9. ‘A Keen Outsider’

Summary

McDougall returned to Washington in 1942, bringing with him rudimentary notes on ‘Progress in the War of Ideas’. He came at a time when prominent members of the Administration were calling for a peace based on higher standards of living. Vice President Wallace arranged introductions for him, including a meeting with Eleanor Roosevelt, which led to his dining with the President. He was also encouraged by Under Secretary of State, Sumner Welles, and Assistant Secretary of State, Adolf Berle.

Although deeply divided, the State Department was responsible for postwar planning; McDougall was briefed on progress by key officials and asked to facilitate discussions with the Department of Agriculture. During the process of rewriting ‘Progress in the War of Ideas’ in consultation with these officials, the memorandum was read by many influential people, including the Roosevelts. McDougall was also asked to prepare a draft program for action on food and agriculture. Under his direction, the Department of Agriculture prepared 12 papers that were discussed by an ‘assessment group’ of senior officials in the Agriculture and State Departments. A final draft of ‘Progress in the War of Ideas’, renamed ‘Draft Memorandum on a United Nations Program for Freedom from Want of Food’, became the fourth of the seminal documents subsequently published by FAO.

This chapter considers possible reasons for the privileged treatment McDougall was given in Washington: that he was seen as Australian rather than British; that his ideas on social justice and nutrition were mirrored in the United States; and that he came at a propitious time. Finally an attempt is made to assess the extent to which McDougall’s work influenced Roosevelt’s decision to call the conference at Hot Springs early in 1943.

McDougall’s Third Visit to Washington: August to October 1942

Wheat negotiations had continued in 1941 after McDougall left Washington, and the resulting Memorandum of Agreement to attend an International Wheat Conference and to establish an International Wheat Council was initialled by
government representatives, including Australia’s Edwin McCarthy. Thus McDougall had an official reason to return in 1942. As Bruce later reported to Labor Prime Minister, John Curtin, who had taken office in October 1941:

...you cabled to me suggesting that Mr F. L. McDougall should go to Washington to attend the first meeting of the International Wheat Council. I greatly welcomed this suggestion as...it afforded an opportunity of ascertaining, relatively at first hand, the trend of thought in the United States with regard to post-war reconstruction through the contacts made when I took McDougall with me to Washington in 193[8] which were renewed, in his case, when he went there last year.¹

McDougall left Bristol on 31 July for a 16-hour flight across the Atlantic to New Brunswick via Eire and Newfoundland, reaching New York late on Saturday, 1 August, and Washington the next day. The Wheat Council was established soon afterwards with Paul Appleby as Chairman and Andrew Cairns as Secretary, but McDougall did not return to London until 29 October.

McDougall took with him notes headed ‘Progress in the War of Ideas’, urging the need to establish concrete allied plans for the postwar world to be used as ‘ammunition in the war of ideas’ in the winter of 1942–43, when Axis morale was expected to be vulnerable. As in 1941, he also took with him letters of commendation to Vice President Henry Wallace, and Under Secretary of State Sumner Welles.

The previous May, in an encouraging sign that the US Administration had recovered from the shock of Pearl Harbor, which temporarily paralysed thinking about postwar planning, Wallace had made his most famous broadcast, saying:

The peace must mean a better standard of living for the common man, not merely in the United States and England, but also in India, Russia, China and Latin America—not merely in the United Nations, but also in Germany and Italy and Japan.

Some have spoken of the ‘American Century’. I say that the century on which we are entering—the century which will come out of this war—can be and must be the century of the common man...No nation will have the God-given right to exploit other nations. Older nations will have the privilege to help younger nations get started on the path to industrialization, but there must be neither military nor economic materialism...

¹ DAFP VI, 78, Bruce to Curtin, 22 November 1942, pp. 157–8.
Those who write the peace must think of the whole world. There can be no privileged peoples...we cannot perpetuate economic warfare without planting the seeds of military warfare. We must use our power at the peace table to build an economic peace that is just, charitable and enduring.\(^2\)

Soon afterwards, Sumner Welles, whose words were generally taken as an indication of Roosevelt's thinking, spoke of the 'frontier of human welfare'. He declared there must be no repetition of US failure to ensure reconstruction after World War I. He also acknowledged need for an international police power in the postwar world, and that the United Nations would become the nucleus of a future world organisation. For constitutional reasons, 'United Nations' was the preferred US term for all countries fighting against the Axis. Welles denounced discrimination on grounds of race, creed and colour, and said 'the age of imperialism was ended'.\(^3\) From the British Embassy, Isaiah Berlin reported to London that Welles chaired a secret State Department advisory committee on postwar reconstruction; the speech was likely to have been inspired by committee members. Berlin understood that views already established in the Administration and particularly likely to appeal to Americans included abolition of colonial empires and equal access for all democracies to raw materials. He understood that Roosevelt talked privately in similar fashion to Welles's speech.\(^4\)

More encouraging speeches followed, including one by Dean Acheson, who also declared determination to avoid the mistakes of the past and to reject 'special privileges and vindictive exclusions'. United action was necessary to achieve increased production, employment, trade and consumption, and to meet

a need such as we have never known to move goods between nations—to feed and clothe and house millions whose consumption has for years been below minimum requirements, to restore devastation, to build and rebuild all the means of production, and, in the years beyond, to move that far greater volume of goods required by the standards we are determined to achieve.\(^5\)

While to some British ears such statements veiled an attack on Britain's interests—in particular, on the Ottawa tariff preference system—they also signalled a welcome rejection of isolationism and a vision very much in accord with that of Bruce and McDougall. On 18 July, the *Economist* published what McDougall

\(^2\) NAA, M104, 10, ‘The Price of Free World Victory’, text of broadcast address, 8 May 1942.


\(^4\) Ibid., 11 June 1942, pp. 43–4.

\(^5\) NAA, M104, 10, ‘Building in War for Peace’, text of speech at the Institute of Public Affairs, University of Virginia, 6 July, sent to Bruce 24 July 1942.
described as ‘a very remarkable article’ summarising recent speeches by leading Americans on postwar reconstruction. The tenor of the paper’s comments is reflected in the following passages scattered throughout:

War is seen as part of a continuous process whose roots lie deep in poverty, insecurity, starvation and unemployment.

Here is a new thesis, a far deeper view of social and international responsibility than was ever enunciated at the close of the last war…

Above all, it seeks to put an end to isolationism, not only on the grounds of comradeship and world solidarity, but also in plain self interest.

The key is expanding markets…a future planned ‘in terms of increase and not curtailment’.

Let there be no mistake about it. The policy put forward by the American Administration is revolutionary. It is a genuinely new conception of world order. It is an inspiring attempt to restate democracy in terms of the twentieth century situation, and to extend its meaning in the economic and social sphere.

The sting in the article was criticism of British failure to make ‘a concrete and creative reply’ to these speeches from ‘the most progressive elements in America’.6 The auspices nevertheless seemed good for McDougall’s visit.

Bruce’s letter to Wallace began with congratulations on his May speech:

I need hardly tell you how greatly I am in accord with what you then said. The series of speeches by responsible men in the United States which have followed your broadcast are most encouraging…McDougall knows my views on economic and social questions and he will be able to convey to you much that I could not write.

