears’ in London. The first Liaison Officer, R. G. Casey, reported informally and directly to Bruce, though he was officially responsible to the one-man External Affairs Branch of the Prime Minister’s Department. By 1939, the Liaison Officer, A. T. Stirling, was part of a nascent diplomatic network and reported to the External Affairs Department established in Canberra late in 1935. An Australian Liaison Officer had been appointed within the British Embassy in Washington in 1937; Australian Legations in Washington and Tokyo and a High Commission in Ottawa were established during 1940. Stirling and his deputy, John Hood, shared premises with the Committee of Imperial Defence in Richmond Terrace, Whitehall, and undertook routine gathering of information and preparation of cables. Bruce was their Head of Mission, but, unlike other heads of mission, he reported directly to the Prime Minister. Being Bruce, he assumed an authority and access that were readily granted both by British ministers and by Canberra. His was the guiding hand on all Australian foreign policy as it operated in the northern hemisphere, although he paid lip-service to Canberra.

McDougall’s position had always been an anomaly in Australia House. Representing no single department, his responsibilities grew haphazardly, usually on his own initiative and largely beyond control of earlier high commissioners. Under Bruce, there was discussion and cooperation, each man working at his own level to a common agenda. When war came, McDougall was given responsibility for ‘political warfare’ at Australia House.

This was at first the old agenda with a new name and some change of emphasis. It drew from the economic appeasement campaign the need to shore up allied, neutral and particularly American support, and to appeal to moderate elements in Axis countries. Once there was a war, however, it was necessary to prepare for peace. The lessons of Versailles must be applied: the next peace settlement had to be ‘an instrument of social and economic betterment’, demanded not only by justice but also by expediency, to prevent revolution, communism and the crippling costs of a potential ‘Pax Anglo–Gallica’: ‘Neither this country, Australia nor France will tolerate the indefinite postponement of the long overdue attack upon the problems of poverty.’ Plans should be made immediately for a peace settlement based on ‘international economic co-operation on a scale never

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9 Hudson and North, eds, My Dear P. M., pp. xi–xiv.
10 FAO, RG3.1, Series D 3, McDougall memorandum: ‘Can we Maintain a Pax Anglo–Gallica?’, 23 November 1939. I am grateful to Sean Turnell for copies of his notes from this file.
previously envisaged’, including a coordinated attack on problems of poverty to secure a progressive rise in the standard of living, international solutions to commodity problems, reduction of trade barriers and policies to facilitate creditor assistance to other nations.¹¹

In the ‘phoney war’ period, the British Government was obliged to formulate its postwar vision in responses to offers of peace from Hitler and mediation by the Dutch and Belgian monarchs. The view of the French and of some Britons, including Churchill, was that the postwar world should be similar to the prewar one, but with a disarmed Germany. Others, like Bruce and McDougall, visualised ‘a new world resulting from a peace settlement which had faced the vital problems of disarmament, territorial adjustment, colonies and the economic needs of all nations, in which Germany would play an appropriate part as a great nation’.¹²

This view was supported by the governments of Australia and New Zealand, and Bruce and McDougall must have been delighted by the words of South Africa’s Jan Smuts: ‘No peace is worth while which does not result in raising the living standards of the people.’¹³

‘Oh the boredom of war!’

McDougall’s new responsibility and an increasing diplomatic workload meant that he spent much of his time in the External Affairs Office. Bruce, Stirling and McDougall worked long hours together over important cables to Canberra, on at least one occasion right through the night. Stirling recalls in his published memoirs that in the early war years Bruce himself spent most mornings and afternoons at Richmond Terrace, where McDougall would often come to see him towards evening. He remembers ‘McDougall bursting in very soon after the declaration of war, saying as he came, “Oh the boredom of war!”’. In his unpublished diary, Stirling records that remark on 15 September, having previously explained on 10 September that McDougall ‘is very genuinely seized with what he calls the “boredom” of war when there is so much else to be done—his new League scheme, for instance’—possibly a reference to the Bruce Report.¹⁴ McDougall may have experienced uncharacteristically low spirits for a period in 1940. On 7 February, Stirling recorded in his diary: ‘At

¹¹ Ibid., ‘The Peace Settlement—Which is the More Practical—a Co-operative or an Enforced Peace Settlement?’, 27 November 1939.
¹² DAFP II, 308, cable 586 from Bruce to Menzies, 26 October 1939, pp.353-5.
¹⁴ Stirling, Lord Bruce, pp. 126–7; DFAT, unpublished Stirling Diaries, 10 and 15 September 1939. I am grateful to Jeremy Hearder for copies of relevant extracts from the diaries.
McDougall’s request I took Mr Bruce E. H. Carr’s *Years of Crisis*. It has shocked McDougall greatly.15 Carr’s ‘realist’ approach to international affairs perhaps gave McDougall some reason to doubt his own belief in reason and cooperation. His output of memoranda slowed: none seems to have been written in the first nine months of that year—an unusually long gap.16 Pressures of work, uncertainty in the early war months and the shocks of the fall of France and the Blitz probably forced a less vigorous prosecution of broader campaigning. The day after Italy entered the war, McDougall fell in the blackout, breaking his collarbone. Stirling recalled that he looked ‘badly shaken up’ and that he was ‘deeply affected by the situation in France—still quoting endlessly the sombrest passages of Shakespeare’. On 22 June, McDougall was more positive, appearing at the External Affairs Office ‘very eager for some action to transfer part of the League of Nations to America’.17

Bruce’s new responsibilities were far greater than those borne by McDougall. His personal files record incessant representation to the British Government on war-related issues: strategic matters, military appointments, supplies to and from Australia, and Australia’s claim to a voice in top-level decision making, the last leading to his being given the right to attend the War Cabinet. He carried responsibility for the safety of a large workforce in Australia House and concern for the welfare of Australian troops in Britain. He pursued personal hobbyhorses, particularly the efficacy of air power against sea power, a subject of debate in the early war years. He saw anyone who might have useful information or ideas and carefully chose targets for his own lobbying. Stirling recalls a long meeting with Bruce and McDougall ‘trying to think of outstanding Englishmen for various missions’.18 Bruce had virtually unlimited access to British ministers, the City, the diplomatic community and Commonwealth representatives. His career and reputation carried weight in all those circles.

