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COMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEE HEARING ON NORTHERN IRELAND

15 MARCH 1995

1. The hearing lasted throughout the morning and was well attended for the early part of the session. However, due to a vote in the House of Representatives and pressure of other meetings, many of the Committee members left after the first hour. Congressman Gilman, who chaired the meeting, and Congressman Manton, the Co-chair, also left early in the proceedings which were then chaired by Congressman Burton. Congressmen Gilman, Manton and King returned for the end of the session. The speakers who gave testimony at the hearings left after their interventions.

2. The Members of the Committee who attended the Hearing were the Chairman, Congressman Ben Gilman (R, NY), Dan Burton (R, Ind), Dana Rohrabacher (R, Calif.), Peter King (R, NY), Sam Gejdenson (D, Conn.), Gary Ackerman (D, NY), Eliot Engel (D, NY), Donald Payne (D, NJ), and Robert Menendez (D, NJ).

3. The meeting was addressed by Congressmen Manton, King, Neal, Walsh, Joseph Kennedy and Richard Holbrooke, Assistant Secretary of State for European and Canadian Affairs, Department of State, Ambassador Margaret Heckler, former US Ambassador to Ireland, Mr Thomas Donahue, Secretary Treasurer, AFL-CIO, Dr Christopher McCrudden, Lincoln College, Oxford and Hon. Alan Hevesi, Comptroller, City of New York. Each participant spoke for a maximum of five minutes, written statements are to be submitted to the Congressional Record (the Embassy has copies of the statements).

4. There was widespread bipartisan praise for President Clinton's initiatives in the peace process, including the US Administration's decision to issue a visa allowing Mr Adams to fundraise. It was notable that Congressman King (R) was particularly warm in his praise of President Clinton. There were several statements in support of the MacBride Principles and the International Fund for Ireland.

5. Support was also expressed for Congressman Gilman's OPIC initiative and the proposed BIRD programme for encouraging investment in Ireland. Several speakers criticised British Government policy in Northern Ireland, in particular the British Government's attempts to influence the US Administration in its decision to grant a visa to Mr Adams allowing him to fundraise.

6. There was general support for Congressman Gilman's proposal to enact legislation for the MacBride principles during this session of Congress. Only Assistant Secretary Holbrooke of the State Department, while supporting the initiative in principle,



expressed reservations about enacting legislation as he was concerned that such legislation might have an inhibiting effect on the U.S. Administration's goal of increased investment in Northern Ireland. In response to a question about the lack of support in Northern Ireland for the MacBride principles later in the session, Mr. Alan Havesi, the Comptroller of New York City, said that while he did not wish to apportion motives to anybody, nevertheless, and in spite of his enormous regard for John Hume, he felt that Mr. Hume was less than enthusiastic in view of the fact that most of the businesses in his constituency of Derry were Catholic owned and less likely to be subject to fair employment difficulties, Mr. Hume was possibly concerned that the MacBride principles would prove to be a disincentive to investment in general.

7. In his remarks at the opening of the session Congressman Menendez said that he intended to introduce a proposal to Congress tomorrow calling on the British to withdraw their military presence in Northern Ireland by 1999 and that the IRA and combined loyalist military command would, at the same time, in phases to be negotiated and agreed, decommission their weapons in amounts proportionate to the phased withdrawal of the British army.

8. Before the Hearing opened Mr. Gerry Adams arrived for a private reception hosted by Congressman Gilman to introduce him to members of the Committee. The meeting lasted approximately 10 minutes. Afterwards he gave interviews to the media in the corridor outside. (Ms. Mairead King of Sinn Fein's Washington office attended as an observer at the meeting.)

9. Fr Sean McManus and a group from The Irish National Caucus distributed "Support MacBride Principles" buttons at the Hearings and tribute was paid to McManus' work by the opening speaker, Congressman Payne (Afro-American Congressional caucus) who recalled that McManus had been jailed for protesting against the Apartheid regime outside the South African Embassy in Washington.

10. Overall, the Hearing provided an opportunity for the Republican members of Congress in particular to show their interest in Ireland (it was the first such Hearing in 20 years). Of all the speakers who expressed support for President Clinton, Assistant Secretary Holbrooke of the Department of State, while expressing support for the peace process, was the least generous remarking that the "ball is now in Sinn Fein's court" with regard to advancing the process.

Embassy of Ireland  
15 March 1995



## Summary of Remarks and Testimonials

### 1. Opening remarks by Congressman Payne

Congressman Payne spoke of discrimination against Catholics in Northern Ireland and expressed his support and the support of the Afro-American Caucus in Congress for the MacBride Principles. He referred to the Sullivan Principles which he believed had a significant effect in South Africa, and paid tribute to Sean McManus for supporting Afro-Americans in their efforts to improve the situation in South Africa. He concluded by asking the Committee to dedicate itself to passing the MacBride Principles into law.

