

# NATIONAL ARCHIVES

## IRELAND



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Taoiseach

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*MR K. says*

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LETTER FROM MASSACHUSETTS CHAPTER OF IRISH NATIONAL CAUCUS

Mr. Nally,

Please see Mr. Murray's minutes beneath on the above subject. I agree with his recommendation in this case.

*for better*

I understand that the Taoiseach <sup>wished to have considered the question</sup> ~~initial reaction~~ was that he might reply personally and in a positive manner to the letter from Mr. McHugh. The Taoiseach may well have hoped that a suitably worded reply might help to swing Nationalist sentiment among the American/Irish behind the positive policy on Northern Ireland set out by the Taoiseach in his Ard Fheis speech and to wean support away from the Provisional I.R.A. and their support and front organisations. There may well be a substantial element, possibly even constituting a majority, among the supporters of the Irish National Caucus whose essential commitment is to the unity of Ireland and to human rights and political expression for the Nationalist community in the North and who may not support the Provisional I.R.A. at all or may do so in an unthinking fashion or solely faute de mieux. It would certainly be desirable, if considered possible, and if there were no major risks in other ways, if this element could be led to support Government policy. For example, there could be a further falling off in the already reduced flow of funds from the United States to organisations within the Provisional family.

However, one has to have a regard to the possible risks of an initiative in this area. Presumably, any increased effectiveness of a strong and unified American/Irish public opinion, would come mainly through pressure on members of the United States Congress and on the United States Administration which in turn might be seen as leading to increased pressure on the British Government to move towards a settlement in line with the policy of the Irish Government. This was the time-honoured approach of American/Irish organisations in the last century and in the first two decades of this century. It is worth noting that the effect on official U.S. policy was minimal, for example in relation to the question of Irish representation at the Peace Conference at Versailles. Coming to the present, it may be noted that over the past few years, there was an unprecedented degree of support among U.S. Congressional and State leaders of the first rank in terms of political influence, in support of policy developments relating to Northern Ireland broadly along lines advocated by the Government here. I am referring to such people as Speaker Tip O'Neill and Senator Edward Kennedy. These people expose themselves to political risks by supporting a policy line that was more moderate than that being supported by the Irish National Caucus. Because of the bad blood between the Four Horsemen and at least the more strident leadership elements of the Caucus, arising out of the "War of Words" in recent years, it would almost certainly be taken badly amiss by the Four Horsemen if the Taoiseach were now, without consulting them in advance, to offer an olive branch, as it were, to the

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Caucus. On past experience, it can be taken as certain that any letter from the Taoiseach will be exploited for propaganda purposes by such Caucus leaders as Father Sean McManus or Dr. Fred Burns O'Brien. It may be that people such as these are not fully representative of the grass-roots membership and support of the Caucus but it is an unfortunate fact of life that it is their statements that receive publicity.

Against this background, I would advise against any action which might alienate the influential Congressional and State leaders for benefits of doubtful utility. At the same time, the leaders on whose influence we rely at present will not be in their present positions of influence for ever and there is also the aspect that they are very largely members of the Democratic Party and might not have the same influence in the event of a Republican being elected President next November. This may argue the case for some attempt at bridge-building. However, I would suggest that any attempt at present to "get through" to more moderate elements among the membership and supporters of the Caucus would have to be closely co-ordinated with the Four Horsemen. At least some of them may have an interest in making progress along similar lines but the whole question would have to be handled extremely carefully, as even to approach them on this basis could be taken as expressing lack of confidence in the effectiveness of their efforts broadly in support of Irish Government policy. Any departure along these lines would preferably be preceded by direct contact, preferably face to face, between the Taoiseach and one of the senior members of the Four Horsemen.

If the Taoiseach so wished, the possibility of proceeding along such lines could be explored although there may be great difficulty in having any meeting between the Taoiseach and O'Neill, Kennedy or Moynihan over the next few months. For the present, however, I would reiterate my agreement with the approach suggested by Mr. Murray.

P.S. Since dictating the above, the Department of Foreign Affairs have indicated that Mr. McHugh is a leading official in NORaid - Mr. Murray's note across refers. This reinforces the case for proceeding as he suggests in this instance.

*W. Kiernan*

10th March, 1980.

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