Despite his workload, Bruce continued to lobby for the nutrition approach domestically and internationally. Before the length and geographical spread of the war could be predicted, he shared McDougall’s fear that the postwar trading situation might repeat that of the interwar years: surplus primary production from overseas producers, particularly the United States, which Britain and Europe could not afford to buy, and a trade war spelling disaster to transatlantic relations. His considerable efforts on behalf of a peace plan with broad appeal embodying social justice had good reason to draw upon the nutrition approach.

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15 Ibid. The words ‘but not the HC’ appear to have been added later.
16 FAO files list 10 memoranda from 1940 that I have not seen. Most deal with war aims and the peace settlement and are unlikely to have been written in the lean period.
18 DFAT, Stirling Diaries, 4 October 1939.
Those efforts met with little success. He began in 1939 with Lord Hankey, Australian-born Secretary of Cabinet and of the Committee of Imperial Defence until 1938, then Minister without Portfolio in the War Cabinet. Hankey told Bruce his colleagues in the War Cabinet laughed at him when he suggested a nutrition standard be considered in relation to any rationing scheme; he ‘was forced to the conclusion they attached no importance to the matter and were completely ignorant of its importance’. Bruce reminded him of the importance of food shortages, largely brought about by the British strategy of blockade, in destroying German civilian morale in 1914–18. Later scholarship has supported Bruce’s view, suggesting that changes to traditional dietary patterns played a ‘critical role’: ‘great mental fatigue’ and ‘real’ and ‘psychological deprivation’ depressed German civilian morale and ‘affected military motivation’. Bruce recommended that Orr and Andrew Cairns, Canadian-born Secretary of the International Wheat Advisory Committee, be attached to a broader authority, possibly the Committee of Imperial Defence, to ensure cooperation between food, health and agricultural bureaucracies. Like Orr, Cairns was persona non grata in Whitehall, particularly in the Ministry of Agriculture, where he was

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blamed for a draft international agreement on wheat to which the ministry objected.\textsuperscript{20} Hankey feared ‘Orr would be regarded as something in the nature of a crank’. Bruce deplored the ‘lack of imagination and vision’ of the Ministry of Health, but modified his suggestion to a small advisory committee to the War Cabinet, to include Orr.\textsuperscript{21} Hankey doubted he could convince his colleagues. Bruce also recommended Orr to W. S. Morrison, Minister of Food, and to Home Secretary, Sir Samuel Hoare, who, as ‘head man of the Home Front’, agreed to talk to Orr.\textsuperscript{22}

There were many nutrition scientists in Britain. Orr’s distinction was that he had become associated with outspoken advocacy of change; official wariness of him, and of McDougall, perhaps helps to explain why Bruce’s recommendation could not have succeeded at this stage. Policies were gradually undertaken in accordance with nutritional thinking, including giving priority to milk production. Much has been written of the beneficial effects of wartime dietary measures in Britain such as the greater extraction rate of flour.\textsuperscript{23} The official war historian gives credit to Orr for spearheading the nutrition movement of the 1930s, which provided both pressure for and acceptance of these measures, but notes that Orr’s \textit{Food, Health and Income} was referred to, in the 1937 \textit{Report of the Advisory Committee on Nutrition}, in a manner ‘so covert as to be unrecognisable’.\textsuperscript{24}

‘The Re-statement of Our Aims’

In August 1940, Clement Attlee, Leader of the Labour Party and Lord Privy Seal from May 1940, effectively (and officially from February 1942) Deputy Prime Minister in the National Government, was appointed chair of a Cabinet subcommittee on war aims. Bruce considered development of a clear statement of aims a high priority and immediately offered help, suggesting ‘possibly McDougall could do some valuable work’. Attlee noted the name, but his assistant Harold Laski subsequently confirmed Bruce’s fears that ‘the committee was in fact making very little progress and that Attlee himself has hardly sufficient drive for the job’. An outspoken left-wing critic of Attlee’s apparent timidity within the National Government, Laski published an ‘Open Letter to the Labour Movement’ in October 1940, urging Labour to demand a statement of war aims from the Government. He was later forced to apologise in the National Executive

\textsuperscript{21} NAA, M100,1939, record of conversation with Hankey, 19 October 1939.
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., records of conversations with Hankey, 27 October, Morrison, 13 November, and Hoare, 1 December.
Committee. Laski did commend ‘the short memorandum we had put in [as] much the best of all the contributions he had read to Attlee, and [said] that both he and Attlee would be prepared to subscribe to it entirely’. Laski, Bruce and McDougall discussed ways of interesting Churchill in the question. The war aims committee recognised the demand for an early statement of the general principles and objectives for which the British were fighting, but agreement on its terms proved difficult. Various drafts were prepared, but after Churchill vetoed the most promising one ‘the committee had decided to postpone its meetings and faded away’. A biographer argues that Attlee’s acquiescence was not ‘timidity’, but concern for the fragile cohesion of a government still including many Chamberlain supporters, compelling Attlee to avoid a potentially divisive statement.

