

PA 'miscellaneous' file

FROM: C G MACCABE
POLITICAL AFFAIRS DIVISION
15 AUGUST 1994



cc Mr Bell o/r
Mr Williams o/r - B
Mr Wood (B&L) - B
Mr Daniell - B
Mr Maxwell
Mr Alexander, NIB
Dr Smyth - Fax

Mr Watkins - B

THE IRISH FAMINE

Thank you for letting me see a copy of Don Alexander's note of 12 August.

2. The Famine entered my consciousness in another context recently, when I lunched with Canon Nicholas Frayling, the Rector of Liverpool. The Canon - who is of Anglo-Irish descent, and a "friend" of the Institute of Irish Studies at Liverpool University, is currently on a 6 months sabbatical in the Republic. Amongst the ideas he is working on is one for a Service of Contrition in Liverpool Cathedral next year, at which "Britain" can express its deep regret for its treatment of its Irish citizens 150 years ago. To the Canon's obvious surprise and disappointment I was less than enthusiastic about the idea making the same point that Mr Alexander does in his note, namely that the dreadful events of 1840s must be seen against the laissez-faire background of their time. I said a service could stir up more emotion than it spent. Although the Canon promised to reflect on my remarks I think he had already decided to go ahead and we shall therefore probably hear more about the idea in the coming months.

Mr Campion. 19/8
I could not resist intervening (copy to follow)
AE
18/8.

13764/LO

267

As to Mr Alexander's suggestion that we should develop some lines to take on the Famine based on reputable historical analysis, Dr Smyth will be happy to help. However, he will be on leave from the end of this week until mid-September so any serious research by him would have to wait until then.

[Signed]

C G MACCABE

SH EXT 27085

13764/LO

268