He wrote in similar terms to Welles.7

Bruce’s hopes were amply fulfilled. Henry Wallace and Sumner Welles acted as mentors to McDougall for the next three months. They introduced him to useful people, they suggested strategies, they even sought his help and advice. Through Welles, he gained access to high levels of State Department thinking on postwar planning. Wallace gave him access to other parts of the Administration and to the White House. And they used him as a facilitator to achieve cooperation between parts of the Administration generally at loggerheads.

6 Ibid., A989, 43/735/658, typed copy of article in the Economist, 18 July 1942, sent by McDougall to Canberra.
7 Ibid., M104, 10, letters to Wallace and Welles, 29 July 1942.
Henry Wallace

McDougall first had a brief meeting with Wallace, who said his coming was ‘timely and very welcome...he asked me to see a number of people and then see him again. He told me to seek an interview with Mrs Roosevelt.’ Wallace probably made that arrangement himself as he and others used Eleanor Roosevelt as a conduit for raising issues with the President. McDougall subsequently reported to Bruce that his luncheon with Mrs Roosevelt occurred ‘owing to a suggestion by the Vice President’.9

Wallace noted in his diary that McDougall

thinks the time has come for the President to speak out clearly with regard to how the United Nations are going to make the world ability to produce abundantly, work in terms of a higher standard of living for all the people. He thinks if something of this sort is said very clearly and very strongly, it will have a decisive effect on the people of Germany.10

At a much longer meeting a few days later, McDougall found Wallace

for the first time...very easy to talk with and he showed the keenest interest in the Food approach and saw at once its significance for political warfare. He wants to see if it is possible to go right ahead but considers that this mainly depends upon whether we can get the State Department to take the right line.

He gave me his views of leading personalities here and said that the key people at the State Department for these purposes were Sumner Welles, Berle and Acheson...

Wallace asked me to see the people in the Office of War Information about the political warfare aspects of the Food approach...

Wallace was also keenly interested in the Security aspects of buffer stocks or as he prefers to say ‘ever-normal granaries’.11

Wallace wrote in his diary: ‘McDougall was visioning a committee to work on this problem of international food planning.’ They discussed this to the extent of listing suitable members.12 Tolley recorded this discussion in the first sentences of his memoirs regarding the Hot Springs conference: ‘On August 12,
1942, Henry Wallace and Frank H. McDougall [sic] decided that a good United Nations food committee would consist of Alvin Hansen, Dr Thomas Parran… Winfield Riefler, Dean Acheson and myself.’13 Alvin Hansen was a Harvard economist at the centre of a group known as ‘the American Keynesians’ who had been opposing ‘pump priming’ by private capital, advocating instead programs of public spending, redistributive taxation and full employment.14

The State Department

The State Department in 1940 was overwhelmed by intrigue and fatigue…Secretary of State Cordell Hull

complained openly and often about prima donnas of the department. [Assistant Secretary Adolf] Berle ranked high on that list because he showed ‘extreme egotism and ambition’, worked almost exclusively to the President and covered too much ground in the Department. Hull also distrusted Welles…[who] increasingly acted independently of Hull in 1940 because he anticipated that in 1941 either Hull would be President and sack him or Roosevelt would be President and sack Hull. It seemed inconceivable that Hull, Welles and Berle would be around for a third Roosevelt term.15

All three were still there in 1942 and, if anything, relations were worse. Ranged on the side of Hull were Assistant Secretaries Breckenridge Long and Dean Acheson. Acheson later wrote that Hull, ‘suspicious by nature…brooded over what he thought were slights and grievances…His hatreds were implacable…long cold ones’. Hull’s relations with Roosevelt were strained from the first by economic problems, beginning with the London Economic Conference of 1933, ‘torpedoed by the President with the Secretary on the bridge’: Roosevelt’s decision to float the dollar was announced just before the conference began. Hull’s determination to liberalise international trade was thwarted by policies like Wallace’s AAA, while Roosevelt turned more and more ‘to other, more energetic, more imaginative, more sympathetic collaborators’, to the extent that Hull, ‘the senior Cabinet officer, became one of the least influential members at the White House’. Even in his own department, ‘the Secretary’s influence and authority were diluted’, particularly after Welles became Under Secretary. Unlike the ‘slow, circuitous, cautious’ Hull, Welles, with his ‘incisive mind and decisive nature…grasped ideas quickly and got things done. More and more he

14 Borgwardt, A New Deal for the World, p. 137.
15 Schwarz, Liberal, pp. 134–5.
took over liaison with the White House on international political matters. Mr Hull rankled under what he believed to be Welles’s disloyalty and the President’s neglect.’ The department became divided into ‘Welles men’ and ‘Hull men’.\(^{16}\)

Acheson and Adolf Berle were both responsible for aspects of postwar planning. Acheson records that his own relations with Welles were good, but that he and Berle disliked one another: ‘for four years…we maintained a wary coexistence on the second floor of old State, separated by the offices of the Secretary and Under Secretary, who side by side managed to do the same thing.’ The dysfunction spread downwards. Bureaucratic power rested essentially with division chiefs and advisers who were also ‘constantly at odds, if not at war…obscurity in lines of command of the assistant secretaries permitted the division chiefs to circumvent them at will and go directly to the Secretary or Under Secretary’.\(^{17}\)

By the time of his second meeting with Wallace, McDougall had also seen Welles. Sumner Welles had a formidable reputation. He was described by columnists as ‘one of the most-discussed human enigmas in Washington’ and as ‘this tall, powerfully built, beautifully-tailored man with the glacial manner, and an expression which suggests that a morsel of bad fish has somehow or other lodged itself in his mustache’.\(^{18}\) Welles was close to Roosevelt, ran the State Department and wielded major influence in US foreign policy. Remarkably, Welles himself sought a meeting with McDougall, who reported to Bruce:

> He could not have been more cordial, it was quite remarkable. He spoke of you with great admiration. He said that my coming over delighted him and that he hoped I should be here for some time. He then gave me a brief outline of the work being done on post-war problems in the State Department and said that while he did not propose to discuss this work with the U.K. at this stage he would discuss it with me after I had seen a number of people. I said that if he regarded me as your personal representative and not as an accredited representative of the Commonwealth Government I thought I could discuss any post-war question. He asked me to see Berle and Acheson and get other names from them and then he would devote much time to a general discussion of American ideas of post-war. He was impressed with the need of concrete plans for political warfare and said that he thought you and he were very close in ideas.\(^{19}\)


\(^{17}\) Ibid., pp. 14–16.


\(^{19}\) NAA, M104, 10, handwritten letter, 11 August 1942.
McDougall added as a postscript: ‘Whatever the level of your stock elsewhere it’s very high here.’

