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## IRELAND



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Note

cc D Nally  
J Campbell

Mr. Lillis telephoned me from Washington on 7 March.

Referring to the visit to Ireland of Mr. Speaker O'Neill of the U.S. House of Representatives, he indicated that the Embassy's understanding was that Mr. O'Neill would stay with Mr. Charles Daly, probably at the latter's Bantry residence, and that Mr. Daly would take his leisure programme in hand. Lillis mentioned that the Department of the Taoiseach had spoken of the possibility of Mr. O'Neill's staying at Dromoland Castle Hotel, and pointed out that the owner of this establishment, Mr. B. McDonagh, is a member of the Republican Party. Mr. O'Neill's intense loyalty to the Democratic Party would constitute a counter-indication as far as Dromoland is concerned.

Lillis recommended that the Government should not push ideas regarding the private side of the visit. Mr. Daly would arrange things in regard to the Speaker's recreation. It was probable that Mr. O'Neill would wish to relax totally for some of the time.

The Speaker's journey will be on the itinerary Brussels-Budapest-Lisbon-London-Dublin. London was a late addition. The visitor felt that when in Ireland he should spend one day in Northern Ireland. He wished to lunch in Derry with John Hume and then go to Belfast for an afternoon meeting with local political figures which the American Consul-General there would arrange. Lillis reported that the British authorities, through their representatives in Washington, were resisting this idea on the grounds that security would be difficult to arrange. Without denying the need for security, the Embassy considered that there were no grounds for keeping O'Neill out of the North and that we should support his plan to go there. An element in the attitude of the Speaker towards the British at present was that he had had a personal and public disagreement with Ambassador Jay some time ago. (Lillis commented that the British see the Speaker, and try to use him, in the larger context of other British policies vis-à-vis the U.S.A.)

Regarding the official part of Mr. O'Neill's time in Ireland, and specifically his time with the Taoiseach, Lillis mentioned that, although documentary evidence may not be impeccable, the Speaker considered his family to be from Cork. Perhaps it might be possible to arrange for him to receive the freedom of that city. Given also the Speaker's known preference for a popular ambience, he might much appreciate an opportunity to attend, perhaps with the Taoiseach, a hurling or Gaelic football match. The Embassy also wondered whether a meeting with the leaders of the opposition parties might be appropriate, given his parliamentary rôle in the U.S.A.

Commenting generally on the visit, Mr. Lillis conveyed the Embassy's view that, with the Taoiseach's own visit to the U.S.A. on the horizon, the conversations in April with the Taoiseach could be very useful. They felt that the Speaker would be very willing to consider our ideas on the Anglo-Irish question in so far as he could help. In this connection Lillis mentioned that it was now almost certain that there would be a St. Patrick's Day statement, but it was not clear whether it would involve all four of the leading American-Irish group (Governor Carey being, obviously, the doubtful starter).

The Ambassador was to see the Speaker later on 7 March and he would report back subsequently.



D.M. Neligan

8 March, 1979