

## NATIONAL ARCHIVES

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# ROINN AN TAOISIGH

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Letter from President Carter to Congressman Biaggi about  
Northern Ireland

Note:

Mr. Sean Whelan, Department of Foreign Affairs, phoned this morning about the above. We took note of the story by Sean O hEalain in the Irish Press (filed beneath). Mr. Whelan said that Ambassador Donlon had been in touch again about this matter. He had indicated that Senator Kennedy who was campaigning on the west coast of the United States was highly incensed that the letter had been issued by the President to Congressman Biaggi. He felt, as did Speaker O' Neill who had been consulted at an earlier stage about the possibility of a statement on Northern Ireland, that he had been deceived. Senator Kennedy intended, but only if questions were put to him on the matter by the media, to indicate his disappointment that Congressman Biaggi had been the channel chosen to issue a further statement on Northern Ireland: he also intended to draw attention to the fact that the statement did not go as far as the section on Northern Ireland in the platform of the Democratic Party for the Presidential election. The Ambassador had also indicated that Dr. Kevin Cahill, the Chief Advisor on Irish affairs to Governor Carey of New York intended to see President Carter on the following day and that there was a possibility, depending on the outcome of the meeting, that the Governor might make a public protest.

Against this background, Ambassador Donlon strongly recommended that, we accede to the request by the "Four Horsemen" that the Irish Government associate themselves with the intended protest to President Carter. He had made the point that if the President lost the Presidential election, the "Four Horsemen" would be the only influential people left to us who had taken a stand on Northern Ireland in line with our policies. When, in conversation, Mr. Whelan had raised the question as to whether it would be appropriate to make representations of this sort to President Carter almost on the eve of the Presidential election, the Ambassador had suggested that this would be a naive view and had referred, by way of example, to the campaigning activities on behalf of President Carter by the Defence Minister of Israel. It was precisely on the very eve of the election that all lobbies who had an axe to grind were seeking to obtain commitments from the candidates, including the President.

Mr. Whelan indicated that the matter had been considered in his Department at Secretary level. They were disposed to agree with the recommendation that the Government should associate themselves with the representations by the "Four

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Horsemen". They considered that, in addition, a short and bland statement might be prepared which could be issued on the record in response to any press queries which might be received and that in addition the media could be given, on an unattributable basis, ~~an~~ further material which would indicate a sense of disappointment in Dublin that Congressman Biaggi had been selected as the exclusive channel for the issue of the message by the President.

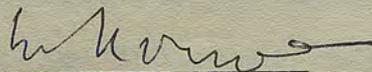
I indicated that the Taoiseach might be reluctant to become involved in any disputes in the United States but that I could see the force of the Ambassador's point about the situation in the event of President Carter losing the election. I undertook to convey the Foreign Affairs views to the Taoiseach. I also agreed that material for response to press queries might be prepared on the basis suggested and indicated that I would work on a draft and consult further with them later in the day.

I referred to the suggestions in the Irish Press story that President Carter would be meeting members of Congressman Biaggi's Ad hoc Congressional Committee on Northern Ireland and that all 33 members of the Committee had sent telegrams to the President asking him to intervene in the H-Block dispute. Mr. Whelan undertook, in response to my request, to make inquiries from our Washington Embassy as to the veracity of these suggestions.

See later  
release  
from  
Washington

Mr. Whelan pointed out that in the light of the protest being made by the "Four Horsemen" the statement in the form approved by the Taoiseach would not be appropriate for issue in response to press queries. I agreed with this view.

I subsequently prepared the draft responses, on an attributable and non-attributable for acknowledgable basis, respectively ~~for~~, which follow on file and discussed the whole matter again with Mr. Nally. Following further discussion between Mr. Nally and the Taoiseach and consideration by the latter, it was decided that no further action should be taken in the matter. I conveyed this to the Department of Foreign Affairs. We agreed that if questions were raised about our non-reaction, the response could be that it was felt in Dublin that this was an internal American matter and that it would be inappropriate to intervene on the immediate eve of the Presidential election.



29th October, 1980.