McDougall understood that external economic relations had been the subject of a bureaucratic battle between the State Department and the Board of Economic Warfare (BEW), headed by Wallace, with Milo Perkins as his deputy. Early in 1942, BEW had sought control over Lend-Lease (a move soon dropped) and the Reconstruction Finance Corporation (RFC) purchasing of strategic supplies. Opposition came particularly from Secretary of Commerce, Jesse Jones, head of RFC, and a determined opponent of apparent BEW aims to combine its operations with social justice policies, thus ignoring the needs of US business in sourcing strategic materials. Conservative opinion was further alienated by accusations of a ‘communist front’ in BEW and an earlier obscenity case against a BEW employee. A Presidential Order in April required automatic approval of BEW funding requests, but left RFC subsidiaries under the control of Jones. The order, however, also gave BEW authority to advise the State Department on terms of Lend-Lease agreements, and for BEW representatives to negotiate with economic warfare agents of foreign governments, leading Welles to protest against the creation of ‘a second State Department and a second foreign service’. Roosevelt subsequently authorised a series of compromises making BEW personnel abroad responsible to local chiefs of mission, thus handing control to the State Department. The war between Jones and Wallace was to continue until the very public ‘Battle of Washington’ in mid 1943, arising from charges by Wallace that the RFC had procrastinated in procurement of vital war materials, including quinine. The result was an executive order abolishing both BEW and the procurement functions of RFC, establishing a new Foreign Economic Administration under Leo Crowley, and publicly humiliating Wallace. It has been suggested that Hull feared BEW powers might be expanded to include negotiation of a postwar economic settlement, which would be a reasonable move ‘if the administration had seriously considered creating any administrative vehicle for the world New Deal’. But, adds Norman D. Markowitz:

Roosevelt the broker had always dealt on the basis of existing power. From the outset the BEW’s plans to combine the war emergency with model programs for economic development and improved labor and welfare standards abroad became subordinate to the superior power of the State Department and the President’s need to retain the appearance of unity within his administration.20

The State Department was effectively declared in control of postwar planning. As a result, wrote McDougall, the department was ‘spurred into quite vigorous activity’: committees had been established on all aspects of political and economic

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20 Markowitz, The Rise and Fall of the People’s Century, pp. 66–74.
reconstruction, chaired by Assistant Secretaries of State and including senior officials from other departments and some non-officials. Responsible to these were subcommittees and a research section directed by Leo Pasvolsky, ‘a rather key person since he has Mr Hull’s special confidence’. The general approach seemed ‘very international and liberal’, but progress varied: a committee on ‘Monetary and Banking’ under Assistant Secretary Berle was drafting its report and work had been progressing on world transport questions. On food and agriculture, Paul Appleby, Under Secretary of the Department of Agriculture, was ‘regarded as a rather key man’, but little progress had been made because key men from the Bureau of Agricultural Economics had been moved to war agencies. Now, after several meetings at Wallace’s request between Bureau head, Howard Tolley, and McDougall, Tolley was ‘working out a tentative scheme’. State Department preparations were ‘being kept pretty secret. It is only because Mr Welles definitely authorized talks with me that I am being given information. The [British] Embassy has not, so far as I know been given more than hints at the scale of the State Department’s operations.’ In fact, Isaiah Berlin had reported on 11 June that a State Department advisory committee on postwar reconstruction, presided over by Welles, met weekly, but ‘discussions, and indeed the existence of this committee, are strictly secret’. There was, wrote McDougall, a strong view that Winant had erred in giving the impression in London that the United States was ready for talks: ‘the State Department is determined to clear its mind before proceeding to Anglo–American discussions.’

Adolf Berle

After Sumner Welles, Assistant Secretary Adolf Berle was McDougall’s most important contact in the State Department. Berle’s reputation was equally formidable; indeed, Welles has been described as ‘one of the few people in Washington who could match Berle for intellectual arrogance’. Berle was ‘a ganglion of complexes. Known to be short-tempered, difficult, abusive, snobbish and elitist, [he] was unexpectedly genial and generous with his time with strangers who dared to seek him out in spite of his forbidding reputation.’ This, and doubtless his genuine interest in McDougall’s message, meant it was the genial Berle whom McDougall encountered. During ‘a long evening’ together, Berle ‘said that Mr Welles had asked him to give me a clear idea of the way in which the State Department was approaching the whole reconstruction problem’. On 7 September, McDougall had a two-hour meeting with Berle,

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21 NAA, M104, 10, McDougall to Bruce, 19 August 1942; Nicholas, Washington Despatches, p. 43.
22 Schwarz, Liberal, p. 189.
23 Ibid., p. 203.
24 NAA, M104, 10, letter to Bruce, 19 August.
who showed him, in confidence, State Department papers on postwar planning. Berle also gave McDougall some tactical advice, suggesting that he make a point of seeing Cordell Hull since his close association with Wallace made his approach to the Administration ‘rather lop-sided’. McDougall did not manage to see Hull, but did meet Hull supporter Dean Acheson, and worked closely with Harry Hawkins, head of the Trade Treaties Section and a close associate in Hull’s multilateral trade campaign.

Because of the link McDougall was making between political warfare and food policy, he also saw Archibald MacLeish, second-in-command of the Office of War Information (OWI), and officers of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS). On Wallace’s instruction, he read a draft relief and rehabilitation policy, later emphasising to Milo Perkins and Riefler the importance of coordinating short-term relief measures with long-term reconstruction policies.

**The White House**

The meeting Wallace had suggested with Eleanor Roosevelt took place over lunch at the White House on Saturday, 15 August. ‘She was very nice and friendly, and suggested the possibility of getting me to dinner to have a chance of a few words with the President. I should not be surprised if this benevolent intention failed to materialize.’ In spite of his doubts, McDougall dined at the White House, seated next to the President, at a ‘family dinner’ on 24 August. Other guests were Roosevelt’s close adviser Harry Hopkins and his wife, who were living at the White House, and ‘several young people associated with Mrs Roosevelt’s activities’.

The President was in good form and talked with great animation. I did not attempt to press our ideas too hard but talked to him about the war of ideas and the need for ammunition for that war in the shape of concrete schemes to give real meaning to the Atlantic Charter and to the phrase Freedom from Want. He seemed to like that line of country and could not have been nicer. After dinner we saw a film and then the President retired to work. He is certainly a most remarkable man and his immense vivacity is extraordinarily attractive. I am very grateful to Mrs Roosevelt for arranging this opportunity.

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25 DAFP VI, 40, p. 82–3, letter to Bruce, 6 and 7 September.
26 NAA, M104, 10, private note for Board of Economic Warfare, ‘Relief and Reconstruction, Joint or Separate Agencies, some Pros and Cons’, n.d., enclosed with letter to Bruce, 20 August.
27 Ibid., letter to Bruce, 19 August.
28 DAFP VI, 29, p. 62, letter to Bruce, 26 August 1942.
At the request of Mrs Roosevelt, McDougall later chaired a round-table discussion of the International Students Assembly.29

Figure 17 F. L. McDougall presenting a copy of the Story of FAO by Gove Hambidge to Eleanor Roosevelt in 1955.

Source: E. McDougall.

