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8 October 1982

Secretary
Department of Foreign Affairs

Attention - Mr David Neligan

VISIT OF MR GERARD COLLINS, MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
TO WASHINGTON SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 1982

The purpose of this visit, apart from discussions with the Administration on international issues of interest to Ireland, including the situation in the Middle East and the role of UNIPIL in Lebanon, were to acquaint the Administration and our friends and contacts in Washington with the present situation in Northern Ireland and in Anglo-Irish relations, to describe the Irish Government's policies thereon and to correct certain misunderstandings or false impressions created by the British Government's publicity drive in favour of the proposed Assembly. The Minister also wished to give added impetus to the effort to mobilize the support of the Irish-American community for the Government's policies and to explore practical means by which this should be done.

2. The visit took place on 29th September (involving the interruption of the Minister's New York programme) and during the period 1st - 4th October. It was cut short by domestic political developments in Ireland. Nevertheless the Minister had a full programme of calls on members of Congress, including Speaker O'Neill, Senator Kennedy and the Friends of Ireland group, as well as a working lunch with the House Foreign Affairs Committee chaired by Mr Clement Zablocki. He called on Judge William P Clark, the National Security Adviser, at the White House and on Acting Secretary of State Kenneth

W Dam at the State Department. He had a discussion in the Embassy with leaders of the Ancient Order of Hibernians and delivered an address to about 200 guests from the Irish-American community at the Embassy residence. He also had a meeting with the editorial board of the Washington Post and briefings with Irish journalists. He lunched with leading Irish-American members of the business and professional community, paid a call on Postmaster-General Bolger and also called on Mrs Ethel Kennedy. All the more substantive of these calls are described in separate reports attached.

3. The visit was extremely useful in clarifying for the Administration and our allies and other contacts on Capitol Hill the Government's attitude to Northern Ireland and Anglo-Irish relations in the run-up to the Assembly elections. It also helped to give practical shape to methods of cooperation between the Government and the Irish-American community.

The Minister's statement at the Embassy reception was particularly effective in that connection, as was his meeting with key AOH leaders to launch a continuing series of consultations between the Embassy and the AOH on practical methods of cooperation. Although these occasions took place only a few days ago some gratifying letters have already been received and I enclose two samples, from Mr T Murray Toomey, President of the Society of the Friendly Sons of St. Patrick in Washington DC and Mr Martin Higgins, a senior member of the AOH in the New York area.

4. The Embassy is now planning the follow-up to be given to the opportunities generated by this visit. A programme of detailed discussions with AOH branches in Washington and elsewhere is envisaged in the coming months, as well as the extension of this process to other Irish-American groups. One of the most important of these is to be found in the American labour movement, of which the Taoiseach met key representatives during his New York visit in June. A meeting

will shortly take place between the undersigned and Mr Tom Donohoe, AFL-CIO, who has a special responsibility for Irish affairs, to explore possibilities in this sector. Although the membership of the Friendly Sons of Saint Patrick is not noted for its day-to-day involvement in Irish affairs, a number of active members are close to the Embassy and a small group drawn mainly from these, whom the Minister met at lunch, has recently been formed to advise and assist the Embassy, when asked to do so, on any matter concerned with the attainment of Irish objectives, especially in the economic field. The informal group of heads of Irish state agencies in America is being kept informed of developments of this kind and as far as possible the work of the group is coordinated to take account of resulting possibilities.

E. F. O'Sullivan
Ambassador