

13 October 1971

V.S. Naipaul, Esq.,
The Bungalow,
Wilsford Manor,
Wilsford-cum-lake,
Amesbury
Wilts.

Dear Mr. Naipaul,

As I believe Carmen Callil may have told you it is my great pleasure on behalf of the Booker Prize Committee to inform you that they wish to award the 1971 Booker Prize for fiction to you for your book In A Free State.

A short list of six books considered the most excellent by the judges has been released to the press for announcement on Friday (15 October), which includes your book. The other titles are The Big Chapel by Thomas Kilroy, Briefing for a Descent into Hell by Doris Lessing, St. Urbain's Horseman by Mordecai Richler, Goshawk Squadron by Derek Robinson and Mrs. Palfrey at the Claremont by Elizabeth Taylor. No further announcement will be made for a month, this month being left for general speculation on the six titles, and the announcement that you have won the prize will not be made until the evening of 25 November at the dinner at the Cafe Royal to be given in your honour, where you will be presented with a £5000 cheque and the Booker trophy.

I am afraid that I must beg your indulgence on one matter. In order that the announcement on 25 November retains its "surprise" value, if you are approached by the press (or anyone really) before that time we would much appreciate that you appear to be unaware that you are the winner, simply that you are short-listed. I do apologize for making this request as I realize it may be awkward for you.

If I can help you in any way or give you any information please do not hesitate to contact me.

May I offer my own congratulations and very best wishes.

Yours sincerely,

Marilyn Edwards

(Administrator for the joint sponsors
Booker McConnell Ltd. and the
Publishers Association)