### 2. Remarks by Congressman Ackerman

Congressman Ackerman congratulated Congressman Gilman on the Hearing and expressed his full support for the peace process and for the roles of the Irish and British Governments and Sinn Fein in moving that process forward.

### 3. Remarks by Congressman Menendez

Congressman Menendez congratulated Congressman Gilman on the Hearing, which he said was well overdue, and went on to say that Britain must take more pro-active steps to improve the situation in Northern Ireland. He said that he intended to introduce a proposal to Congress tomorrow requesting that the British military presence in Northern Ireland be withdrawn by 1999 and that the IRA and combined loyalist military command would, at the same time, in phases to be negotiated and agreed, decommission their weapons in amounts proportionate to the phased withdrawal of the British army. With regard to the MacBride principles, Congressman Menendez suggested discussion of the possibility of linking the investment of Federal Pension Funds to the MacBride Principles.

### 4. Statement by Congressman Manton

Congressman Manton paid warm tribute to President Clinton's active engagement in Northern Ireland and, in particular, his decision to grant a visa to Mr Adams and to invite him to the White House Reception on St Patrick's Day. He said that it was now up to Sinn Fein and the other parties involved to follow through with the steps that had been taken to promote the peace process. Congressman Manton expressed his full support for the work of the International Fund for Ireland and the MacBride Principles and said that they were of vital importance in ending the discrimination against Catholics in the workforce in Northern Ireland.



5. Statement by Congressman King

Congressman King warmly praised President Clinton for his initiative in granting a visa to Mr Adams allowing him to fundraise. He said that the peace process was irreversible and offered an unprecedented opportunity to achieve a lasting peace in Northern Ireland. He went on to say that economic discrimination against Catholics (he quoted a figure of 70% unemployment in Ballymurphy) had been institutionalised by the British Government for over fifty years and, although there had been improvements in the situation in recent times, there was still a great deal of work to be done. He supported the MacBride Principles as a necessary transitional arrangement in order to bring about equality in Northern Ireland. Congressman King said that as well as emphasising the need for fair employment practices, there was also a need to emphasise the importance of the fair location of employment opportunities in order to ensure that both sides would be able to avail of them. In answer to a question afterwards, Congressman King referred to the fact that the early civil rights movement in Northern Ireland was based on the black civil rights movement in the United States, remarking that the difference was that while US citizens had been protected by Federal troops during the riots, British troops had persecuted Irish citizens. Congressman King voiced strong criticism of the British Government for its efforts to influence the Clinton Administration's decision on the Adams visa and said that as long as such interference continued the United States' role in helping the process was vital.

6. Statement by Congressman Neal

In his statement, Congressman Neal paid tribute to the previous work of the House of Representatives in making progress on the issue of Northern Ireland, stating that the dispute in Northern Ireland was "the longest-standing dispute in the history of the world". He paid tribute to President Clinton, saying that it was a remarkable step forward that both John Hume and Mr Adams would be greeted at the White House on Saint Patrick's Day, and hoped that this would be another significant step in "the return of the six counties of Northern Ireland to the Republic of Ireland where they rightfully belong". He also said that he understood from his visits and discussions with the British Government that they have decided to withdraw from Northern Ireland but want to do it in an honourable fashion. Congressman Neal said that he supports the concept of the MacBride Principles.

7. Remarks by Congressman Rohrabacher

Congressman Rohrabacher, in remarks during the Hearing, said that the United States owed a great deal of gratitude to the Irish for their support to the US during the US struggle for independence from Britain.



8. Statement by Congressman Walsh

Congressman Walsh emphasised that, although US support for Ireland was relatively small, it was nevertheless vital in achieving a solution to the problem. He referred to the great suffering that had been inflicted during the years of violence, particularly on the Catholic population. He said it was now time to look to the future and stressed the importance of continuing financial aid from the US and the forthcoming White House Conference on Trade and Investment in Ireland as important milestones in that ongoing process. He spoke strongly in support of the International Fund for Ireland, referring to the 25,000 jobs created by it, and said that any cut in the US contribution to the Fund would constitute "a terrible blow to the peace process".

In response to a question about whether he supported the MacBride Principles, Congressman Walsh said that he personally supported them but, but emphasised that as titular head of the Friends of Ireland group, he could not speak on its behalf.

