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Mrs Floryan

To me [unclear]

G 24/11

NOTE FOR THE RECORD - MEETINGS WITH SIR A ACLAND AND OTHERS



a m to amici
m r to roger
m g to giles
m g to gandy

cc PS/Secretary of State (L&B) - B
PS/Minister of State (L&B) - B
PS/Dr Mawhinney (L&B) - B
PS/Mr Viggers (L&B)
PS/PUS (L&B) - B
PS/Sir K Bloomfield - B
Mr Burns - B
Mr Stephens - B
Mr Felt
Mr Semple
Mr Chesterton - B
Mr Miles - B
Mr A P Wilson - B
H M Ambassador, Dublin

Mr Mawhinney - G 24/11

1. As Cabinet overran yesterday, I was left to field Sir Antony on his own. (The Ambassador later met both the Foreign Secretary as well as our own in the FCO.)

2. Sir Antony quizzed me on the Article 11 Review, and our current attitude to the Anglo Irish Agreement. I did my best to explain why we hoped it would be forward looking, and build on what we had in common with the Irish, so as to enable us post-Review, to make continued progress towards achieving the objectives for which we had signed it in the first place. It was important, if we were to avoid recriminations, to avoid using the Review to duplicate discussions we have had, or are holding in the Conference (and Secretariat) on matters of substance. It was also important that the Review process if possible furthered, and on no account prevented the search for political development, and dialogue between the parties. Thus, although we had affirmed our commitment to the Agreement in the last Joint Statement, we had to ensure that nothing we said on the Agreement make it harder for Unionists to come out of their corner, especially at the present conjuncture.

3. The Ambassador accepted that the Secretary of State had a number of difficult hands to play simultaneously, but he emphasised the damage that would be done in the States if HMG gave any impression that they were flagging in their commitment to the Agreement, and he

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reminded me of the "sigh of relief" that had gone up over there when the Anglo Irish Agreement was signed.

3. The Ambassador went on to emphasise to that on MacBride, our decision to use lobbyists was clearly right, although he understood the need to ensure value for money. He also believed that the MacBride Campaign would indeed continue indefinitely. Following my suggestion that we would have to look hard at whether we ought to continue our resistance at its present level after the Fair Employment Legislation had become law, and the new Administration had played itself in, he accepted that it would be sensible to review our policies. But "review" meant precisely that: we should not preempt the decisions that might be take next year.

4. In particular, he believed that much would depend on the progress of the Fair Employment legislation. Above all, he feared slippage. If the Bill did not obtain Royal Assent by next Summer, our "street cred" in the US would be severely damaged. (I did my best to reassure him that, on the present best estimates, the Bill would be laid before Parliament in early December, with, possibly, a Second Reading before Christmas, and that it should be on the Statute Book, with luck by the Summer.) It was also important that UK Ministers were seen to be enthusiastic about the new legislation. There was a wide spread view in Irish America that HMG was being dragged reluctantly to enact it. The more we could do to dispel this impression the better.

5. We must also, he thought, accept that we would not receive more than \$10 million for the International Fund in FY89. But we should continue to lobby with the Irish for further tranches. Tactics were something he could discuss with his Irish colleagues. However, the intensity of our lobbying would be inversely proportional to the amount of money the Fund had left unspent. Our task would be far more difficult if the Fund were sitting on large reserves. I explained that the US Consul General in Belfast, Mr Myers, had told me only the day before that the AID administrators, who had come to Northern Ireland to see the Fund in operation, had left greatly

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impressed with the quality of the Fund's management and the worthwhileness of its projects. That, apparently, was the impression he had received also, and we agreed that this was a good omen for the future.

6. The Ambassador uttered a cri de coeur for the Embassy's being given as much advance information as possible, if necessary in the strictest confidence, about new measures likely to make an unfavourable impact in the States. He appreciated that the measures emanating from the Security Review had been restricted to a very tight circle, for good reasons, but commented that there were disproportionate gains to be made if the US audience (including, I think the Administration) could be approached in advance, so that their reactions could be better judged, and less off the cuff.

7. As for Ministerial visits to the United States, the Ambassador confirmed that those by Mr Viggers and Dr Mawhinney had been very successful. He was particularly warm about the good relations which Dr Mawhinney had struck up with influential Irish Americans. The Ambassador also asked whether the Secretary of State intended to visit the US. He would be most welcome, but timing was most important. The Fair Employment Bill would have to be well advanced before he, or indeed any other NI Minister - and I mentioned the possibility of a follow up visit by Dr Mawhinney - came back to America.

8. On Shorts, the Ambassador was relaxed. The Sherpa contract had been signed. And Mr McNulty had apparently convinced Mr Joe Kennedy that Shorts' were indeed bending all their efforts to further improve their equal opportunity practices. (Also on the economic side, when we touched on the balance between the resources currently devoted to the NI information and investment promotion efforts, I felt that the Ambassador was sceptical whether the IDB effort in the US represented value for money.)

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9. I also raised very briefly, the possibility of Mr Burns' visiting the US to provide "state of the art" briefing to our US posts, but also to brief incoming members of the new Administration and Irish Americans. The Ambassador had apparently discussed this already with the Minister, Mr Fall; in his view, this was something that Mr Burns might like to follow up directly with Mr Fall. There were a lot of visits planned by Ministers, senior military and others over the coming months, and the new Administration would, of course, be swamped in its early days by lobbyists. Hence, once again, timing would be very important.

Other US encounters

10. This was my third meeting with a US flavour this week. The first two being with the US Consul General in Belfast (and a member of the US Embassy here); the second with two influential Presbyterian Ministers from the Chevy Chase Interfaith Group in Washington DC about to visit Northern Ireland. The only specifics worth noting here were:

- a) once again, the significance of our FE legislation, including getting across to a US public that if we did (despite present indications) introduce via the House of Lords this was not a down grading of the legislation, but simply reflected pressures on a heavy Parliamentary time table;
- b) that of the 40 million or so Americans of Irish descent, a substantial proportion were of Protestant Irish descent, who like many Presbyterians still retained a sympathetic interest in the old country, though without the emotional hand ups that often distort the perceptions of Irish Americans of the other tradition. We were urged, therefore, not to overlook the former group who looked, above all, for reassurance that our policies in Northern Ireland were equitable. And, provided we could do this, they were disposed to be helpful rather than the reverse. At their request, I tried to argue the case they might put to, say, Episcopalians and Methodists as to why

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people of good will should not as the latter denominations had done, support MacBride. I also emphasised that the more Americans could visit Northern Ireland, and help, on return dispel the painfully simplistic notions held by some of their countrymen, they would be performing a major act of good neighbourliness;

- c) the Presbyterians emphasised the damage, both in the MacBride and other contexts, of Northern Ireland becoming elided in the North American mind with South Africa. This was damaging, not only in the MacBride context (where we are well aware of the dangers of the full precedent of the Sullivan principles) but also more widely, especially in church circles. It was partly in that context I had to spend quite a bit of time explaining that we had not recently introduced media censorship, or abolished the right to silence. It is in itself worrying, and harks back to the Ambassador's concerns, that well meaning and well informed Americans could be talking in these terms.

P N BELL
SIL Division
16 November 1988

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