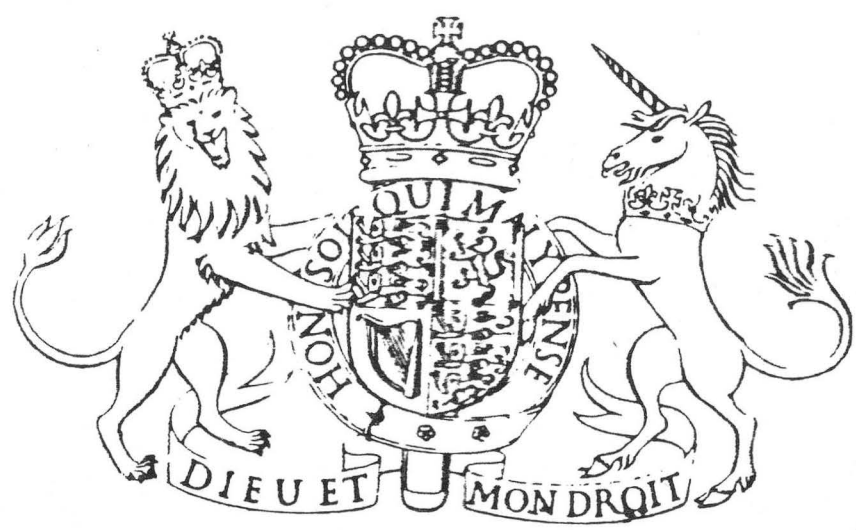


MR Johnson

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PA General US Reg. File  
Vol 2.



THE

MACBRIDE

CAMPAIGN

OCTOBER 1988

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INFORMATION OFFICERS' CONFERENCE

BRITISH EMBASSY, WASHINGTON:

4-5 OCTOBER, 1988

The MacBride Campaign: Briefing Pack

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## TACTICS FOR COUNTERING THE MACBRIDE PRINCIPLES CAMPAIGN

Introduction

1. The campaign for the implementation of the MacBride Principles has been running for a little over three years. During that time the MacBride proponents' tactics have undergone changes, some subtle, some less so. For example, the green blazers and the early hysteria have given way to sober dark suits and a more low key public performance (with the possible exception of Father McManus).
  
2. Our efforts to oppose the Principles have undergone some changes in emphasis. In the early stages, having initially reacted negatively to the Principles themselves, we tended to lay greatest emphasis on their potential illegalities under UK law. This of course remains an important point. But we now concentrate more on the fact that however laudatory, the Principles may be in theory, their effect in practice is to discourage investment in Northern Ireland and thereby compound the unemployment problem.
  
3. Most of our Posts in the US have now had some experience of lobbying against the MacBride campaign either directly when faced with draft legislation, or more obliquely by defending the British Governments position in the face of a media campaign. This paper attempts to draw some conclusions from this experience. We must recognise of course that every State is different and that what has worked in one State will not necessarily work in the next but there are general lessons to be drawn. By way of caveat, we all recognise that there are resource implications involved in our lobbying against MacBride both in terms of time and money spent on MacBride work and in terms of other work left undone.

First Contacts

4. On tactics the most important point to make is that there is absolutely no substitute for direct personal contact with key legislators and their staffers. Without the support of the Speaker of the House, the majority leader and (perhaps less so) the President of the Senate, very little legislation stands a chance of success. The Speaker and caucus leaders also play a key role in allocating bills to committee. This too can have a significant effect on a bill's chances of survival. It follows therefore that it is necessary to lobby these individuals early. A high powered approach late in the day is rarely effective.

5. A sympathetic legislator can be invaluable in offering advice on how to handle a campaign of opposition to a bill and can also identify other key figures in the legislature. This is also a point on which a paid lobbyist (about which more later) can prove extremely helpful. The local Chairman of the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), a nationwide bipartisan (although generally conservative) organisation, which is generally well disposed towards us, can be helpful in this regard, although in one State the ALEC Chairman was a co-sponsor of the bill.