The Bruce–McDougall ‘short statement’ to Attlee’s committee has not been identified. A 29-page memorandum called ‘Notes on the Re-statement of Our Aims’ is dated 22 October. It refers to an earlier version called ‘War Aims’ and reiterates some of its content. It seems reasonable to conclude that the October memorandum reflects much of what had been submitted earlier to the Attlee committee, and possibly content of a document referred to by Alfred Stirling, on 28 July, as a ‘Bruce–McDougall memorandum handed to [the Foreign Secretary, Lord] Halifax last week’, which related to rejection of any peace offer by Hitler. Bruce had cabled Canberra on 21 July that it was necessary to counter Nazi economic propaganda with ‘a positive and constructive policy’ and Prime Minister Robert Menzies had agreed. Stirling also records McDougall preparing a 33-page memorandum on war aims in October 1940, its progress closely watched by Bruce.

‘Notes on the Re-statement of Our Aims’ is McDougall’s most important memorandum of 1940. The title refers to the fall of France. Until then, most people had expected that ‘the keystone of post-war reconstruction would be Anglo–French collaboration’. After the fall of France, British–American collaboration was the only alternative to Nazidom, hence the need to rethink war aims. From this time on, both McDougall and Bruce believed in the absolute necessity of British–American cooperation for the new world order: ‘In the post-war political reconstruction it will be essential to secure the full and permanent participation of America.’

26 NAA, M100, records of conversation with Attlee, 27 August 1940, with Laski and McDougall, 21 October 1940.
30 NLA, MS6890/4/6, ‘Notes on the Re-statement of our Aims’, p. 27.
‘Notes on the Re-statement of Our Aims’ repeats an assertion from the missing earlier paper that to save Europe from tyranny, ‘we must fearlessly decide upon profound adjustments in the political, economic and social spheres’ and must lead ‘a beneficent revolution by associating with our defence of liberty and International Law effective proposals for securing economic freedom and social justice’. In the later paper, McDougall began to consider the nuts and bolts of framing and organising such a peace settlement, although he made ‘no attempt… to put forward ideal solutions’. He aimed simply to indicate ‘the minimum of change needed’ for security, equity between nations and greater social justice between classes.31

Under the heading of security, McDougall acknowledged the need to reconsider ‘doctrines of national sovereignty’ in view of the ‘inter-dependence for security’ and possible ‘substitution of international for national forces’, as well as control of civil aviation and international industrial cartels. Methods should be devised to prevent ‘violent breaches of the international system’ more effectively, and methods for modification and change of that system: political machinery rather than arbitration was needed.32 This section perhaps owes something to McDougall’s reading of E. H. Carr, who had condemned the ‘pathetic fallacy that international grievances will be recognised as just and voluntarily remedied on the strength of “advice” unanimously tendered by a body representative of world public opinion’.33 Carr argued that interwar internationalism had failed to take account of the importance of power, yet power—military, political and economic—had consistently determined outcomes.34

A second section of ‘Notes on the Re-statement of Our Aims’ dealt with another new idea: the duties, as well as the rights, of man. Again, McDougall seems to have been influenced by Carr, who wrote of the complexity and impersonality of modern industrial society: ‘The real international crisis of the modern world is the final and irrevocable breakdown of the conditions which made the nineteenth century order possible. The old order cannot be restored, and a drastic change of outlook is unavoidable.’35 McDougall wrote: ‘In the middle decades of the twentieth century we cannot return to the individualism of the nineteenth century but must rather seek new definitions of the relationship of the State and the individual. This will involve the consideration both of human rights and [of] human duties.’ The weakness in totalitarianism is that

once the State is regarded as an end in itself, its glory, and its power
superior to all other considerations, the virtues of pity, forbearance,

31 Ibid., pp. 1–3.
32 Ibid., pp. 3–6.
34 Ibid., pp. 102–8.
charity, come to be regarded as weaknesses. Ruthlessness in the service of the State becomes a virtue and cruelty, that intolerable insult to the dignity of man, is the inevitable consequence.

McDougall wanted a ‘statement designed to emphasise individual responsibility towards collective well-being’ based, he suggested, on sources including the medieval theologians, modern constitutions such as those of the Weimar Republic and some Latin American states, and the literature of the ‘Corporative state’. The last two suggest the influence of his American experience.

Sections on economic relations included much of McDougall’s previous thinking on avoiding uneconomic forms of industry and agriculture, removal of trade barriers and social policies to improve living standards. On colonial policy, he suggested that an international commission, administering an international fund for active policies to improve living standards, would give ‘all nations some degree of responsibility for non-self-governing areas’. The experience of the Empire Marketing Board had shown the effectiveness of grants ‘made with imagination’ and building upon expertise already existing in the receiving country. An ‘International Commission’ controlling an international fund ‘mainly subscribed by the creditor nations’ could provide financial assistance and technical advisers, thus allowing for increasing international responsibility and control ‘without any formal transfer of administrative authority’. The idea of a supervisory commission for colonial territories had evolved into provision of practical assistance on the ground, becoming closer to what were to be the functions of FAO.

A section headed ‘Social Justice’ reiterated a call in the earlier paper for ‘positive action on the boldest scale to associate our defence of liberty with the re-dress of economic inequalities’. The wartime economy saw ‘all resources…harnessed to the war effort’; in the postwar world, ‘our effort should not be slackened by peace but at once deflected to the tremendous task of solving the problem of poverty’. Controversies between capitalism and socialism should be avoided. McDougall hoped ‘British political instinct will find the way to increase the powers of the State to secure a far wider conception of economic security and yet to retain in large measure the flexibilities and initiative of private enterprise’. In other words, he aspired to what was sometimes called in the United States ‘a middle way’. McDougall concluded with tentative suggestions about an international organisation: it should be based on the experience and machinery of the technical organisations of the League of Nations and the Bruce Committee recommendations.

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36 ‘Notes on the Re-statement of our Aims’, pp. 7–8.
37 Ibid., p. 11.
38 Ibid., p. 21.
39 Ibid., pp. 22–3, 29.
With this memorandum, the elements of McDougall’s postwar vision were largely in place. Predominant were American–British collaboration in the context of internationalism, machinery to enable individual and collective responsibility for assisting less fortunate peoples and states, and association of the defence of liberty with social justice. What remained to be established was a strategy for achieving them.

