

10/3

CONFIDENTIAL

HL071

350W 1-12-87  
P. McAllister  
2/12/87

Miss Thompson  
to be pl-1/10  
Kurt

NOTE FOR THE RECORD

- cc: PS/Sir K Bloomfield - B
- Mr Burns
- Dr Quigley, DPP - M
- Mr Fell, DED - M
- Mr Chesterton
- Mr Gowdy, DED - M
- Mr Elliott - B
- Mr Bell
- Mr Kirk
- Mr Wolstencroft, DED - M
- Mr Wilson, DED - M

Sty E  
train &  
Federal files

**RECEIVED**  
1315  
- 1 DEC 1987  
MUFAX ROOM  
STORMONT HOUSE ANNER

**MEETINGS WITH US DIPLOMATS**

S. Leach 1.12.87

1. Mr Bell and I met yesterday with Ross Rodgers (the First Secretary in the US Embassy concerned, among other things, with Northern Ireland) and Bob Myers, the US Consul-General in Belfast. We briefly discussed Anglo-Irish relations and the ECST, but the main topic covered was the MacBride campaign and our forthcoming fair employment legislation.
  
2. Mr Rodgers' main point was that the timescale for the new legislation was not understood on the Hill or even to some extent in the Administration. While it was well appreciated that in Whitehall (as in Washington) there were constraints on the resources available to prepare legislation and on the Parliamentary time available to progress it, these difficulties could be circumvented if a sufficiently high priority was given to the Bill. Our Consultative Paper had appeared over a year ago and yet it was still being said that the legislation could not come into effect before 1989. Fair employment in Northern Ireland was one of the few issues - perhaps the only one - which could be used in the US to attack the UK as a human rights violator: the Government's own statistics showing that the Catholic/Protestant unemployment ratio had scarcely changed over the last 10 years were superficially very damaging. Mr Bell and I explained the intricacies of the problem, the comprehensive way in which HMG was tackling it and the requirements of our legislative system. Mr Rodgers said that he understood, but these arguments did not cut much ice at the political level. The State Department believed that the MacBride campaign had by no means peaked yet: it

CONFIDENTIAL

was gathering considerable momentum and would provide a major platform for anti-British propaganda during the 1988 election campaigns. (He commented that State believed that our Ambassador in the US was also extremely concerned about the possible damage.) Our on-the-ground efforts in the US must continue, but accelerating the legislation would very effectively provide the necessary ammunition to halt the MacBride campaign and even, perhaps, roll it back in some states. Mr Rodgers commented that Ambassador Price felt strongly on this issue and might even raise it at one of his regular meetings with the Prime Minister.

3. We asked Mr Rodgers about the current position on the possible Federal challenge to the constitutionality of Sullivan and MacBride statutes enacted by State legislatures. He said that the White House and the NSC were still favourable to the idea of a challenge to such statutes in the courts; however, there was now greater sensitivity to the political dangers of appearing to champion South Africa by challenging the Sullivan Acts. This meant that the MacBride Acts were now emerging as the principal target of a possible legal initiative. Some in the White House were eager that Federal attorneys should challenge MacBride statutes through the courts, but the Justice Department remained reluctant to expose the Administration so directly. This new thinking in the Administration is clearly a positive development from our point of view. (Mr Rodgers stressed however that deliberations on this issue were still continuing; he was giving us this progress report for background and on an unattributable basis - could recipients please note.)

4. We also briefly discussed the International Fund. Mr Rodgers (though not Mr Myers) thought that it was quite likely that the third tranche of \$35 million allocated to the Fund in FY 88 would be cut back: there were precedents for reducing authorised foreign aid. Moreover budget pressures were affecting just about everything at the moment: Mr Myers commented that he had just had to release two locally engaged staff at his Belfast Consulate. However, both men thought that there was still a reasonable chance of a fourth contribution to the Fund in FY 89 if impressive testimony could be provided (starting as soon as possible) of major projects taken

CONFIDENTIAL

forward by the Fund. Even though the Administration privately believed that Northern Ireland would not be the most logical recipient of further US foreign aid, we should not underestimate the reserves of goodwill towards Northern Ireland which existed on the Hill and which might be tapped further provided that it was adequately demonstrated that the money already provided had been used productively.

5. In this context Mr Ross commented that the meeting with the Fund Chairman during Mr Price's visit to the Province in September had not been an unqualified success: some of Mr Brett's comments (particularly on the importance of taking environmental considerations fully into account when deciding whether the Fund should support development projects in rural areas) had struck the Ambassador as unbusinesslike. Mr Myers commented that he had seen the Fund Chairman recently and thought that he was now focussing more fully than previously on the need for the Fund to show visible and early results. Mr Myers also commented that Ambassador Price was keen to make another visit to Northern Ireland, perhaps as early as next spring.

Conclusion

6. The points which Mr Rodgers and Mr Myers put to us about the timing of the legislation are similar to those which Mr Myers put to Mr Fell on 20 November (Mr Fell's note of 23 November, not to all) and also incidentally to those in Judy McLennan's letter of 20 November to the Secretary of State. Our explanation of the complexities of the Parliamentary timetable, convincing though it is on the rational level, will clearly not carry a great deal of weight in a more than usually febrile election year when candidates will be vulnerable to single-issue lobbies. We shall have to extract the maximum possible mileage from the Secretary of State's statement in the New Year committing the Government to legislation and indicating the likely content of the proposed measures.

*Stephen J. Leach*

S J LEACH

SIL Division

1 December 1987

T3490.

CONFIDENTIAL