Rewriting ‘Progress in the War of Ideas’

McDougall’s memorandum ‘Progress in the War of Ideas’, brought to Washington in rough note form, underwent a series of revisions. On the weekend preceding his White House dinner, he worked over it with Harry Hawkins and other State Department officials. He sent Bruce a copy of the new version and another to Mrs Roosevelt with his letter of thanks for the dinner meeting, commenting that he thought the case for urgent action was ‘overwhelmingly strong’. She replied that she was ‘most interested’ in the memorandum.30

29 DAFP VI, 40, pp. 79–80, letter to Bruce, 6 and 7 September.
30 Ibid.; Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, handwritten letter to Mrs Roosevelt, 25 August, with copy of seven-page version of ‘Progress in the War of Ideas’, and Mrs Roosevelt’s reply, 26 August.
On 25 August he dined with Wallace, Milo Perkins, Harold Butler, Riefler and a ‘remarkable young Englishwoman, [economist] Barbara Ward’. His exposition on that occasion of the ideas in the memorandum is recorded in Wallace’s diary:

McDougall held forth as usual on the psychological value of the weapons which we have in the form of food. His battlecry is ‘Freedom from want everywhere in the world’. He would have established a number of technical expert commissions to study and report on the freedom from want problems in the different parts of the world. The commissions would report to an economic council of the United Nations which would make decisions based on the reports, arrange for publicity and in effect become a munitions factory for the war of ideas. There should be the closest possible co-operation with the Office of War Information in the United States and the British Ministry of Information.

The following evening he was taken by Wallace to dine with Francis Miller and his wife. Miller was Chairman of the Donovan Committee on Psychological Warfare. His wife, Helen Hill Miller, was American correspondent for the Economist. She had been an executive of the National Policy Committee, founded by her husband, which advocated support for Britain and an end to isolationism. She had served as liaison between the British Ambassador and the Administration and had worked as a writer for Henry Wallace when he was Agriculture Secretary. Also present were staff of OWI and OSS. McDougall talked of timing a psychological offensive to coincide with German morale reaching a new low in the coming winter as difficulties with food and transport increased. After dinner they discussed the latest version of ‘Progress in the War of Ideas’, Wallace reading aloud and pausing for comment as he went. McDougall made further revisions as a result of these ‘constructive comments’. During a meeting lasting one and a half hours, he gave the final version to Wallace, who described it in his diary as

a most interesting memorandum. The essence of the McDougall approach is that Germany is much weaker internally than we realize, that we must hit her with everything we have now, that the situation is perhaps a little bit like it was in October of 1917. We must remember that Wilson came out with his 14 points in January of 1918 [and although the German Army inflicted defeats on the British and French between March and July] nevertheless the 14 points took hold; the German psychology crumbled.

31 DAFP VI, 29, letter to Bruce, 26 August 1942.
32 HWD, 25 August 1942.
34 NAA, M104, letter to Bruce, 1 September.
Wallace lunched with the President that day and gave him a copy of the memorandum, together with a clipping from The New York Times urging ‘now was the time to strike with single-mindedness on all fronts including the psychological...The President read the four pages of the memorandum very carefully’. There is thus firm evidence that Roosevelt read ‘Progress in the War of Ideas’.

Berle read it and agreed that a psychological offensive should be prepared and ready for launching as soon as Roosevelt and Churchill thought the time right. But he also thought that priority should be given to enunciation of policy for an international bank, to reassure Americans that the financial burden of reconstruction would not fall upon them. Standards of living should be placed in the forefront to explain that ‘use of US gold reserves to secure economic activity will be reflected in increased demands for U.S.A. goods and hence more employment in factory and farm’. McDougall told Bruce that he found Berle’s point about the politics of US public opinion persuasive.

With Welles absent from Washington, Berle thought he might himself discuss the food and agriculture campaign with Roosevelt, though he admitted he did not ‘fully understand’ it. He gave helpful advice. Under Secretary of Agriculture Paul Appleby had been asked to produce a document, which had ‘hung fire’. McDougall should work with Appleby ‘in getting the position clear’. Berle gave Hull a copy of ‘Progress in the War of Ideas’, and Hull told Hawkins ‘it seemed to contain much sound sense’. Hawkins told McDougall that Wallace had insisted the President read it.

Thus, by early September, after some five weeks in Washington, McDougall had talked to the Roosevelts and Harry Hopkins, to Wallace, and to much of the senior echelon of the Departments of State and Agriculture. He had met, socially or officially, the second-in-command of OWI, staff of OSS, the Director of BEW and the Chairman of the Committee on Psychological Warfare. He had talked with senior economists Winfield Riefler and Alvin Hansen, and had held ‘long talks’ with officials at the British Embassy responsible for relevant areas of economic policy, Harold Butler and Redvers Opie. A two-day meeting of the League Economic Committee early in his visit brought him in touch once more with international economic experts, including Britain’s Leith Ross, Sir Frederick Phillips, Chairman of the League Financial Committee, Canada’s Deputy Minister of Finance, W. C. Clark, and American Henry Grady.

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35 HWD, 26 August 1942.
36 DAFP VI, 40, pp. 80–3, letter to Bruce, 6 and 7 September.
37 Ibid.
38 NAA, M104, 10, letters to Bruce, 19 August and 11 August [handwritten].
McDougall always enjoyed drafting ‘in committee’ and made good use of the information and advice he was given. The outcome of all this discussion was a revision of the rough notes on ‘Progress in the War of Ideas’ he had brought with him. The two and a half pages had expanded to a polished memorandum of more than four, carefully crafted to appeal to Americans.39

A seven-page revision follows the outline of the first version, but is clearer and much more telling. Paragraphs are shorter and the text is punchier: ‘the military offensive now being demanded by the peoples of U.S.A. and the British Empire must be paralleled by a psychological offensive.’ Subject headings have been added: ‘The Psychological Factor’, ‘The Time Factor’, ‘Ammunition for the War of Ideas’, ‘An Immediate Programme’, and ‘Methods of Progress’. New ideas have been added. Historical examples show the value of ideas in winning wars: the French revolutionary army even before Napoleon; the Union Army in 1863 after the Emancipation Proclamation; and Wilson’s Fourteen Points in 1918. Two new points address international and US domestic sensitivities. First, ideas should be put forward not as American, or even as Anglo–American, but as of the United Nations, to avoid ‘suggestions about American imperialism or of an Anglo–American hegemony’. Second, tackling hunger ‘can show our own farmers how their war-time efforts can be correlated with the health requirements of our own peoples and of the rest of the world’.

Most significantly, a vague reference in the first version to assessment of food requirements by ‘the best experts’ has now become investigation by ‘technical commissions’ reporting to ‘an Economic Council of the United Nations’, which would then ‘take decisions…arrange for publicity and thus become the munitions factory in the war of ideas’. Ideas could be disseminated by the US OWI and Britain’s Ministry of Information, aiming at ‘vigorous discussion of our aims [being] reflected to enemy and enemy-occupied countries’. The draft concludes with the words: ‘It is essential to draw the peoples of the world into the process of discussion…because our hope of actually achieving the Four Freedoms will depend upon the people wanting them enough.’40

A third and final version is the one Wallace showed President Roosevelt on 2 September.41 Changes from the second version are mostly cosmetic. The

39 There are various copies, mostly undated. The first rough notes occupy two and a half single-spaced pages. The seven-page revision, that sent to Eleanor Roosevelt, is double-spaced. The final version, that shown by Wallace to the President, is little changed and exists in at least two forms: a single-spaced copy of four and a half pages and a double-spaced copy of eight.


41 It exists in two forms, one of which is dated Washington, 1 September 1942. A single-spaced dated copy of four and a half pages is in NLA, MS6890/4/4, and another in NAA/CSIR, A9778/4, M1 N43. An undated version, annotated ‘further copy’ in McDougall’s own hand, is in NLA, MS6890/4/4, and another in NAA, M104, 10.
five sections are retained, though the first title, 'The Psychological Factor', is omitted. Much of the text is unaltered, but it has been polished and tightened, with sentences and paragraphs further shortened. It begins:

The purpose of the United Nations is first to win the war and then to win the peace.

