

Miriam Meets: Moore McDowell and Michael McDowell 6th May 2012

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Moore and Michael Mc Dowell recall their childhood in Dublin. Moore is the eldest of five siblings, Michael the youngest. Moore recalls his younger brother as a lovely and affectionate child. Michael remembers Moore's departure for boarding school. They recall their parents. They were affectionate to each other and to their children. Their father, Anthony McDowell, a barrister by profession who joined the the Civil Service, suffered from chronic TB all of his life. Their mother Eilis was an architect by profession but she never practiced and devoted herself to her family.

Moore recalls his grandfather, Eoin MacNeill. He has very hazy memories of him as he was born a couple of years before Eoin MacNeill's death. They talk about the view of his life and career through the eyes of his family. From County Antrim, Eoin MacNeill was a leader of the cultural nationalist movement and a leader of the Irish Volunteers. He is known for countermanding the orders in the run up to 1916. Imprisoned for life after the Rising, he was a Free State Cabinet Minister and member of the Boundary Commission. Moore explains how this last role ended his career and the view in the family was that he took this role to save others from undertaking this thankless task.

The brothers do not agree on their grandfather's involvement in revolutionary politics. Moore feels that his grandfather would have been better off not being involved. Michael believes in Irish independence very strongly and this colours his views his grandfather.

Michael recalls Brian MacNeill, his uncle who was on the anti-Treaty side in the Civil War who was shot on Ben Bulbin in the course of the Civil War. They describe the impact of this death on their mother. Though their family was not active politically, the story of Ireland and how Independence was won and how people behaved well or badly was the stuff of conversation in their family.

Moore recalls his experience in boarding school. The financial strain placed on the family. He settled into school life, but at the end of holidays he would feel unsettled before returning. He reads from a poem *Visit* by Micheal O'Siadhail's collection *Chosen Garden* to explain how he feels about the experience. Moore agrees that they may have been closer as brothers if he hadn't gone to boarding school.

Moore recalls how Michael loved Dinky toys as a child. Michael recalls Parsons Bookshop where he bought the toys and how Brendan Behan and Patrick Kavanagh would come into the shop. Michael's interest in these types of toys continues to this day.

Moore explains how on the advice of his wife and mother, he never went into politics. Michael explains how he got involved in politics, why he quit in 2007 and the difficulties of being involved in a coruscating, vicious world for very little game. They both talk about the importance of being involved in politics. Miriam asks Moore if his younger brother should set up a party. Michael won't say yes or no when asked if he will set up a new party. He doubts he will rejoin Fine Gael. They discuss whether or not there is a clear opening for a new party in Irish politics.

Miriam asks them to account for the actions of politicians and economists in the run up to the financial collapse. Moore admits that he didn't warn of the impending crash, he thought there would be a soft landing. But he explains that he knew the government policies were wrong. Michael explains that sometimes he fantasizes that he had a Morgan Kelly moment when he realised that doom was coming. But in government, this didn't happen. He says like the captain and the crew of the *Titanic* that he didn't believe that the ship would sink. Moore says that it shouldn't be forgotten that, in his opinion, the decision to go into the euro is responsible for a proportion of the economic problems that we see today.

Looking forward to 2016, Michael says that we have done well from Independence. They discuss the decade of centenary commemorations and Moore expresses the hope that we will see the whole decade in terms of the agreements and disagreements.

Fred Astaire - *Dancing Cheek to Cheek*
Puccini - *La Boheme - O Soave Fanciulla*
10cc - *I'm Not In Love*