‘Freedom from want’

On 6 January 1941, a key part of that strategy was provided. In his third Inaugural Address, President Roosevelt pledged increased production of armaments, foreshadowed the Lend–Lease program to assist Britain and called for cooperation from all sectors of the American community. He also declared ‘the mighty action that we are calling for cannot be based on a disregard of all things worth fighting for’. He listed the foundations of a healthy democracy, and he undertook to remedy deficiencies at home. Then he continued:

...we look forward to a world founded upon four essential human freedoms.

The first is freedom of speech and expression—everywhere in the world.

The second is freedom of every person to worship God in his own way—everywhere in the world.

The third is freedom from want, which, translated into world terms, means economic understandings which will secure to every nation a healthy peacetime life for its inhabitants—everywhere in the world.

The fourth is freedom from fear, which, translated into world terms, means a world-wide reduction of armaments to such a point and in such a thorough fashion that no nation will be in a position to commit an act of physical aggression against any neighbour—anywhere in the world.

That is no vision of a distant millennium. It is a definite basis for a kind of world attainable in our own time and generation.40

Bruce and McDougall saw immediately that the worrying possibility of a postwar clash of economic interests between the United States and the British Empire could be avoided by the realisation of ‘Freedom from Want’. Civil servants on both sides of the Atlantic would subject the ‘Four Freedoms’ to close analysis, searching for precise meanings. McDougall was happy to provide his own simple

40 <http://www.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/4free.html> [accessed 8 October 2008].
interpretation of the third: ‘Freedom from want means sufficient food, adequate housing and clothing, reasonable leisure and the means for its enjoyment.’ Problems of oversupply would then dissolve and increased standards of living might be made affordable for two reasons. First, Roosevelt had also promised freedom from fear; if that could be achieved in the peace settlement, resources formerly used for armaments could be devoted to social welfare. And second, industrial countries could not afford to neglect measures to raise standards of living; adequate markets for their products would depend on them.41

A set of typed notes, found in Bruce’s personal files and apparently written in the early months of 1941, spells out a new nutrition campaign based on giving ‘practical expression to the third of President Roosevelt’s four freedoms…and to expand slightly what he means by it’. Roosevelt should ‘strengthen the Allies’ hands in the war of ideas by adding to the concept of freedom that of economic welfare and social justice’. To persuade him, it would be necessary to emphasise that ‘the achievement of these aims is physically practicable but requires some revolutionary thinking’ and that unless the British Empire and the United States ‘do some of this thinking jointly, we may find ourselves poles apart’. Roosevelt need only commit to joint British Empire–US examination of agricultural, trade and health factors involved and the national and international action required to translate the general objective into terms of practical policies.42 The presence of these unsigned notes in Bruce’s own file suggests that he, like McDougall, had seized upon the Four Freedoms as the rhetorical basis for their campaign: although British cooperation remained essential, both men now believed that the best hope of action lay with Roosevelt.

McDougall wrote several short papers on this theme. One proposed a formal US–British agreement to adopt policies of ‘diets adequate for health’ at home and in relief and reconstruction policies.43 Others stressed the importance of the United States as a potential competitor in world export markets and the consequent importance of its placing ‘the standard of living in the forefront of economic policy’. Another worried that commitment to a prosperous British agriculture, as sought by agricultural interests, could ‘prejudice the whole position’ of basing reconstruction on increased consumption and reorientation of agriculture.44

41 Speech, ‘Empire Primary Products in Relation to Post-War Reconstruction’, given on 1 April to a meeting of the Royal Society of the Arts, chaired by Bruce, printed in Journal of the Royal Society of Arts, 25 July 1941. Copy supplied by E. McDougall.
42 NAA, M100, May 1941, untitled, unsigned and undated paper.
43 NLA, MS6890/4/6, ‘Freedom from Want, a beginning’, undated, one-page version.
The American Ambassador

Bruce had a valuable ally in the person of the new American Ambassador, John Gilbert Winant, who replaced the outspoken, defeatist and unpopular Joseph Kennedy early in 1941. Winant was a Republican three-time Governor of New Hampshire, sometimes considered a potential presidential candidate, and an idealist and independent thinker. He supported the New Deal and Roosevelt’s re-election for a third term in 1940 and was personally close to the President and his adviser Harry Hopkins. Winant saw his mission as facilitating understanding between Britain and the United States; he cultivated a wide range of contacts and reported in detail not merely through normal State Department channels, but directly to the President and Hopkins. His allies in Washington included Eleanor Roosevelt, Interior Secretary Harold Ickes, Secretary of War Henry Stimson, and Justice Felix Frankfurter. A notable exception was Cordell Hull. Winant’s Economic Advisor in London, E. F. Penrose, has written:

To him the outbreak of war was an occasion not for suspending public concern with economic and social questions but rather for re-examining the existing order to determine how far past shortcomings had contributed to present strife. He did not believe that political settlements in themselves could provide an enduring basis for peaceful international relationships, and he knew that economic settlements would require long and arduous preparation if the errors made after the First World War were not to be repeated…he took every opportunity, from an early stage of the war, to advise the State Department and sometimes the White House to take constructive action on a variety of postwar international economic matters.

Winant also had experience in international organisation: he was Assistant Director of the International Labour Office in Geneva for a few months in 1935, including the time when the ILO Conference carried the Australian resolution on nutrition. He returned to Geneva in 1937, becoming ILO Director in 1939. In 1940 he oversaw its move to Montreal, whence he was summoned by Roosevelt to his new appointment. In Geneva Bruce had ‘close associations with him’.

