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4 June 1981

James Larkin Esq.,
Manager - Publicity and Public Relations,
Bord Failte Eireann,
Baggot Street Bridge,
Dublin 2.

Dear Mr. Larkin,

In Paddy Walshe's absence I am replying to your letter of 26 May about the effect on our main tourist markets of negative publicity about Ireland.

The volume of reporting from Missions abroad during recent weeks has been extraordinarily high, reflecting the volume of news coverage and comment on events in Northern Ireland. While the interest for us in such reporting and commentary extends to the political assessment made abroad of those events, it also lies in the image presented by the media of the State. These aspects are therefore monitored in all our Missions.

The general picture which emerges from our offices in the U.S.A., Britain, Germany and France is of occasional over-simplifications in reporting disturbances in Northern Ireland, but of more enlightened and sober commentary in editorial and contributed articles. In America the volume of international wire service news coverage was unprecedented and this was most evident in television and radio. However, in all media and in all the countries covered a favourable appreciation of Irish Government policy on Northern Ireland emerges and there is little specific evidence of exaggerated or maliciously distorted publicity about the Republic. The worst example seems to be the offensive cartoon in the London Evening Standard in mid-May. It has been clear from recent coverage that the media perception of the Republic is different from that of Northern Ireland.


The Department's information work is a continuing effort which involves contact with politicians and the media at various levels and is particularly visible in the role of our Press Officers in London, Washington, New York, Paris, Bonn and Rome. In our view the relatively sane and constructive tone of editorial comment abroad, referred to above, reflects the extensive contacts and accurate picture of the Northern Irish problem which our services have built up over time. At the present stage - and we were of course aware of the problem of tourist publicity before you wrote to us - we are maximising

efforts to counter inaccurate publicity and to present a true picture of the situation, responding to a general heightened interest in Ireland resulting from the tragic events in the North.

In this connection it seems that the publicity problem in our main tourist markets should not be attributed exclusively to the hunger strike and related events in the North. The burning of British-owned houses and of the British anglers' bus, street disturbances in Dublin and the maiming of a British lecturer in T.C.D. will all have been damaging, even when these developments are placed within their context, as it is the concern of all of us that they should be. We understand that there was evidence even before events connected with the hunger-strike of a fall in demand in some of our markets.

Our offices abroad are in close contact with those of Bord Failte and we would welcome it if your representatives could make known any day to day tactical measures - for instance the participation of diplomatic personnel in or joint organisation of trade functions or news releases - which would help in the present serious situation. In addition we would be glad to describe in greater detail the experience and findings of our people abroad and to discuss the position with you personally. Perhaps you could contact me or Paddy Walshe (who returns next week) to arrange a meeting.

Yours sincerely,


D.M. Neligan
Assistant Secretary.



Bord Fáilte

Irish Tourist Board

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Mr Paddy Walsh
Press Officer
Department of Foreign Affairs
80 St Stephen's Green
Dublin 2

26 May 1981

Dear Paddy

Bord Failte is very concerned about the very negative publicity which has appeared in our main markets. Apart from the predictable news coverage, we have heard of highly exaggerated publicity, but have not been able to tie down the specifics on these - you will remember my call to you about reports in the Kansas area about bombings at Dublin and Shannon Airport.

I am writing to ask if you could let us know what reports you are getting from overseas missions about the coverage on Ireland over the last month or so; what monitoring is done of print media, radio and TV abroad and what actions are being taken to counteract the bad publicity - in particular publicity which is exaggerated or wrong.

Bord Failte is very concerned about the losses in tourism which have been caused by damaging publicity in our main markets and if any measures are being considered to increase positive publicity abroad I would be glad to have such details as you can give at this stage.

Yours sincerely

James Larkin
Manager - Publicity and Public Relations