To win the war we must pass from the defensive to the offensive and utterly destroy the German and Japanese military despotisms.

To win the peace we must, during the war, reach agreements which will determine the pattern of the post war world.

The simultaneous prosecution of these two purposes is necessary since the factor of political warfare can be of tremendous importance.

The final version includes one new idea:

...current fears of some business men, trade unionists and farmers that the war production programme will be followed by surplus capacity and unemployment is proving a psychological obstacle to an all out war effort. We must convince them that an expanding world economy will bring them freedom from these fears.

In subsequent weeks, many influential people in the Administration read the paper. McDougall told Bruce, for example, that Supreme Court Justices Jackson, Douglas and Frankfurter were all 'greatly interested'. It is not clear how many of the readers, including Roosevelt, knew that the ideas contained in it originated with McDougall. None of the copies cited here bears his name, but the information may well have been given informally. His discussions were so widespread that his ideas must have been generally known even before copies of the memorandum were circulated. Bruce gave him some credit: in sending a copy of the final draft to Stafford Cripps, then British Ambassador to the Soviet Union, he described it as originating ‘from a paper which McDougall drafted after discussions with me here’, revised in discussion with ‘either the State Department or Wallace’s people’ and ‘indicating something of what is in the minds of the Americans’. He explained that McDougall had been ‘in touch with Wallace and the State Department on reconstruction questions’. Although these organisations had ‘not at all times been on the best of terms’, McDougall, ‘who has contacts in both has apparently been used to a considerable extent as an outsider to help in composing these differences’.

42 NAA, M104, 10, letter, 4 October 1942.
43 DAFP VI, 42, pp. 85–6, Bruce to Cripps, 9 September 1942. Here Bruce claimed to have seen three revised versions from Washington. He may have been counting what I believe to be the first version as a revision, if earlier notes were made of their conversation. There may be other versions I have not seen. Or Bruce may simply have lost count.
'Active preparation’ in the Department of Agriculture

By early September progress had stalled, and McDougall was frustrated. Key contacts were away, including Welles and Parran. Paul Appleby recalled his own support for McDougall’s ideas, when Agriculture Secretary Wickard was inclined to be cool and suspicious of McDougall. Appleby, ‘irritated…bore down on him. I more or less made demands on him, and I dictated to him that this was important business—this was the kind of thing that was wholly desirable that the United States as a great food producer ought to be interested in.’ But Appleby identified a weak point in McDougall’s campaign:

In smaller groups we talked over McDougall’s plan of action, which was based on the notion that we had to have a whole lot of popular discussion about this kind of thing. McDougall had been having a lot of discussion with individuals, and his method was one that would have continued discursive, I think, for a pretty long period of time…I happened to think that it was not necessary and actually would be delaying to try to build up popular sentiment, but that some initial action…was in the area of discretion of the executive leaders of the government. I discouraged and was more or less in a position to block the effort to get out and start beating the drums over the country.  

Appleby directed McDougall to what he thought a more productive approach. MacLeish of OWI wanted active preparation for psychological warfare in the coming winter, and believed food and agriculture provided ‘much the best material’. Appleby suggested he and McDougall collaborate in preparing a proposal for action to submit to the State Department. By 14 September McDougall had a preliminary draft, amended after comment by Tolley. The draft proposed the Department of Agriculture prepare six papers to be discussed by an interdepartmental panel and then submitted to Wallace, Hull and Welles, who would consider submission to the President. Orr was expected in Washington late in September and McDougall hoped to involve him.

Bruce had suggested McDougall return to London by the end of September. McDougall replied that with such interest in the idea of combining reconstruction with political warfare, with food and agriculture in the forefront of the program, his early departure would be damaging: ‘I think Wallace and possibly Welles would feel that we had raised very important issues but had not been as helpful as possible in following them up.’

A handwritten postscript to this letter indicates what ‘positive action’ the US Government might take:

1. The approach to other governments to obtain agreement to establish a technical expert commission. This would be much easier if an Economics Council of the United Nations already existed.

2. A suggestion of Hawkins of the State Department is that if the President accepts the view that a major political warfare drive should be commenced this winter, then he should decide to call a conference on food and agriculture. The invitations should be accompanied by the papers we are proposing to produce and the conference should take the form of plenary meetings with speeches. The conference to conclude its sittings with a request for the establishment of a Technical Expert Commission to prepare plans for action by the United Nations.

Bruce agreed that McDougall should remain in Washington until about 10 October.45

A week later McDougall reported rapid progress by the Agriculture Department: BAE staff were working on the capacities of national agriculture to supply food requirements, methods to bring food within the purchasing capacities of lower-income groups and the role of international trade in food. Staff of the Farm Security Division were applying their domestic experience to international problems. The Division of Foreign Agricultural Relations had produced and discussed with McDougall a paper on Eastern Europe and was now working on Latin America and China. Staff of the Advisory National Committee on Nutrition were ‘going into the vital statistics approach’. McDougall must have been very busy: ‘I am seeing all these people and discussing the way in which the papers shall be presented.’ The assessment committee, which was to begin a series of meetings on 1 October, would comprise, as representatives of the Department of Agriculture, Dr M. L. Wilson, Tolley, Director of Foreign Agricultural Relations Leslie Wheeler, and one other. Berle or Hawkins would represent the State Department together with Parran for Public Health, Boudreau for nutrition, Milo Perkins or his nominee for BEW, Eisenhower, ‘brother of the General’, for OWI, with Orr and McDougall. ‘The main objective will be to get an agreed statement which would be the sort of document the President could send to other United Nations Governments if he decided to go ahead on these lines…I shall try to have a preliminary draft ready before the group meets.’46

The Department of Agriculture prepared 12 papers, rather than the six earlier proposed, and McDougall spent the first weekend of October summarising

45 NAA, M104, 10, letters to Bruce, 14 and 20 September.
46 Ibid., letter to Bruce, 20 September.
their 120 pages for a dinner discussion of 30 people, headed by Wallace, Berle, Hawkins, Parran and Boudreau. Berle was ‘very pleased with the progress made over food and agriculture’. Orr had not arrived: ‘It is a great nuisance’, wrote McDougall on 12 October. Group discussions had taken place, a small drafting committee was working ‘pretty solidly’, but he wanted Orr to consider the draft before the final meeting of the whole group. He was confident that Wallace, the State Department and OWI believed ‘the Food and Agriculture approach is right and should have a high priority’, but there had been no indication of Roosevelt’s thinking.

The Vice President tells me that the President is keeping his own counsel about post-war questions. Wallace feels sure that the President is having some members of his White House entourage work in strict secrecy on the subject and that neither he, nor the State Department can get any inkling of how the President’s mind is shaping.47

In ‘a most satisfactory hour’, Sumner Welles told McDougall he had been unhappily conscious of a gap in the State Department’s preparation on reconstruction because the Department of Agriculture had not found time to do a real job on Food and Agriculture. He had now been told that this gap was being well filled by our joint group’s work and that pleased him very much...he anticipated that by the middle of December the committees on all aspects of reconstruction would have reported and that it would then be possible to go to the President and propose methods of consultation with other nations.