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48 NAA, M104, 9(1), Bruce to Fadden, 25 September 1941.
Bruce discussed the nutrition campaign with Winant in May 1941. He found him ‘generally receptive to everything I had been saying…we can I think take it that our ideas are well sold to Winant’. In particular, Winant agreed with Bruce’s view that ‘so far from detracting from the President’s determination to aid the Democracies it would strengthen it, if he had the picture of a practical policy in his mind that was going to help to realise all that he stood for once peace was achieved’. They agreed that Bruce should continue his nutrition campaign in London.49

To press the importance of transatlantic cooperation to the Australian and British Governments, Bruce wrote an untitled memorandum, which he labelled ‘A’, and, with McDougall’s ‘enthusiastic and useful assistance’, another, labelled ‘B’. ‘A’ dealt with the need to reinforce physical force against Germany with the ‘psychological factor’ of assured higher standards of living. ‘B’ was given a title: ‘British–American Understanding.’ It stressed the importance of economic cooperation between Britain and the United States to avoid repetition of inter-

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49 Ibid., M100, May 1941, record of conversation with Winant, 22 May 1941.
war problems and outlined the nutrition campaign. Bruce distributed them widely in London: recipients included Winant, Anthony Eden, press baron Lord Camrose, Home Secretary Herbert Morrison, shipping magnate Sir Alan Anderson, Labour Cabinet member Arthur Greenwood, Lord President of the Council Sir John Anderson, Orr and Sir George Schuster. They were also submitted to the War Cabinet’s Committee on Post-War Economic Problems and Anglo–American Co-operation. They were sent to Menzies on 18 July, but did not reach him before he lost office; Bruce then wrote to the new Australian Prime Minister, Arthur Fadden, recommending he read them. They were also sent to economist Dr Roland Wilson and Rivett in Australia.

Winant believed Britain’s desperate situation was not understood in Washington. At the end of May 1941 he returned at his own request to argue for greater material support. He was invited to stay at the White House so that he could have easy access to Roosevelt and Hopkins, and he saw many other officials. Most of the discussion concerned immediate military assistance to Britain. Winant also took copies of Bruce’s memoranda ‘A’ and ‘B’, and told Bruce he had discussed them with Roosevelt and Vice-President Wallace, who were both ‘very receptive and anxious that some definite steps should be taken’. Back in London at the end of June, he told Eden and the Canadian and South African High Commissioners of his Washington talks on the subject. Bruce was delighted by Winant’s account and with his enthusiasm and grasp of the subject. Winant suggested Bruce send a cable to Wallace expressing his interest in Winant’s report.

Efforts by the International Wheat Advisory Committee to replace the failed 1933 Wheat Agreement had stalled in 1939, but negotiations between Argentina, Canada, Australia, Britain and the United States were resumed in Washington in July 1941. McDougall was to attend. Bruce sent a letter to Wallace with McDougall, stating that ‘McDougall has my complete confidence’ and hoping Wallace would discuss questions of nutrition and agriculture with McDougall personally. He also cabled Wallace on 26 June: ‘extremely interested in Winant’s report of his conversations with you.’ Bruce told Winant of his hope ‘that something to tidy it up might be accomplished while McDougall was in America, and a possible line of action determined upon’.

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50 The papers are in NAA, M103; information about their distribution is in NAA, M104, 9(1).
52 NAA, M104, 9(1), Bruce to Menzies, 18 July 1941.
53 Ibid., M100, record of conversation with Winant, 24 June 1941.
56 NAA, M100, record of conversation with Winant, 24 June 1941.
'I like these Americans'

McDougall travelled to Washington in the summer of 1941. Bruce explained the journey to Fadden, first recounting his concerns about postwar policy and the importance of British–American cooperation, the history of the nutrition question and its advantages for Australia, his discussions with Winant, and Winant’s recent discussions in Washington. He continued:

Soon after the Ambassador returned to London it was decided to send McDougall to Washington to represent Australia at the Wheat Conference. As you know McDougall has worked in very close co-operation with me for many years on these questions and a great part of the results which have been achieved are due to his initiative, industry and perseverance. I decided to take advantage of his visit to America to put him in touch with the Vice President who is playing an increasing part in regard to questions of post war reconstruction, and after consultations with [Australian Minister in Washington R. G.] Casey to sound out American official opinion on these subjects.57

Wartime travel across the Atlantic was dangerous, subject to long delays and to permission from the governments involved. Without the official reason of the wheat negotiations, McDougall might not have made the journey. He left London by air in the first week of July and was forced to spend three ‘trying hot days’ in Lisbon before crossing the Atlantic.58

Washington before the New Deal, according to one observer, had been ‘a small town, mildly important as the seat of the national legislature, a place where President Coolidge habitually had taken a nap after lunch’. The New Deal increased the tempo and the range of government activity: ‘Bright young men and women flocked to Washington…They put in uncounted hours with a gusto.’59 The looming war accelerated industrial recovery; planning to effect Roosevelt’s undertakings of aid to Britain increased the attraction and power of the capital. Journalist Marquis Childs wrote that the atmosphere of wartime Washington was ‘in many ways a reprise of the early New Deal era’.60 McDougall found its energy exhilarating. The Americans he met were enthusiastic about his ideas and keen for Empire–US cooperation. He was busy and confident: ‘I’ve not

57 Ibid., M104, 9(1), Bruce to Fadden, 25 September 1941.
58 Ibid., M104, 9(6), McDougall to Bruce, 19 July 1941.
60 Borgwardt, A New Deal for the World, p. 70.
touched a golf club, indeed apart from one swim I’ve not had a moment before 10 p.m…. The humidity is very great and I feel I could do with a few days quiet in a cool place but it’s all extraordinarily interesting. I like these Americans.’

