

An Chartlann Náisiúnta
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ROINN AN TAOISIGH

Uimhir.....

VISIT BY U.S. CONGRESSIONAL GROUP

1. The Taoiseach received the Chairman of the House Foreign Relations Committee, Mr. Clement Zablocki accompanied by twelve members of Congress, the U.S. Ambassador Mr. William Shannon and Mr. John J. Brady, Chief of Staff to the House Committee at 5 p.m. on Wednesday the 18th January in Government Buildings. A list of the Congress Members who were present is attached. Messrs. D. Nally, W. Kirwan and F. Murray of the Department of the Taoiseach were also present.

2. After the formal introductions and a photocall, the Taoiseach in welcoming the Group gave them a comprehensive account of the historical background to the Northern Ireland problem together with a report on the current political situation. He then invited the Group to ask questions on matters of particular interest to them.

3. The first questioner asked for some additional information on the background to the current talks on devolution and also some further information on power-sharing. The Taoiseach in replying explained that current proposals would involve a certain degree of autonomy for a proposed elected assembly in Northern Ireland. Matters such as the armed forces, imposition of taxation, foreign policy etc. would remain the prerogative of the British Government whereas certain local matters such as education, housing, infrastructural development etc. would be delegated to the proposed assembly. On power-sharing, the Taoiseach said that the population of Northern Ireland was divided roughly into one million who were in favour of maintaining the union with Great Britain and a half million who were against this. The Six County area had been drawn up initially to maintain this balance - three other counties in the province of Ulster were excluded so as to ensure that there would be a Unionist majority in the remainder of the province. There had been no change of Government in Northern Ireland since it was set up and the administration there had operated in a discriminatory fashion over the years. Eventually this administration was dissolved by the British Government of which Mr. Heath was Prime Minister in 1972. It was decided then that any future Government in the area would have to have a power-sharing arrangement under which executive functions could be discharged by both sections of the population proportionate to their representation in a newly elected assembly. An experiment on these lines was established in 1974 but was brought down by a general strike supported by extreme Unionists after approximately six months. The Taoiseach explained that all the major political parties in the United Kingdom were in favour of a power-sharing type of Government but that todate the Unionist parties in Northern Ireland had, since the fall of the executive in 1974, failed to accept this formula.

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4. In replying to a question by a Congressman on the voting rights which the minority have had in Northern Ireland, the Taoiseach explained that the minority community was represented in Stormont by a number of members of Parliament prior to its abolition but that these members had never received any executive power or office.

5. One of the lady members of Congress asked about the peace people and the effect which they had on the situation in Northern Ireland. The Taoiseach explained the background to the Movement and traced its development up to recent times including the award of the Nobel Peace Prize. He mentioned that the motivation behind the Movement had changed along the line and had now a political dimension. It was not a political party as such but nevertheless was involved in overall politics. This had led to difficulties with other parties. After winning the Nobel Peace Prize there was also the question as to where the Movement could go from here.

6. Another of the Congressmen asked the Taoiseach for some information on the S.D.L.P. party, the support which it receives and in putting his question was highly complimentary of the work which Mr. John Hume had done for Northern Ireland in the U.S. The Taoiseach in reply explained the composition of the party, its policy in regard to unity and power-sharing and mentioned as well the fact that in the most recent Northern Ireland election, it had received approximately 23% of the popular vote. The Taoiseach also explained the system of election to Westminster and how this resulted in the party having a small representation here.

7. The Taoiseach was asked for a comment on his recent statement on Northern Ireland and the British Government reaction to it. In replying he explained his views on the negative guarantee which the Unionists have received from successive British Governments and their consequential intransigence which now resulted in their refusal to accept a system of power-sharing. He also referred to the amnesty question which had been raised and indicated that this was a hypothetical question which the Government of the day would have to decide on for themselves possibly at some date in the future when the current campaign was concluded.

8. One of the Congressmen asked the Taoiseach for his views on the refusal by the U.S. authorities of visas to people such as Ruairi O'Brady going to the U.S. on fund-raising missions.

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The Taoiseach gave a detailed reply outlining the differences between the old I.R.A., the new I.R.A. of the 30's, 40's etc. and the P.I.R.A. which split from the official I.R.A. in 1969. He further explained that the Sinn Féin organisation as such had split up likewise at that time. He gave the Group an account of Rory O'Brady's involvement in Provisional Sinn Féin and also the jail sentences which he has served on being convicted of membership of the I.R.A. which was an illegal organisation in this country. The Taoiseach stated that he would not dispute the right of the U.S. authorities to refuse visas in cases such as this. He went on to mention that Mr. O'Brady heads an organisation which is against the Constitution of this State. He was of the view that the U.S. authorities were right in making the decision they had made in this instance.