Welles agreed with McDougall’s view that they might have only 18 months to formulate joint schemes, obtain the approval of governments, ‘sell the ideas’ to American, British and dominion peoples and ‘put them across the air to Europe’. He had read ‘and much liked’ McDougall’s memorandum ‘Progress in the War of Ideas’, and agreed that political warfare ‘might play an important part [if] supplied with proper munitions’. To counter Welles’ view that the United States must know its own mind before discussions with other nations, McDougall suggested advantages in early informal discussion: ‘it was harder to modify completed proposals than those which were in a less advanced stage.’ Welles seemed to agree, and thought ‘we should get to a United Nations basis early in 1943 and hoped I should be back in Washington then’. He wrote to Bruce that McDougall’s visit had been ‘most helpful. It has not only been agreeable but most useful to all of us to have the opportunity of talking with him and of exchanging views.’ He repeated his hope that McDougall would return in 1943.48

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47 Ibid., letters to Bruce, 4 and 12 October.
48 DAFP VI, 61, pp. 132–4, handwritten letter, 16 October; NAA, M104, 10, Welles to Bruce, 14 October 1942.
The draft prepared by the group is the memorandum published in 1956 by FAO as the fourth document in *The McDougall Memoranda*, the booklet referred to in the introduction to this study. Orr arrived just in time to give his opinion, and it was approved by the full group on the day McDougall departed for home. Orr urged American business leaders to persuade government of the economic advantages of what he called ‘a World Food Plan’. He also discussed it with senior officials, but his memoirs give no indication that he influenced any changes to their approach. He declined a suggestion that he be invited by Mrs Roosevelt to meet the President, but left America ‘hopeful that the President would call a conference of the nations to consider a world food policy’ and that he would be supported by ‘the more intelligent industrialists and financiers’.49

After reading the group draft, Wallace ‘expressed great interest and warm appreciation’. Hawkins assured McDougall that ‘close attention would be given to the paper in the Department’. In sending a copy to Curtin, Bruce warned it should be regarded as unofficial and as expressing the personal views of the members of the group. It will, however, be closely considered in the State Department in the hope that it may be found to provide a suitable basis for the formulation of the Administration’s policy on this subject.

He went on:

McDougall tells me that he is satisfied that the Vice President, Mr. Sumner Welles, Mr. Acheson and Mr. Berle are now convinced that the Food and Agriculture approach should be given a high priority in the United Nations programme for reconstruction. He cannot indicate what Mr. Cordell Hull’s attitude is likely to be but Mr. Hawkins, the head of the Commercial Treaties Division of the State Department, was a keen member of the group and Mr. Hawkins is a trusted adviser to Mr. Cordell Hull. McDougall found the officials of the United States Department of Agriculture keenly interested and desirous of playing a considerable part in the development of policy along these lines. He has, however, emphasised that he cannot form any opinion as to whether the method suggested in the Memorandum of the setting up of technical expert commissions appointed by a projected United Nations Economic Council will commend itself to the Administration.50

50 *DAFP* VI, 78, pp. 157–60, Bruce to Curtin, 22 November 1942. The full memorandum is published as an attachment, pp. 160–8.
A New Idea Each Morning

‘Draft Memorandum on a United Nations Program for Freedom from Want of Food’

Like many of McDougall’s memoranda, this jointly authored paper bears an unwieldy title. Its substance is little more than a polished version of ‘Progress in the War of Ideas’. The first words, indeed, repeat those of the earlier memorandum: ‘The purpose of the United Nations is first to win the war and then to win the peace.’ It moves on quickly to a more vigorous statement of campaign: ‘We have promised to our own citizens, and to the peoples of the world, freedom from want through an expansive economy with full employment, better labour conditions and social security. We have, in effect, undertaken to engage in a world wide campaign against poverty.’

Preparation to fulfil those promises for the peace should be made before the war’s end, and would require ‘many forms of action in the economic and financial fields’, but food—‘the most essential of human needs’, the production of which ‘is the principal economic activity of man’—must be given priority and adequate nutrition must be ‘the first concern of agricultural policy’. Realisation of ‘Freedom from Fear’ and of ‘Freedom from Want’ would require a world authority with both political and economic functions. The memorandum suggests steps for its formation and for ‘technical commissions’, including one to ‘formulate action programs designed to assist the nations to achieve freedom from want of food’. It repeats the call for a pledge by the prosperous countries of the United Nations to institute national policies for adequate nutrition and to assist others towards that objective. Its concluding paragraph stresses the urgent need for action ‘if we are to avoid losing the peace’, and the universality of its objectives:

The end of the war will find all peoples impatient for a return to peace conditions. The United Nations must be ready with measures and organizations to carry out their pledges, otherwise national legislatures may adopt ill-considered, short-sighted and nationalistic policies and vested interests will re-entrench themselves…We look forward to a co-operative World Commonwealth to which every nation will make its individual contribution, in which variety of culture will be matched by unity of purpose to secure for all the four essential freedoms, and the right to participate in, and contribute freely to, international counsels for the future welfare of mankind.
‘A keen outsider’

Early in his visit McDougall had explained how he might be useful amidst the ‘warring principalities’ of Washington: ‘there is much confusion and a good deal of jockeying for position between Departments. A keen outsider comes into the picture and may be able to get action by bringing people together on an extra-departmental basis.’

That is hardly sufficient to explain why an official on the staff of a dominion high commissioner in London was paid such attention by some of the most awe-inspiring figures in the Roosevelt Administration. What was it that made this ‘keen outsider’ so acceptable and interesting to his hosts? There are, perhaps, several answers, including the fact that he represented Australia, the coincidence of his ideas with much US thinking, and the timing of his visit.

Representing Australia

There was an identified ‘Anglophile’ faction in Washington, but almost all the senior figures McDougall saw, including Roosevelt, Wallace, Welles and Berle, were not part of it. They acknowledged that alliance with Britain was necessary to defeat the Axis but remained deeply suspicious of British motives in postwar planning, even expecting to find it easier to work with their Soviet allies than with British statesmen who were probably doing all they could to shore up Britain’s empire for the future. New Dealers saw Britain as the centre of bankers’ capitalism against which the New Deal was directed. Roosevelt distrusted the British aristocracy, he suspected the Foreign Office of pro-fascist tendencies and thought British representatives generally were determined to trap Americans into defending purely British interests. The imperial preference system established at Ottawa in 1932, which was seen as an obstacle to expansion of US trade, was the object of particular anger. It has been suggested that this distrust was the reason for State Department reluctance to permit negotiations in London or, indeed, negotiations with the British at all, until Washington was adequately prepared.