The most important American to McDougall in 1941 was the Vice President, Henry Agard Wallace, who, as Bruce had hoped, acted as his mentor. McDougall saw Wallace several times in his office and at social occasions. Roosevelt had explained his choice of Wallace as running mate in 1940 in terms both of farm states’ support and of ideology: Wallace would reaffirm the Administration’s domestic and foreign policies. ‘He is no isolationist, he knows what we are up against in this war that is rapidly engulfing the world.’ Norman D. Markowitz writes that Wallace was ‘possessed of a keener intellect than Roosevelt, [but] lacked the charm and cunning with which to build a career of his own in a politics increasingly dominated by personality. His vision, however, remained large and his imagination open.’ Walter J. Samuels describes a figure out of place in the increasing sophistication of Washington: ‘Never a glad-hander or back slapper, he was basically a shy person who felt uncomfortable with strangers and often appeared detached and aloof.’ Although Wallace had ‘many friends and a group of capable advisers in the Department of Agriculture, he was essentially a loner who arrived at positions more on the basis of his own thinking than on the advice or suasion of others.’

Wallace advocated a middle course between isolationism and internationalism. He believed that US policies of the 1920s, limiting the ability of debtor countries to earn dollars, had played a major role in creating world depression and war. In 1940 he set out in a letter to Roosevelt his ideas for postwar economic programs to create stability and improve ‘conditions of life among the common peoples of the world’. They included continuation of Cordell Hull’s reciprocal trade agreement program to ensure freer flow of goods and services, international commodity agreements, a world ever-normal granary to stabilise prices and encourage consumption, and US credit to rebuild war-torn countries, given in such a way as to make debt repayment possible: ‘I would hate to see us again commit the various errors that we committed during the twenties and early thirties.’ ‘The overthrow of Hitler is only half the battle’, he wrote, shortly before Pearl Harbor; Americans should ‘think hard and often about the future peace’. Determining national boundaries and creating a new international organisation would not guarantee a durable peace. Economic planning and a concerted effort to promote industrialisation and improved living standards throughout the world were also necessary.

61 NAA, M104, 9(6), McDougall to Bruce, 19 July 1941.
62 HWD. For the relevant period in 1941, the diaries record only dates of meetings, without detail or comment.
63 Markowitz, People’s Century, pp. 28–31.
64 Samuels, Wallace and American Foreign Policy, p. 35.
65 Ibid., pp. 83–4.
Bruce had instructed McDougall to be guided by Wallace. At their first meeting on 17 July, McDougall found him ‘in good form and spirits and clearly quite keenly interested in our approach’. Wallace suggested McDougall see Assistant Secretary of State Dean Acheson, Dr M. L. Wilson of the Department of Agriculture, Surgeon-General Thomas Parran, and economist Winfield Riefler. McDougall also carried a letter of recommendation from Bruce to Under Secretary of State, Sumner Welles. Welles was interested enough in his ideas to comment, but went no further on their first meeting. McDougall met other senior State Department officers: Assistant Secretaries Dean Acheson and Adolf Berle, and Harry Hawkins, head of the Trade Treaties Section. Most expressed interest and even enthusiasm, but McDougall remained unsure of Acheson’s views. It was not until his visit the following year, and after Orr had also talked to Acheson, that he discovered how far Acheson was prepared to support the nutrition campaign. Following his meeting with Orr later in 1941, Acheson dictated a note supporting ‘the nutrition program recently discussed in Washington by Sir John Orr and Mr McDougall’. He thought the approach would ‘ultimately involve nearly all the most thorny problems of domestic and international finance and economics’, but that efforts ‘should not…be diluted into ultimate problems at the expense of developing the core of the nutrition program’, the success of which might facilitate solution of more difficult problems. He suggested steps for approaching the problem. This paper was intended for McDougall, Orr, Parran and Boudreau. It did reach Boudreau’s office and was filed by a secretary, but was not received by the other three. McDougall commented ruefully in 1942 that as Acheson was the Assistant Secretary directly involved in commercial policy, the paper ‘would have been of great help in dealing with Whitehall’.

Washington’s political and official life extended well beyond its office buildings to evening functions where informal discussion of substantial issues could take place. Wallace took McDougall to a ‘party’ to discuss Empire–US cooperation and presided over a ‘discussion dinner’ with ‘the people engaged in the National Nutrition drive and the two most active scientists. I had to open the show and then for two hours had a barrage of questions and points fired at me. The interest was very keen and the evening most useful.’ Wallace asked McDougall, Wilson and Parran to draft a possible agreement between the United States and British Empire countries ‘on the lines of our suggestion’, and also wanted notes on a possible speech on the subject. He also suggested the three see Eleanor Roosevelt ‘thus to strengthen his own approach to the President’. Casey gave a dinner for Wallace, his guests including British Ambassador Lord Halifax, Minister at the

66 NAA, M104/, 9(6), McDougall to Bruce, 19 July 1941.
67 Ibid., M104, 10, McDougall to Bruce, 4 October 1942. Acheson’s paper, ‘A suggested Program of Work to Develop the Plan of Advanced Standards of Nutrition’, 7 November 1941, is attached.
68 NAA, M104, 9(6), McDougall to Bruce, 19 and 22 July.
British Embassy Dr H. B. Butler, Acheson and Parran: ‘We started serious talk at 9.30 and went straight on to 12.30.’\textsuperscript{69} McDougall dined with the nutrition scientists and Parran and Boudreau for more discussion.

