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VISIT TO USA: 16-25 JULY 1986

1. Earlier this year I received an invitation to address a course at the Federal Executive Institute (FEI) at Charlottesville, Virginia, which offers training to US public servants through its Executive Excellence Programme (in which, in the past, a number of civil and public servants from Northern Ireland have participated). In pursuit of this invitation I agreed to lead a "Special Forum on Northern Ireland" on Thursday, 17 July. I took the opportunity of this visit to America to offer my services to the Embassy, the Consulates and the IDB representatives in post there in support of their various political, information, economic and other activities.

Federal Executive Institute

2. At Charlottesville I addressed a course of some 70 federal officials, drawn from a very wide range of departments and agencies, from the Department of Defence to the Bureau of Indian Affairs. I spoke for about 45 minutes on the historic origins of the divisions in Northern Ireland and on the various attempts over recent years to cope with those divisions, culminating in the Anglo-Irish Agreement. I then responded to interested and penetrating questions for a further three-quarters of an hour. The US Civil Service is, of course, very different from our own. Its officials are, in practice, much more distanced from policy-making processes than their UK counterparts. Nevertheless it was, I found, useful and stimulating to discuss the Northern Ireland situation with a range of people occupying quite responsible positions. Other "special forums" on the occasion of this particular course included "Major Issues on American Foreign Policy", a "White House Update" (by a Special Assistant to the President who acts as Executive Secretary to the Domestic Policy Council), "Gramm Rudman: The Saga Continues" and "Canada: Fantasies, Facts and the United States" (by Ambassador Allan Roger of the Canadian National Defence College).

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Public Officials: Elected and Appointed

3. In the course of excellent programmes organised by the Embassy and by consular posts at Chicago, Cleveland and New York, I met a wide range of Federal, State and other officials. These included:-

In Chicago

Neil Hartigan, Attorney General of Illinois (formerly Lieutenant Governor)

Michael Madigan, Speaker of the Illinois House of Representatives

Thomas Hynes, Cook County Assessor

In Washington

Bob Bell, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Near East and Europe, Agency for International Development (AID)

Ron Venezia, Deputy Director, AID

Russ Misheloff, AID

Jim Wilkinson, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for European and Canadian Affairs, State Department

Bob Myers, US Consul General-Designate at Belfast

Congressman Benjamin Gilman (Republican, New York)

Hillel Weinberg, Staffer, House Foreign Affairs Committee

Rick Messick, Majority Counsel, Senate Foreign Relations Committee

Kevin Peterson, Office of the Speaker of the House

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Peter Sommer, National Security Council

Dr Paul Stockton, Office of Daniell Moynihan

Mrs Toni Verstandig, Staffer, House Foreign Affairs
Committee

Ms Nancy Soderberg, Office of Edward Kennedy

In New York

Ned Regan, State Controller for New York

Tom Pandick, Director of Investor Affairs, New York
State

In New Jersey

Assemblyman Zimmer, Chairman of the State
Governmental Committee

Assemblyman Bocchini, member of the State
Governmental Committee

Assemblywoman Crecco, member, State Governmental
Committee

Gregg Edwards, Research Associate to the State
Governmental Committee

Media

4. In Chicago I was interviewed on Radio Stations WBFZ (Public Radio) and WBBM (the CBS Radio Network) and met members of the Editorial Board of the "Chicago Tribune". In Cleveland I talked to editorial staff of the "Cleveland Plain Dealer". Guests at a dinner in New York included editorial staff from the "New York Daily News", the "New York Post", the "New York Times" and "Newsweek International". In suburban New Jersey I talked to editorial writers of the "Bergen Record", one of the most influential newspapers in that State.

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Other "Opinion Formers"

5. I was able to make numerous other contacts. These included, in Chicago, a group associated with the Irish Children's Fund and a battery of no less than seven university professors deeply interested in, or associated with, Ireland. In Cleveland I met Kevin O'Donnell, Chairman of the Cleveland Council on World Affairs. Washington lunch guests included Tom Melia, Associate Director of the Free Trade Union Institute, Patricia Keefer of the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, and Paul Quinn, President/Chairman of the Committee for a New Ireland.

Industrial Contacts

6. Here the main events were in St Louis and New York. In St Louis, Sam Fox, Chairman of the Harbour Group, gave a lunch for me to meet business contacts, and spoke very positively about his own corporate experience of Northern Ireland. I also met there David Low, President of Sherwood Medical, a subsidiary of American Home Products whose Chairman Mr John Culligan, I subsequently also met in New York. HMCG hosted an excellent "business contacts" lunch in New York, bringing together both people with positive experience in Northern Ireland and new contacts, and including the Presidents of J P Stevens and Cluett & Peabody International and the Senior Vice-President of Grumman Corporation International.

Embassy and Consulates

7. I called with the outgoing Ambassador (Sir Oliver Wright) in Washington. HM Consuls General at Chicago and New York (Messrs Carrick and Mellon) were immensely helpful in terms both of making contacts and sponsoring functions. I was able to meet the full IDB "team" in New York, and also the Northern Ireland people currently doing Industrial Development work for the United Kingdom out of Chicago and Cleveland. I also met representatives of the IBB (Invest in Britain Bureau) in New York.