9. Another member of the Group asked the Taoiseach for his views on the requests received from U.S. citizens for Congressional hearings on Northern Ireland. The Taoiseach said that those people who made these requests were not persona grata to people genuinely interested in human rights. He did not want to see such people putting forward a case for Ireland. They spoke for only a small minority of the population here and had only approximately 2% support. He suggested that the members of Congress should certainly examine the situation in Northern Ireland but not on the basis of what the people to whom the Congressmen had referred would suggest. In answering a question as to what role the U.S. might play in finding a solution to the Northern Ireland problem, the Taoiseach mentioned President Carter's statement which he said had encouraged the Government here who welcomed in particular the President's reference to investment. This was the first time that such a statement, even if in muted tones, had been made by the President of the U.S. The Taoiseach welcomed the request to Irish Americans not to contribute to organisations such as Noraid. From the information at his disposal, he was satisfied that more of the funds raised by this Group went to activities such as bomb-making etc. than were channelled towards relief of distressed families etc.

10. Turning to U.S. investment here, the Taoiseach mentioned that over 80% of all overseas investment in Ireland came from the U.S. There were over 200 projects involved and these employed 33,000 people. He said that we would welcome more such investment particularly that which would provide us with new expertise. He mentioned the advantages of the E.E.C. membership which provided an access to a huge market. He

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then went on to speak of the current economic situation dealing with subjects such as inflation, tax reduction, employment promotion, borrowing, unemployment and our overall position in regard to these matters in the E.E.C. context. He told the Congress members that there had been a reduction in unemployment in the past six months and that further reduction was anticipated. He then went on to deal with the economic situation in Europe and spoke also of the applications from Portugal, Spain and Greece for entry giving our views on enlargement of the Community. In a further reference to U.S. investment in Ireland, the Taoiseach mentioned the interest which Ireland had in avoiding any move by the American administration to change the tax laws on foreign investment in a way which would be adverse to the interest of this country.

11. In a reference to the Irish National Caucus the Taoiseach mentioned that many Irish-Americans were being deluded into believing that they were helping orphans etc. by assisting certain organisations in the U.S. In regard to the Caucus he said that this Group had a habit of putting themselves forward as representatives of the Irish people. He suggested that Irish-Americans should be wary of all groups seeking funds for Ireland but on being queried as to whether there were any particular groups who were bona fide and worthy of support the Taoiseach mentioned the Ireland Fund and the Children First organisations.

25th January, 1978.

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CODEL ZABLOCKI

LISTING OF MEMBERS

MEMBERS OF CONGRESS

1	Rep. Clement Zablocki	- Wisconsin
2	Rep. Jonathan B. Bingham & Mrs. Bingham	- New York
3	Rep. William S. Broomfield & Mrs. Broomfield	- Michigan
4	Rep. J. Herbert Burke	- Florida
5	Rep. Delwin M. Clawson & Mrs. Clawson	- California
6	Rep. Christopher Dodd	- Connecticut
7	Rep. Paul Findley & Mrs. Findley	- Illinois
8	Rep. Benjamin A. Gilman	- New York
9	Rep. Helen S. Meyner and Mr. Meyner	- New Jersey
10	Rep. Donald J. Pease	- Ohio
11	Rep. Shirley N. Pettis	- California
12	Rep. Leo J. Ryan	- California
13	Rep. Larry Winn, Jr. & Mrs. Winn	- Kansas

OTHERS

Maj. Lonny R. Alexander - Military Escort
Mr. J. Brian Atwood - State Department
Mr. George R. Berdes - HIRC Staff Member
Mr. Everett Bierman - HIRC Staff Member
14 ✓ Mr. John J. Brady - HIRC Staff Member
Col. Robert Buhrow - Military Escort
Mr. Kenneth R. Harding & Mrs. Harding - Sergeant at Arms
Mr. Keith Jewell - Photographer
Lt. Col. Karl Lauenstein - Military Escort
SM/Sgt. Rasem Malley - Military Escort
Ms. Helen Mattas - HIRC Staff Member
M/Sgt. Joseph McDonald - Military Escort
Dr. Andris Neimanis - Doctor
Mr. Ivo Spalatin - HIRC Staff Member

15 U.S. Ambassador

THE MEMBERS OF THE U.S. HOUSE INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS SUB-COMMITTEE ON THE MIDDLE EAST AND EUROPE HAVE BEEN ON A TOUR OF ARAB CAPITALS: TUNIS, AMMAN, DAMASCUS and Riyadh. THEY HAVE JUST VISITED TEL AVIV and are visiting Ireland) before their return home.

THEIR MAIN INTEREST WOULD BE THE CARTER INITIATIVE. THEY MAY ALSO refer to European (EEC) - U.S. relations.

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