Welles was prepared to show much of the confidential planning material to McDougall and to seek his comments, because McDougall represented not Britain, but Australia. There were reasons for Americans, both private and official, to think sympathetically of Australia in 1942. America was at war, but

51 DAFP VI, 22, p. 42, letter to Bruce, 13 August 1942.
53 The frustration by Hull of Winant’s efforts to arrange such negotiations are detailed in Howland, ‘Friend of Embattled Britain’, pp. 202–10.
the only significant fighting in which its forces had a major part had been in the
Pacific. General MacArthur had his headquarters there; American soldiers were
based there; Australia was in the news and high in American consciousness. Some
would have been aware of issues apparently dividing Australian interests from
British: Curtin’s ‘look to America’ speech and his differences with Churchill over
withdrawal of Australian troops from the Middle East. Official Washington had
been intrigued by another matter. Early in 1940 Australia opened its first foreign
diplomatic mission, a legation in Washington, led by former Federal Treasurer
R. G. Casey, whose energy, charm, skill at public relations and enthusiasm for all
things technological (he flew his own plane) quickly won him influential friends
at the highest level. Then in March 1942 the British Government appointed
Casey its Resident Minister in Cairo. Casey and Roosevelt were happy with the
appointment, and Curtin had apparently given his consent, but the manner of
its announcement infuriated him and cables between Curtin and Churchill were
subsequently published. Isaiah Berlin reported from Washington that ‘even
in friendlier quarters the treatment of what appeared to be an intra-Imperial
dispute showed traces of Schadenfreude and gave further evidence that the wave
of anti-British feeling is running strongly’. As a representative of Australia in 1942, McDougall thus represented both
America’s brave fighting ally in the Pacific and a victim of British imperial
high-handedness. It seems clear that Bruce was also well regarded. His
recommendation of McDougall appears to have carried weight and considerably
eased McDougall’s path.

A Coincidence of Ideas

In London Bruce and McDougall had hammered away on doors that for the most
part remained closed. Established agricultural and commercial policies made it
unlikely that their ideas could be accepted. Public health and food authorities
were at best lukewarm. Longstanding antipathies in Whitehall to McDougall
and a suspicion that the idea was merely a ploy to sell more Australian produce
added to the barriers against them. In Washington there were no barriers.
Indeed, McDougall was largely preaching to the converted, his contribution
being to bring together problems and ideas already current in a way that was
new.

In the United States there was widespread scientific interest in nutrition,
particularly in the large foundations, as noted in the prologue to this section.

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54 Hudson, Casey, pp. 117–19.
55 Ibid., pp. 132–3.
56 Nicholas, Washington Despatches, 26 March 1942, p. 27.
Work was also being done in the Health Department, although Thomas Parran told McDougall in 1938 that his department should do more. In Wallace’s Department of Agriculture much of the focus during the 1930s had been on disposal of surplus in schemes of distribution to the needy. The preoccupation with surplus throughout that decade made agricultural authorities amenable to suggestions of increasing consumption in a way unimaginable in Britain. Howard Tolley recalled that when McDougall came to Washington

he found a rather surprising agreement among a lot of people...on the importance of more and better food in making and preserving peace after the war. Some of us who had been so greatly concerned about agricultural surpluses in the United States in the pre-war period saw that here might be an opportunity to escape from burdensome surpluses and reduction of production...and turn our efforts and programs toward expanding food production and distribution of food to hungry people and low-income people throughout the world. It had appeal for Henry Wallace. Then the question of getting full U.S. support of course arose, and attention was turned toward the White House and FDR.58

The fact that postwar planning was receiving much attention in Washington, and the appeal of McDougall’s approach to New Dealers influenced by progressivism and other ideas emphasising science and efficiency, also prepared the way for his contribution.

Timing

McDougall’s 1942 visit could not have been better timed. Some military successes had occurred, and the paralysing anger of the months immediately after Pearl Harbor had been transformed into energy not only for waging war but also for planning a just and lasting peace. Officials eager for such action were frustrated by bottlenecks in the planning process and by the difficulty of bridging the gaps between the fortress departments. Cooperation must surely have occurred eventually in some way, but McDougall’s arrival at a moment of need suggested a solution.

To have arrived earlier in 1942 would have been too soon, but a few months later could have been too late. Congressional elections in November entrenched the conservative hold on Congress and made the President wary. Henry Wallace’s importance diminished accordingly, declining further in the bureaucratic battle throughout 1943, and Roosevelt chose the conservative Democrat Senator Harry

57 NLA, MS6890/3/2, letter to Hall and Orr, n.d.
S. Truman as his fourth-term running mate over a marginalised Wallace. Late in 1943 Sumner Welles was forced by personal scandal to resign. He continued to write of his visions of the peace from outside the Administration, but was powerless to implement them. Roosevelt, in failing health, was increasingly constrained by domestic and international pressures.

A Conference on Postwar Food

On 24 February 1943, McDougall opened his *Times* to find a headline, ‘Conference on Post-war Food’. President Roosevelt had told his press conference that he was considering the possibility of ‘a conference in the spring to discuss postwar food production’, not relief, but ‘the permanent food supply of the world’. He recalled the ‘near success’ of wheat conferences that had sought to prevent wide fluctuations in the wheat price and said that this conference would seek ‘to prevent both famines and large surpluses, and at the same time to give the producer the assurance of a decent price’. He saw the conference as an ‘exploratory investigation’.59 The Australian Legation in Washington could only tell McDougall that there had been ‘a number of public suggestions that a conference of United Nations should be held’, including one from New Zealand’s representative on the advisory Pacific War Council, Walter Nash, some weeks earlier. Roosevelt had said then that he thought a conference might do more harm than good. Public pressure had continued, and some days before the press statement Roosevelt had made a similar announcement to the Pacific War Council, saying that the conference ‘should be confined to what he thought was the safe topic of post-war food, mentioning specifically wheat’.60

The 1956 booklet discussed in the introduction to this study, *The McDougall Memoranda*, followed the reproduction of ‘Draft Memorandum on a United Nations Program for Freedom from Want of Food’ with these words:

The rest of the story is well known. The President of the United States, through the intervention of Mrs Eleanor Roosevelt, became interested in ideas which in many respects were close to his own. He talked to McDougall and convened the Hot Springs Conference in May 1943, which was followed by preparatory work and the final establishment of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations at the Quebec Conference, in October 1945.

60 NAA, A2937, ‘Post-War—Food’, cable 9 from McDougall to Washington Legation, 24 February; cable 38 from Washington Legation, 28 February 1943.
Similar versions are given in early histories of FAO. Bruce also made that link, urging Curtin to cable Australia’s support, to ‘reinforce constructive elements both here and in Washington’, and adding that he had ‘good reason to believe’ that Roosevelt’s announcements were ‘inspired’ by the memorandum McDougall had written with the aid of the committee in Washington late in 1942.

But what evidence exists to support this claim, beyond the words of Bruce and McDougall themselves? What other influences might have been responsible? Contemporary documents support claims made in FAO literature that McDougall met Roosevelt and Harry Hopkins and urged the idea of starting international postwar planning with food and agriculture. They show that Mrs Roosevelt received a copy of the memorandum ‘Progress in the War of Ideas’, and that the President read it in the presence of Wallace. It is not clear from material I have seen whether Roosevelt read the later ‘Draft Memorandum…’ resulting from the work of the committees in October. Apart from questioning the primacy given to the ‘Draft Memorandum…’ in FAO, lack of this evidence signifies little. The difference between the two memoranda is not great: both, in their final form, were the result of extensive consultation in Washington and both argue for urgent action on food and agriculture as a starting point for postwar planning.