Issues

8. I will not attempt to record here the fine detail of a very large number of

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exchanges which ranged extremely widely. Instead, I would like to offer some comments on a number of specific issues:- the state of mind of "Irish-America"; Extradition; Employment Equality; US Aid to Ireland; and the pursuit of US Investment.

The State of Mind of Irish-America

9. For many Irish-Americans the murder of Lord Mountbatten represented some kind of emotional turning-point. Responsible people decided to distance themselves from the IRA and its sponsors, but remained somewhat sceptical about British motives in Ireland and our ability to advance the interests of the minority there. The Anglo-Irish Agreement has bought us time, and given a crucial impetus to the proposals for US aid and to the Extradition Treaty. But there is some impatience with the feeling that the Anglo-Irish process is now "stuck". If, later this year, the Irish were to berate us for continuing lack of progress, and to be joined in that chorus by John Hume, the adverse repercussions could be considerable. I judge that we are currently just about holding on to "responsible Irish-America". But we must not be complacent about this. We must remember in particular the very short tenure of a Congressman, and the way in which ethnic issues can affect a member, even though he may have an Italian or a Polish rather than an Irish name.

Extradition

10. I was quite extensively questioned about this, even though by the time of my visit it was past the post in the Senate. I sought to emphasise everywhere that, though the practical consequences in individual and notorious cases were not to be despised, the most important outcome was the clear signal that two great democracies together were now giving to terrorist groups.

Employment Equality

11. There is very widespread interest in this. The growing focus on South Africa has led to some unfortunate associations between Sullivan and McBride Principles. If we want to prevent adverse action under legislation already enacted by States (ie, in New York and Massachusetts), to deter further such action (eg in New Jersey) and to protect our investor companies from

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embarrassment at shareholder meetings, it is I believe imperative that we continue to produce convincing evidence of credible Northern Ireland domestic action to tackle the problem. When I saw Ned Regan, he had just come up from Washington where he had been testifying before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on South Africa. I am circulating to colleagues particularly concerned with the McBride Principles the text of his remarks at the hearing, which I believe to be of some significance in calling for the Federal Government to "pre-empt" State action on disinvestment. It was clear that Regan will not rush to play his role under the new law relating to Northern Ireland either precipitately or negatively, given credible evidence of domestic progress. He was very interested to hear about progress within the Civil Service, and of our commitment to produce some new proposals on the wider front. And in New Jersey, even the least helpful of the three Assemblymen I saw said he would not be rushing to see legislation brought forward, but would be bound, for electoral reasons, to support it if it did come forward.

12. In the various discussions about McBride, I made as much as possible of the argument that it would look rather perverse if States were to take action unhelpful to investment in Northern Ireland just when the Administration and Congress, through the aid package, were trying to give positive signals.

US Aid

13. I arrived in Washington a few days after Dr Quigley and others had been discussing with State and AID officials various administrative and other aspects of the Aid package. I therefore concentrated yet again upon expressing the hope that the US Aid would not be in terms of cash alone. We badly needed to get the engine of private sector development started up again. Anything the US authorities could do to give a push to investment from their side would be most welcome. This could range from such measures as a US "tax-break" to official US encouragement of the right time to important US businessmen to participate in missions/visits to Northern Ireland.
14. We can, I think, expect relatively early proposals for a visit to Belfast by AID and other officials to see how non-cash measures previously discussed might be developed in a way helpful to us. We would then need to plug

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them in to relevant experts here (in relation to housing).

Pursuit of US Investment

15. Unless and until things improve, I fear that our Industrial Development representatives in the United States will continue to face a formidable task. In spite of all the difficulties we do manage to persuade various sponsors of projects to visit Northern Ireland, but it is not proving easy to consummate such interest into actual investment decisions. Overall, I would judge that it remains sensible to retain representation in the United States and to deploy it, as at present, both in the IDB "unit" in New York and at Consulates, acting there under a wider UK remit. But at least one contact contrasted the sharp clear image of the Republic, projected through the IDA, with a somewhat fuzzy image of Northern Ireland projected through UK institutions; and I believe that this is a matter we need to continue to review very carefully.
16. On a much smaller scale the admirable people in Chicago who have been sponsoring holidays there for Northern Ireland children are now thinking seriously about setting up some small business projects here to find work for some such young people. They have engaged the interest of local Rotary Clubs in raising some modest working capital, and I have offered to help them in any way I can in terms of introductions etc.
17. Sherwood Medical have a specific problem about the purchasing policies of the National Health Service. This is an old story, and I doubt if we can do anything whatever about it, but I have agreed to look again at the detailed arguments. Basically what is at issue here is that an NHS policy of pursuing the cheapest possible source does not necessarily sit comfortably with the promotion of jobs in Northern Ireland.

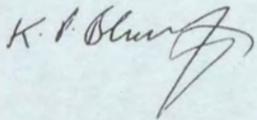
Conclusion

18. Visiting America is always a stimulating experience. One is struck, as ever, by the essential dynamism, energy and (often misplaced) idealism of that great country. It has gone far to regain the self-confidence it lost through Vietnam and the Nixon experience. Sir Oliver Wright told me that his parting despatch will be on the theme of the "Reagan Phenomenon"; not at all, in his experience, a "simple cowboy", but an

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immensely successful setter of a new and more forward-looking national mood.



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