

STAFF IN CONFIDENCE



B/3/6/MLR

2. Dtd 2/11
Sub file

Mr Bloomfield

cc Miss Pease
PS/PUS(L)

McBRIDE LOBBYIST

In the light of your minute to me of 20 February and Miss Pease's minute of the same date I should record the conversation which I had with Sir Patrick Wright on this subject over lunch on 20 February.

2. I expressed our strong disappointment at the FCO's apparent preference for its own man to fill the McBride post when we had gone to considerable trouble to field two good candidates, one of whom seemed to me particularly well qualified in terms of his knowledge of Northern Ireland, his Ulster accent and the fact that he came from the minority community. I found it hard to believe that an FCO candidate without this background could do the job as well, however skilled he might be in the general arts of diplomacy. There were not many opportunities for members of the NICS to gain broader experience in this way and it was disappointing when a post on which hopes had been built failed to materialise. It was particularly unfortunate that there had been such a long delay in making the selection, during which the Job Description seemed to have changed to the detriment of the Northern Ireland candidates.

3. Sir Patrick Wright said that he too regretted the delay and could appreciate that we felt let down by the FCO decision. His understanding was that a fairly precise Job Description had been provided by the Consul General in New York and that those in the FCO who had to make the appointment (in which he had not been personally concerned) had chosen the best person to meet this description. He knew the individual in question who was currently Private Secretary to a Junior Minister in the FCO and thought highly of his ability, although he recognised that he would suffer the initial disadvantage of being unfamiliar with the Irish scene.

4. I went on to express a more general concern about the way in which staff exchanges with the FCO seemed to be a one way traffic. We were anxious to continue to take good quality FCO staff to fill certain posts in the NIO for which diplomatic experience was appropriate. But it would be difficult for us to do this if when an opportunity occurred for a move in the opposite direction the FCO seemed unwilling to accept NIO candidates. I thought that we would take the FCO candidate for the forthcoming Liaison Staff vacancy; but we might well decide to look elsewhere to fill the ESL post.

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5. Sir Patrick Wright said that he very much hoped we would continue to provide occasional posts in the NIO for FCO personnel. This was an outlet which the FCO valued and they would undertake to provide good quality candidates. He accepted, however, that we would be more disposed to take their people if they could provide an occasional outlet for one of ours.

6. I do not think that we can do anything about the McBride post at this stage; but I hope that my conversation will have done some good in registering our concern about the way in which the matter was handled and may perhaps be helpful to us on some future occasion.

4 March 1987



ROBERT ANDREW