

5th September, 1968

Miss J. Mortimer,
The Publishers' Association,
19, Bedford Square,
London, W.C.1.

Dear Jill,

The Booker Prize

I enclose notes on the Booker aspects which you might like to incorporate in the overall release. No doubt you will want to insert bits of my stuff in the relevant places in yours. So I won't mind if you chop it up. Looking forward to having your draft.

Best wishes,

Yours ever,

John Murphy

Enc:

NOTES for inclusion in Press Release on
THE BOOKER PRIZE

The prize money will be given by Booker McConnell Ltd. Booker McConnell is the parent company of the Booker Group which comprises a large number of businesses in various parts of the Commonwealth. The main operations in which Bookers are involved are: Sugar Production in Guyana (where the group originated), Jamaica, Nigeria and other parts of Africa; Shopkeeping and Wholesale Distribution in Britain, the Caribbean, Zambia and Malawi; Shipping in the Caribbean and Britain, including a cargo service between Britain and the Caribbean; Rum marketing throughout the world allied to distilling in Demerara and Jamaica; Engineering in Britain including the manufacture of sugar machinery, centrifugal pumps, central heating equipment and mining machinery; Light Industries of many kinds in the Caribbean and Central Africa; and, most recently, investment in writers' companies.

Despite its wide variety of interests Booker McConnell is, in British terms, a medium sized company. It has net trading assets of £40,000,000 and employs 29,000 people of whom 5000 are in Britain.

At about the same time as the Publishers' Association was thinking about the desirability of a big literary prize which would, Bookers were, quite independently, also considering a similar idea. By a happy coincidence people from Bookers and the Publishers' Association chanced to meet, compared ideas and swiftly decided to sponsor jointly The Booker Prize for Fiction. Booker McConnell's reasons for joining in such a venture are best explained by its philosophy, like other progressive companies, of trying to see a little further than its nose. Naturally this has more than once involved the Group in doing things that provided no immediate return. For instance, the company started its life in British Guiana. When that country became independent - as Guyana - Bookers marked the occasion by giving a fellowship in the History of Guyana (an example of a gap that needed filling) at the new University of Guyana. Bookers tries to be sensitive to the needs of areas in which it operates. Being now involved in the book world it is natural for Bookers to wish to help fill a need for a really good and effective literary prize.