**A US–British Empire conference**

Throughout July the Wheat Conference occupied most of McDougall’s time. By early August a draft Memorandum of Agreement, which McDougall had helped prepare, was ready for submission to governments, allowing the conference to adjourn for 10 days. ‘The wider international business’ was also progressing well. The Americans McDougall met were extremely keen on the early getting together of Empire–US interests both because they feel the need to start now if we are to be successful and also because they seem clearly to realise that there is urgent need of an Anglo–American declaration of post-war purposes if Europe is to be rallied against Hitler.\textsuperscript{70}

The McDougall–Parran–Wilson draft was completed. It aimed ‘to test the practicability’ of an agreement between the United States and British Empire countries to adopt policies to improve the diets of their own peoples and to offer practical assistance to other nations for improved nutrition. Acheson’s staff were keen, but McDougall was dubious about Berle’s suggestion that Latin America be included. He hoped to be able to ‘leave the issue in the Vice President’s hands, put as clearly as possible and in the best form for his use with the President’. McDougall had agreed with the Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Nutrition, Dr Russell Wilder, Parran and others that in March or April 1942 the United States should call a conference of scientists, economists and agriculturalists from the United States, Britain, Canada, Australia and New Zealand to consider the possibility of such an agreement and its application during the reconstruction of Europe. He intended to discuss this idea with Wallace.\textsuperscript{71}

The conference idea was warmly supported by Agriculture Secretary Claude Wickard, Sumner Welles and Harry Hawkins. Welles said he was ‘intensely interested’ in the food proposals as a means of preventing postwar conflicts of interest; when McDougall asked for permission to repeat those words, Welles ‘remarked that I must go further and state that he was “determined to use such influence as he possessed to try and bring the [conference] proposal to a

\textsuperscript{69} Ibid., McDougall to Bruce, 26 July and 1 August.
\textsuperscript{70} Ibid., McDougall to Bruce, 19 July.
\textsuperscript{71} Ibid., Letters of 1, 8 and 11 August.
successful fruition’’. Hawkins told McDougall that the State Department was ‘inclined to attach considerable importance to the idea of putting food policies in the forefront of post-war reconstruction’, and had ‘put one of their men on to examine the whole picture’. He suggested McDougall return early in 1942 to help prepare for the conference. Hawkins, Riefler and Agriculture officials all asked McDougall for ‘suggestions for a programme of work’. The State Department was liaising with Health and Agriculture, where Wickard instructed H. R. Tolley, Director of the Bureau of Agricultural Economics, to keep in touch with Wilson on the matter. Wallace ‘strongly supported’ the idea, but added that the British attitude would determine its future. Thus, to cooperation and a published agreement between the United States and the British Empire, McDougall could now add the idea of a conference at government level.

The five-government agreement drafted by McDougall, Parran and Wilson declared intentions to ‘enable all sections of their own populations to secure a full sufficiency of those kinds of food needed to meet all human physiological requirements’, to pool experience and to establish a ‘joint consultative commission’ to report on necessary ‘adjustments of agriculture and commercial policies’ and steps necessary to help other countries achieve the same ends. McDougall elaborated in memoranda on the national and international benefits of such an agreement; the importance of surveys to establish national resources and demand; desirable adjustments in agriculture; economies possible in distribution; international obstacles to achieving adequacy of food in various countries and to trade in foodstuffs; and a suggestion for a ‘Council on Food Problems’ representing each contracting party.

One of these Washington memoranda had an important effect on his subsequent work. The British Ambassador, Lord Halifax, ‘challenged me to put the whole idea on one sheet of paper. This I have done and enclose the highly concentrated results.’ One wonders how much more effective McDougall and his campaigns might have been had Bruce thought to give him this common bureaucratic instruction much earlier in his career. The ‘highly concentrated’ memorandum makes use of every inch of the single sheet, but loses nothing in scope and gains considerably in comprehensibility. The discipline seems to have been lasting. Subsequent memoranda tended to be shorter: the average length of memoranda written in 1941 is some four pages, compared with nearly 14 pages in 1936.

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73 Ibid., M104, 9(6), handwritten letter to Bruce, 19 August.
74 Ibid., M104, 9(1), ‘Note on Food Policy Discussions in Washington’.
75 Ibid., M104, 9(6), undated draft.
77 Ibid., M104, 9(6), handwritten letter to Bruce, 19 August.
78 Ibid., M104, 9(1) and MS6890/4/6, ‘Freedom from Want a Beginning’, undated.
Wartime shortages of paper and staff may have contributed to the change but it seems likely that Halifax’s challenge, and the experience of working closely with American bureaucrats, finally taught McDougall the value of brevity.

**American–British Cooperation**

In July, Winant, prodded by Bruce’s memoranda ‘A’ and ‘B’, had suggested US–British–dominion talks on economic cooperation, beginning with agriculture and nutrition. Both Winant and Bruce lobbied ministers. Bruce was pleased with their progress, telling McDougall in mid July: ‘position developed considerably since you left.’ He was even more optimistic in mid August: ‘there may be interesting developments following on joint declaration by President and Prime Minister.’ He therefore instructed McDougall to return to London, subject to Wallace’s agreement. McDougall obtained a reservation on a bomber leaving Montreal on 28 August and was back in London on 30 August.

Bruce reported to Canberra that he was convinced by McDougall’s reports and by his own discussions with Winant that ‘the United States Administration is intensely interested in the idea of placing policies with regard to food in the forefront of post-war economic reconstruction’. It was likely that the United States would shortly approach the United Kingdom, which in turn would consult the dominions about holding a conference in the early months of 1942. But Bruce’s habitual pessimism about British ministers, frequently expressed at the end of a record of what otherwise had seemed a useful conversation, was justified; nothing came of his and Winant’s midyear campaign for American–British discussions.

