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INTERVIEWER

Next to news from Washington that the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Tip O'Neill says he has received proposals from President Reagan for a multi million dollar aid package for Northern Ireland. The exact details are not known yet but it is thought the plan is for \$250m to be paid over a 5 year period. Justin Webb telephoned Sean Cronin, a Washington Journalist who specialises in Irish-American affairs to ask him what Mr O'Neill had to say about the package.

AMERICAN JOURNALIST

O'Neill says that basically it is \$250m over 5 years, but the White House says they have sent no proposals to O'Neill or to Congress although I understand that has been carried on the wire, this is just a technical difference because O'Neill has been consulted every step of the way, I gather from the State Department, so he knows exactly what it contains and he knows that the proposal is going to go to Congress probably Friday or Saturday.

INTERVIEWER

And once it gets to Congress, what exactly happens to it then.

AMERICAN JOURNALIST

Well now, that is the big thing. It is not in this year's budget, and it is not in next year's budget and that means it has to come in as a supplementary estimate. Supplementaries come up in mid-May - they also are subject to hearings and anything really could happen to it but the amount is so small proportionately that probably nothing drastic will happen to it but there are numbers of people in Congress - a few anyway - in both House and Senate that want the MacBride Principles, they are the same guidelines as apply to South Africa - except in that case they are called the Sullivan Principles, to apply to any aid dealing with the North that employment must be fair, hiring, firing etc.

INTERVIEWER

If this is the case then at the moment some American politicians feel that those criteria do not apply in Northern Ireland.

AMERICAN JOURNALIST

I think that what is bothering them is what happened in the case of Shorts. The case of Shorts when it was being opposed for an Airforce contract, congressional critics had been assured that employment, they had complained that the number of Catholics employed at Shorts was very very small - Shorts have given all sorts of reasons for that but said they would change it and apparently they also said they would get the De Lorean plant in West Belfast and set up there. These congressional critics have stopped and they follow these things closely and they keep complaining that the skilled workforce of Catholics in Shorts remains around 4% or something like that and that they have made no attempt to take over De Lorean's plant. So they want to tie down any US money that goes to the North of Ireland, these people say, must be guided by these MacBride Principles.

INTERVIEWER

Is it also the case that some American politicians are trying to link this issue to the issue of the extradition Treaty between Britain and the United States and the present Bill before Congress to alter that Treaty.

AMERICAN JOURNALIST

That is correct. The Treaty must be confirmed by the Senate. The Senate Foreign Relations Committee must report it out to the full Senate. The Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee - Senator Richard Lugar, he has been very much in the public eye over the Phillipines - was close to the administration and said that that extradition Treaty is being held up at Congress by Senators, he did not spell it out, but the Senators are members of the Friends of Ireland in Congress and he said and has made it clear in a letter to Congressman Biaggi

and Mayor Raymond Flynn of Boston that there will be no aid until the extradition Treaty is cleared for a vote in the full sense.

INTERVIEWER

So what is the likelihood in your estimation that this measure will get through intact and that this money will find its way to the Province.

AMERICAN JOURNALIST

Well I have learned one thing that dealing with Congress, that you can never estimate anything and I have heard experts like Tip O'Neill himself announce in the morning that a certain vote is going to go through and the thing gets defeated at night. Congress is subject to many changes for many reasons but I would not hold my breath, of course in this case you have O'Neill pushing it, he is a man of enormous influence and prestige and he is retiring at the end of the year, so it is possible that it would be pushed for that reason.

INTERVIEWER

Sean Cronin speaking from Washington.