Writers about the Roosevelt Administration generally agree that it was never possible to know what was in the President’s mind or to do more than guess at reasons for his decisions. Roosevelt’s method of government was calculated inscrutability. Contemporary and later accounts suggest that trying to guess at his thinking was a major preoccupation of Washington insiders. Some argue that he found it difficult to make up his mind, particularly when an unpopular or painful decision was to be made. One commentator suggested that ‘Mr Roosevelt relies upon opposites to coax him first to one side and then the other, believing apparently that this will ensure a middle course approximately in line with the temper of the average American’. Whatever the reason, his method ensured that he kept decisions firmly in his own hands. Harry Hopkins was his closest adviser, living in the White House, with unlimited access and an unlimited bailiwick. By 1942 the State Department had been given authority in postwar planning but, as noted earlier, Wallace for one believed that postwar planning was also being considered at the White House. This was typical. Roosevelt would authorise planning, sometimes by more than one person or group, without their knowing that others were also at work on the issue. He liked to be given a range of options. He would listen, as he did to McDougall, and read, as he did McDougall’s memorandum, but give no indication of his

61 A similar version of these events, probably based on McDougall’s own account, is given in Gove Hambidge, The Story of FAO, D. van Nostrand, Princeton, NJ, 1955, pp. 45–9. Briefer references to the account are in Paul Lamartine Yates, So Bold an Aim: Ten Years of International Co-operation toward Freedom from Want, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Rome, 1955, p. 49; and in Orr, As I Recall, p. 158.
views. He would allow Welles and others to make speeches that might or might not have his endorsement, and he would judge reactions. When persuaded to a particular course of action, he still waited until he judged the time was right. Amongst many examples are the following comments: Roosevelt ‘enjoyed dividing authority among competitors’; he ‘tacitly and cynically’ encouraged conflicts’. Roosevelt himself said: ‘I am a juggler, I never let my right hand know what my left hand does’; ‘spreading power among contending forces allowed [him] to retain undisputed authority in his own hands’.

By 1942 Roosevelt was on shifting political ground: he was dealing with momentous issues of war and peace in a complex domestic political system with strengthening forces of opposition. Alonzo L. Hamby argues that having led ‘a nation unprepared for the grim realities of international power down a twisting and often devious path to war’, Roosevelt represented ‘an inconsistent amalgam’ of the two dominant strains of twentieth-century American liberalism: Theodore Roosevelt’s emphasis on a need for national strength and self-interest, his ‘imperative of a forceful American role in the larger world’; and Woodrow Wilson’s vision of a ‘pacific world community, united in adherence to a supranational body striving to meet the needs of all mankind’. At home, with isolationism still a potent factor, Roosevelt was forced to exercise a leadership of ‘constant interaction with an inconsistent self-deceptive public mood’; the majority followed him because ‘in his inconsistencies he reflected their conflicting concerns’. In the wider world, he faced the difficult task of dealing with Stalin across an ‘unbridgeable ideological gulf’. In that situation, Roosevelt’s ‘splendid inspirational banner’ of the Four Freedoms ‘could only interfere with the realistic diplomacy’ needed to deal with the world as it was; instead he tried to secure peace through ‘atmospherics…compromise and…postponement of differences’. This perhaps explains his decision to begin postwar planning with a ‘safe topic’.

Elizabeth Borgwardt gives Roosevelt more credit for commitment to the ideals professed in the ‘Four Freedoms’, noting that he had written that section of his speech himself. In April 1939 he had suggested discussions with the Axis powers on opening up international trade, stating that every nation was entitled to ‘assurance of obtaining the materials and products of peaceful economic life’. Borgwardt suggests this marked ‘the transition toward blending economic concerns with the politics of collective security’. The President had been interested in the British debate about social welfare that was to culminate in

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63 Schwarz, Liberal, pp. 88, 159.
the Beveridge Report; he kept a file of press clippings labelled ‘economic bill of rights’. The phrase ‘freedom from want’ had been suggested to him by a journalist at a press conference in 1940.66

A confident assessment of McDougall’s place in Roosevelt’s decision making seems out of the question. There were many voices raising ideas similar to those McDougall was putting forward. Isaiah Berlin noted, at the time of McDougall’s visit, ‘many writers over a period of time have argued the United Nations need a more definitive statement of war aims’.67 We know that Winant raised nutrition with Roosevelt in some form before McDougall’s 1941 visit, and that an international conference on the subject had been proposed during that visit, only to be lost in the tumult surrounding Pearl Harbor. Given that Welles was a close adviser, and in 1942 was masterminding the committee bridging Agriculture and State, it seems likely that Roosevelt would have known of its work, and might well have seen its final ‘Draft Memorandum…’.68

The President’s interest in food questions may have been heightened in the last months of 1942 when committees in both Washington and London assessed the food needs of liberated areas in the ‘emergency period’ immediately following liberation. Tolley chaired the Washington committee; in London McDougall was one of ‘a distinguished group of British and European agricultural and nutrition experts’. Their difficult and complex task undertaken over some two months produced a report ‘widely circulated’ in London and Washington bureaucracies. The magnitude of the requirements put forward impressed the supply authorities and helped to correct overly optimistic ideas still lingering from the days of surpluses. E. F. Penrose, chairman of the London committee, notes that the two reports had ‘hardly been completed when President Roosevelt called for a United Nations Food Conference’.69

In his press conference announcement, Roosevelt specifically excluded emergency relief problems from the ambit of Hot Springs. These, he said, were already being dealt with. The emergency matter might nevertheless have reminded Roosevelt of the longer term problem, or perhaps he judged that it had paved the way for a longer term discussion he had earlier considered. Throughout the war farm

66 Borgwardt, A New Deal for the World, pp. 48–9, 98.
67 Nicholas, Washington Despatches, 5 October 1942, p. 90.
68 Borgwardt writes that Roosevelt had ‘actively reviewed’ ‘Draft Memorandum on a United Nations Program for Freedom from Want of Food’, which had ‘clearly captured his capricious imagination’. But her identification of the memorandum Roosevelt actually read seems based only on statements in the FAO booklet in which it is reproduced. Borgwardt, A New Deal for the World, p. 115.
prices were the subject of constant pressure in Congress; it was not an issue Roosevelt was likely to forget.\(^{70}\) It is perhaps significant that Roosevelt recalled, in his press conference, attempts in the 1930s to solve the wheat price problem.

The contemporary records provide a rather different impression from the vague accounts circulated through FAO. It is clear that a carefully constructed campaign was waged to attract the inscrutable president to the idea of urgent preparation for international action on food and agriculture. McDougall was undoubtedly a key player, both in bringing together like-minded people from the warring principalities of Washington as the ‘keen outsider’ and in providing telling arguments to support it, thus giving shape to ideas less focused, though widely accepted within the Administration. But his success depended on the readiness of the key figures to accept those ideas and to provide high-level facilitation, to use him to ends they thought valuable. There remains a question about the role of Bruce, certainly in prompting Winant’s discussions, and in using his weight in support of McDougall. How much real influence did he have in Washington? In the end, it is not possible to apportion credit to any one individual with certainty.

McDougall’s credit remains undiminished, nevertheless. His relentless campaigning provided a catalyst for action within the Administration. Once the international conference was called, the 12 papers that his committees had produced shaped its agenda and its decisions, and thus the ultimate nature of FAO. In that sense ‘Draft Memorandum on a United Nations Program for Freedom from Want of Food’, which is also a result of that work, deserves its place as a fundamental document of the organisation.

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