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6. As soon as a bill has been assigned to committee, it is essential to make personal contact with the Chairman and all committee members to set out the reasons for our opposition to the bill. If you can persuade the Committee Chairman (or enough of the Committee members) to oppose the bill, there is often a possibility that he will delay, or even refrain from, scheduling a hearing. Pressure can, however, be brought to bear on the Committee Chairman by his leadership or by constituents to schedule a hearing. As well as all relevant committee members you should speak to the main sponsor of the bill and his co-sponsors to judge their level of commitment to the legislation. Having done this you may also be in a position to judge the level of support in the legislature for the prime sponsor. If he or she commands respect and loyalty our life will be made more difficult. If, on the other hand, he or she is considered to be something of a renegade we may be better placed. This may also be the time to make a low-key approach in the Governor's Office to let them know that we are active in opposing legislation in the State House (cf paragraph 20 below re appeal to the Governor to veto).

7. Our opponents will be extremely active both in personal meetings and orchestrating a letter writing campaign from constituents to key legislators. It does not take that many letters to persuade a legislator that they have a live/hot issue on their hands which has re-election implications for them. It is essential therefore to speak to committee members early to let them know that there is another side to the story, before they make commitments to constituents that they are subsequently loathed to break.

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12. With most, if not all, of the people in paragraph 4-9 above you will undoubtedly find an appalling level of ignorance about Northern Ireland and perceptions based solely on press reports of the latest outrage. You will need to explain carefully the position of John Hume and the role played by the SDLP in Northern Ireland politics. Their opposition to this campaign is central to our cause. Our opponents will make attempts to belittle Hume because of his opposition to their campaign, and to suggest that he is isolated within his own party. You should point out the absence of any positive or constructive aspects in the MacBride legislation. It contains no commitment to further investment: in marked contrast to the Boston/Derry/Galway venture sponsored by Mayor Flynn of Boston with the specific aim of encouraging commerce between Boston and the two areas of Ireland. You can also explain some of the background of some of the characters involved in the MacBride campaign by using Greyband material on, eg NORAID/AOH/INC but be careful about criticising the AOH - local chapter members will be in the forefront of the campaign in each State and will undoubtedly appear to be good solid citizens and constituents. Comparisons with the situation of blacks in the US should also be handled with care.

13. As time goes by you should keep in regular contact with committee members and their staffers, developing personal relationships and establishing an early warning system for signs of movement, eg a hearing date. You will never get much notice. The date of a hearing is often contrived to suit the sponsor of a bill and, by extension, our opponents. This essentially highlights the defensive nature of our campaign.

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14. One of the strengths of the MacBride campaign is that it has brought together a wide coalition of people in the United States. Liberals, human rights activists, blacks, trades unionists, church and Irish American groups are all able to unite behind this issue. You should attempt to break this coalition by targeting specific elements within it. A prominently positioned friend in the Democratic party can be invaluable. You should get alongside the leader of the black caucus at an early stage. The analogy with South Africa, although demonstrably false, will be in most people's minds anyway and early contacts with the black caucus may pre-empt their support for the campaign. The National AFL/CIO have adopted the MacBride Principles much to the annoyance of the Northern Ireland Committee of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions. John Freeman, Irish Secretary of the AT & GWU has agreed to write expressing his union's opposition to the MacBride campaign. It is unlikely that this would persuade the local AFL/CIO to oppose the campaign, but it may reduce their enthusiasm for it. Our opponents will target the unions and we should not under-estimate the leverage that organised labour has over some legislators. In the past Jim Eccles has done sterling work with the local church hierarchy and should be used at an early stage if feasible.

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15. When a hearing date has been set it is essential that we are represented by a good team. Although many committee votes will have been decided before the hearing, the absence of any voices against on the day will undoubtedly sway fence sitters. Balanced presentations by Cooper, Cushnahan and others have contrasted sharply with the polemical approach of Father McManus and his cronies. Father Helmick from Boston provides a good balanced testimony in opposition to MacBride and acts as a foil to McManus's dog collar which, despite his rhetoric and transparent anti-Britishness, provides him with an air of respectability. The impact of "locals" on legislators should not be under-estimated. If we can get one or two to speak on our behalf that is only to the good. We are after all dealing primarily with a US domestic issue albeit one with international overtones.

