

# NATIONAL ARCHIVES

## IRELAND



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Presentation of Government Policy in the United States

1. Since the outbreak of violence in Northern Ireland in the early 70's relations between successive Irish Governments and those sections of the Irish-American community which are politically active have been categorised by a considerable degree of tension. (Only a very small proportion of the Irish-American community is politically active - see separate paper on "General Introduction to Irish Issue in America".) The Irish in America frequently base their approach to the Northern problem on an analysis which is simplistically anti-British, without reference to the fundamental tensions within Northern society and without making any provision for the accommodation of Northern Protestants or Unionists in any envisaged solution. This simplicity of approach is frequently reflected in a degree of sympathy with the objectives and sometimes the methods of the Provisional IRA. For example, the newspaper "The Irish People" accepts and, indeed, the Irish National Caucus in its early less-sophisticated phase accepted without question that the murder of British soldiers in Northern Ireland was acceptable and indeed to be welcomed.

2. Because of the tension between the simplistic approach of the Irish in America and the necessarily complex issues which must be covered by Government policy, there has been a tendency over the years towards frequent disagreement between the Irish in America and Irish Government representatives, although successive Irish Governments have attempted to emphasise what is common to both sides, rather than the divergences of approach. Some of this disagreement is unavoidable: spokesmen in the United States, as in Ireland, for the Provisional IRA, will continue to attack Irish Government representatives, irrespective of the policy decisions taken. However, some of the disagreement may be avoidable, as it can be presumed that a very large proportion of the Irish in America do not support the Provisional IRA and would be happy to co-operate with the Irish Government in the pursuit of Irish unity by acceptable means. In following this approach it is, however, necessary to be exceptionally prudent because of the ever-present

danger, when dealing with the Irish-American community, that their enthusiasm will express itself in language which may, on the one hand, encourage those sympathetic to violence and, on the other, be used against an Irish Government as "evidence" that it too is sympathetic to the use of violence. The desirability of prudence is also re-enforced by the relatively small gains to be anticipated in any event from support from the general Irish community in the United States.

3. After the change of Government in 1977 and again in December 1979 a deliberate effort was made by certain sections of Irish-american opinion to identify the Northern policy of the incoming administration with the policies favoured by different pressure groups in the United States. This attempt has been made with greater or less skill depending on whether those making it were professional publicists, such as Congressman Biaggi or Fr. Seán McManus, or merely persons who wanted to move from a previous period of disagreement with Irish Governments into a new phase of co-operation. In 1979, the coincidence of Deputy Blaney's visit to the United States was availed of by the Irish National Caucus to imply that they were representative of the policies on Northern Ireland of the incoming Taoiseach and thus to increase their own status in Washington and, by reflection, in Ireland.

4. In view of the essential continuity of Government policy on the North, this approach by the Irish National Caucus necessitated a considerable degree of misrepresentation. The Caucus also used the stratagem of personal attacks on Irish official representatives in the United States, who were accused of poisoning relations between Dublin and the Irish in America. Finally, the Irish National Caucus attempted to use the change of Taoiseach in 1979 to undermine the relationship which had been built up between the Irish Government and the four major Irish-American leaders (O'Neill, Kennedy, Moynihan and Carey).

5. Because of the publicity generated by Caucus activities during December last, the Minister for Foreign Affairs thought it necessary to issue a statement, a copy of which is annexed, about

the presentation of Government policy in the United States. On the same day the Taoiseach let it be known that the Government's views would continue to be represented in the United States by their officially accredited representative in that country and that any claim by anyone else to speak for the Irish Government should not be taken seriously.

6. Irish Government policy in the United States remains under close scrutiny by two major groups. The first is Speaker O'Neill and his friends who have supported the policy of Irish Governments in recent years. The second is the INC and their supporters. Both groups carefully examine the expression of Irish Government policy in order to detect any changes of content or emphasis that arise from time to time. Because of the anxiety of the Caucus to attempt to identify with Irish Government policy, without disavowing their sympathy in the past for the Provisional IRA, they are always on the watch-out for perceived differences of emphasis which enable them to play-off one statement against the other. In the interests of continuity, therefore, there is a lot to be said for expressing Government policy on Northern Ireland in a form and with language very close to that implied by the Taoiseach in his Ard-Fheis address. A copy of that address is attached for ease of reference.

7. In recent years, on the instructions of the Taoiseach, it has been the practice of Irish Government representatives to leave reviewing stands during St. Patrick's Day parades when contingents, either official or unofficial, from Noraid, the Irish National Caucus or bodies sympathetic to the Provisional IRA passed the reviewing stands. This year also the Government has directed its representatives to follow this practice.

Department of Foreign Affairs  
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