As the year neared its end and the United States was finally drawn into war, a philosophical McDougall set out in memoranda his understanding of the differences between the views of the two allies on postwar planning. There were ‘encouraging’ signs in Washington that Americans realised that ‘security and welfare cannot be attained in isolation’; that ‘America’s best interest will be served by the generous use of American resources to promote reconstruction in other countries’. The United States was thinking in ‘large scale terms’ of schemes such as a Tennessee Valley Authority for the Danube Valley, of proposals to stabilise world agricultural and raw material prices and to raise the standard

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79 Ibid., M104, 9(1), Bruce to Menzies, 18 July.
80 Ibid., M100, July 1941, cable from Bruce to McDougall, 12 July; M104, 9(6). 15 August.
81 Ibid., M104, 9(6), handwritten letter to Bruce, 19 August.
82 Ibid., M104, 9(1). Bruce to Fadden, 25 September.
of living in raw material producing countries. Cooperation with the United States would achieve ‘an era of security in which all countries will be able to engage in a campaign against poverty and in the organisation of well-being’.84

Whitehall, on the other hand, was obsessed with the difficulties Britain would face after the war. Treasury worried about postwar balances of payment; the Ministry of Agriculture and farmers wanted to protect high-priced domestic agriculture; imperial enthusiasts feared the threat to imperial preferential tariffs in US multilateralism. McDougall believed nevertheless that a much wider section of official opinion—including some Treasury figures, economists in the War Cabinet Secretariat, principal officials of the Board of Trade, Labour members of the War Cabinet, and The Times, Manchester Guardian and the Economist—was convinced the difficulties must be overcome. The alternative for Britain was balance-of-power politics in a Europe dominated by the USSR, heavy military commitments undermining material welfare and strain on the cohesion of the Commonwealth:

There is really no choice. The advantages of co-operation with America are overwhelming, the disadvantages of its failure are so patent that every Empire Government will determine that nothing must stand in the way of joint action to secure for ourselves and for the world…Freedom from Fear.85

McDougall’s Washington experience had led him by then to abandon ideas of reworking Geneva organisations, which would not be acceptable to the US Congress or to the USSR. League of Nations and ILO staff and expertise, however, should still be used.86

Progress in the War of Ideas

By 1942 McDougall’s definition of political warfare was precise:

Its object is to achieve the political purposes of the State, either without bloodshed or, after hostilities have commenced, to ease the tasks of the Armed Forces. Its purpose is to undermine enemy morale, to secure Allies, and to strengthen the will to victory of our own people and those associated with us. It is the war of Ideas.87

84 Ibid., pp. 8–10.
85 Ibid., p. 10.
87 Ibid., A 2937, ‘Political Warfare’, secret memorandum, 4 May 1942.
In the immediate aftermath of Pearl Harbor, American interest in postwar matters was temporarily diverted. Riefler warned a small dinner group including McDougall that ‘America was today an angry nation’; effective public discussion of postwar reconstruction projects would have to wait until there had been some military successes. American–British agreement was urgent, nevertheless, so that plans could be announced as soon as those victories had been achieved, and Americans would welcome early action on nutrition.88

McDougall’s own sense of urgency was soon jolted. In April 1942 Bruce arranged for him to be briefed on the British political warfare organisation. He visited its headquarters, met regional directors for German, French and Scandinavian areas, and attended a meeting of the Political Warfare (Japan) Committee at the Foreign Office. He made it clear he did not want to know the techniques of ‘black’ warfare, but ‘desired to understand the major problems…the lines of policies adopted, and the particular gaps which existed in the political warfare armory’. He found that the British authorities ‘considered that they now knew as much about how to conduct war propaganda as Goebbels. What they really lack is the most effective material.’ Political warfare used weapons based on fear or hope. ‘So far as the United Nations were concerned, fear was not a factor which could operate’; the authorities therefore needed ‘hopes which are both substantial and definite’. But each official McDougall spoke to

said that they are, in effect, carrying on with their right hand tied behind their backs so long as there is no predominantly British plan for the future of Europe. Europe, in effect, wants to know what we are prepared to do with our power once we have broken Nazi domination.

On economic and social issues, the Atlantic Charter was ‘too vague to be of much value’; the need was for definite plans for the welfare of particular areas; undertakings ‘for co-operation of a practical kind to maintain full employment, to improve standards of living, to reduce social inequality’. He noted the statement of a former Bulgarian official: ‘we know what Germany will give us and we don’t like it, we know what Russia will give us and we are doubtful whether we like it. We have no idea what Britain and America will give us and so we feel compelled to choose between Germany and Russia.’89

While none of this was really new to McDougall, the sense of urgency and of the desperate need for ‘ammunition’ in the ‘war of ideas’ and the unanimity of the demand for action all galvanised and reshaped his campaign yet again. Much of what he learned, and in particular the sense of urgency, reappeared in a new memorandum called ‘Progress in the War of Ideas’, which exists in several locations and forms. The first version was written hurriedly after discussion

89 Ibid., A 2937, ‘Political Warfare’, secret memorandum, 4 May 1942.
with Bruce in July 1942 when McDougall was about to set off on another visit to the United States. He jotted down two and a half pages summarising their conclusions, which began, in part:

The vigorous prosecution of the War of Ideas is essential because: —

Our political warfare directed towards enemy-occupied countries lacks ammunition…

Our own peoples need the stimulus of positive ideas if they are to give full support for an all out offensive effort…

To win the peace, we must secure agreement now regarding many of the methods of international co-operation which will be essential. If we delay until the end of the war, we are almost certain to fail.

The tone was urgent. Concrete proposals were needed now to give body to the vague terms of the Atlantic Charter and President Roosevelt’s ‘Four Freedoms’. Severe winter food shortages were predicted for Europe in its third year of war: ‘Men’s minds everywhere will be concerned with food. This will be the time for the United Nations to present to the world the picture of how they propose, on the food front at least, to secure “Freedom from Want, everywhere in the World”.’ Some economic issues would take time to solve, but for others immediate steps were practicable. Food was essential and the need was measurable: ‘there are many advantages in starting the United Nations’ campaign against poverty with a limited and realisable objective.’ Planning should begin for assessing all countries’ food requirements and resources, special problems of backward areas and methods of safeguarding the interests of both producers and consumers of key commodities.90

The nutrition campaign had reached solid ground. The combined impacts of the American visit and the briefing on the needs of political warfare had given it purpose and definition. The urgent need for ‘Progress in the War of Ideas’ would be the basis of McDougall’s discussions during his next visit to Washington.