16. You might also consider arranging a letter to the Committee Chairman from a Northern Ireland Minister, normally Mr Peter Viggers MP, who is responsible for the Department of Economic Development. (This could also be done in advance of a hearing.) State Department will also write a letter setting out their opposition to the campaign but they have to be asked to do this by a member of the legislature. The request should be directed to Mr Gerald Monroe of the Office of InterGovernmental Affairs: tel (202) 647 7416. Please keep this Embassy informed.

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17. We have in the past tried to encourage the US companies that invest in Northern Ireland to play a more active role in support of our opposition to this campaign by, eg speaking at hearings. With the exception of isolated appearances by representatives of Ford and GM the companies have to date been reluctant to raise their profile on this issue. The latest round of share-holder resolutions at AGMs provided mixed results for the MacBride proponents - some votes were down, others marginally up, one by a surprisingly large number. We need to keep in contact with the companies. If any of them are particularly prominent in a State considering MacBride legislation they may be prevailed upon to adopt a higher profile.

#### Professional Help

18. A good team from Northern Ireland for committee hearings is essential but visits by Jim Eccles and John Cushnahan early on in the proceedings before the hearing stage has been reached can be even more effective. Their behind the scenes lobbying may prevent a bill even reaching the hearing stage.

19. In much of the above the support offered by professional lobbyists can be of great help. DED are be willing to consider allocating funds for this, subject to the endorsement of this Embassy and always bearing in mind that funds are limited. Lobbyists can be of particular value for the local knowledge that we, in the time available to us, simply cannot achieve. They can identify legislators who might be prepared to break ranks if convinced of the righteousness of the cause. They are also invaluable in advising us on the twists and turns of the State's legislative process.

Engaging professional lobbyists is however something of a lottery unless it is done on the basis of a firm recommendation from trusted contacts. We need to identify immediately that there is no conflict of interest and that the lobbyist concerned will have the time to devote to our business. In this regard biggest is not always best. The larger lobbying firms tend to have many other clients and although they would doubtless have a good deal of prestige locally that too can be double edged if it attracts criticism from our opponents for the amount of HMG's money we are spending in countering the campaign. (More money spent on this than on trying to stop the publication of Spycatcher was a recent claim!) When considering the possibility of hiring a professional lobbyist you should discuss it with this Embassy before approaching the DED.

20. If it becomes apparent that the bill is unstoppable you should turn your attention to trying to amend it, removing divestment clauses if they are there and ideally deleting references to the MacBride Principles, although this has not proved possible yet. We should then be left with a monitoring bill in which you should try to insert references to the role of the Fair Employment Agency and the British Government's proposals contained in the recent White Paper. At this stage you should also consider the possibility of an appeal to the Governor to veto the bill. You will need to recommend whether such an appeal should come from HM Ambassador or the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

21. In all this you should feel free to call for reinforcements earlier rather than later. Our opponents will swarm the legislature in question, creating the impression of a wave of support. And once this impression has been created it will be very difficult to get legislators to focus on the logic of our arguments.

22. In a nutshell professional lobbyists can be a great asset and we are grateful for DED's continuing support on this. But there is no substitute for personal contacts. Our opponents are prepared to pound the corridors of the legislature banging on every door. We should do the same. Get in - get in early - and get in regularly. Do not take yes (or no) for a definitive answer. Do not take anything for granted. Politics at the State level is a cut-throat business and committed votes can evaporate over night if the price is right.

Conclusion

23. Above all, do not hesitate to ask for help and advice from:

- a) the Embassy, which is responsible for overall coordination of the MacBride campaign;
- b) BIS New York, who have much useful information material available; and
- c) DED (Belfast) who can provide all kinds of invaluable support for Posts conducting the "ground war".

September 1988

British Embassy  
Washington