9. Statement by Congressman Joe Kennedy

Congressman Kennedy emphasised the critical importance of continued support for the International Fund for Ireland. He then went on to speak of the BIRD project and said that he had yesterday sent a letter to President Clinton urging him to support the initiative. Congressman Kennedy said he had been working closely with Irish American entrepreneur, Mr John Cullinane, in promoting the initiative and felt that it was well worth supporting as it would be of benefit to both Irish and US business. Congressman Kennedy suggested that the initiative could be financed by transferring (i.e. deducting) a sum of \$5 million from the current allocation to the IFI, and asking the Irish and British Governments to provide matching funds for the project. Congressman Gilman expressed support for this initiative and said that his staff would work with Congressman Kennedy to move the project along. In response to a question from Congressman Gilman, Congressman Kennedy also said that he supported the MacBride Principles. In response to a question from Congressman Rohrabacher on his views on the cycle of violence in Northern Ireland, Congressman Kennedy said that he had always condemned violence and that those who broke the law should be punished. He said, however, that there was a continuing need to highlight human rights abuses in Northern Ireland which the British Government had tried to play down.

10. Statement by Assistant Secretary Richard Holbrooke

Mr Holbrooke made a very short statement as he was rushing to meet a delegation from Bosnia, and he offered to answer any written questions the Committee might wish to put to him at an early date. In his remarks, Mr Holbrooke paid tribute to the parties involved in creating the current peace process (he said that he had often drawn on the Irish example as an incentive to other parties involved in conflict, e.g. Cyprus and Bosnia) and said that "the



ball is now in Sinn Fein's court" with regard to moving the process along. With regard to the MacBride Principles, he said that the Department of State supported them fully in principle but would reserve its position on putting them into legislation as this might create problems with regard to attracting suitable investors.

11. Statement by Ambassador Margaret Heckler

Ambassador Heckler, speaking on behalf of ICCUSA, outlined ICCUSA's work in promoting employment in Ireland and stressed the attractiveness of Ireland as a location for potential investors. Ambassador Heckler went on to propose support for the establishment of a \$60 million equity fund by OPIC which would be targetted towards small and medium-sized enterprises (this has also been proposed by Congressman Gilman). She also said that economic investment in Ireland was critical to the success of the peace process and fully supported the work of the IFI, stressing that any cuts in US support at this time would be very ill-advised. In making this point, Ambassador Heckler said that it would be particularly wrong to limit US support of the IFI at a time when the unionist population of Northern Ireland had finally begun to take advantage of the programmes the IFI offered.

12. Statement by Mr Thomas Donahue, AFL-CIO

In opening his remarks, Mr Donahue emphasised the importance of assistance to Ireland while ensuring that a situation would not arise where Irish and US workers would be competing in the same job areas. He said that the current peace process was one of the great successes of President Clinton's foreign policy and urged continued support for US policy in Ireland. Mr Donahue said that he fully supported the MacBride Principles, as job discrimination against Catholics and the resulting economic hardship was still very serious. Mr Donahue, in supporting the IFI, said that the way in which it was possible for the IFI to target the most disadvantaged communities was of great importance and the political consequences of any cut in American support to the IFI would have grave consequences for US involvement in the peace process.

13. Statement by Dr Christopher McCrudden

Dr McCrudden referred to the background to fair employment legislation and said that there were now two areas where, in his opinion, the process towards ending discrimination in employment could be advanced :

- a restructuring of economic development policy
- a linkage between inward investment and fair employment in any legislation enacted.

Dr. McCrudden stressed the latter point several times saying that targetted investment which would be fair employment effective was vital to continuing the peace process. He said that the



disbursement of EU structural funds was already linked to fair employment principles. Dr. McCrudden went on to say that there needed to be a more integrated Governmental approach in terms of attracting investors and developing new employment locations, and said that this approach should be stressed in preparing for the May Investment Conference. In response to a question from Congressman Gilman as to whether there would be a conflict between the OPIC proposal and the IFI, Dr. McCrudden said that the two could be compatible and complimentary, provided that support for the OPIC initiative in Congress did not detract from Congressional support for the IFI. Dr. McCrudden stressed the need for greater incentives to business to invest in the most disadvantaged areas of Northern Ireland and in response to a question from Congressman Gilman on how this might be achieved, he pointed out that the Republic of Ireland offered a the 10% tax rate for companies investing there and said that a decision would need to be taken at political level to make similar opportunities available in Northern Ireland.

14. Statement by Hon. Alan Havesi, Comptroller, City of New York

Mr. Havesi stressed his support for the MacBride Principles and spoke of the great improvement in the climate for investment in Ireland as a consequence of the peace process. The MacBride Principles were not a disincentive to investment, he said, the disincentive was conflict, and all those involved in the steps taken to resolve the conflict were to be congratulated. He went on to outline his proposal for an Irish Peace Bonds initiative and said that he would shortly be presenting the proposal to Congress. He said that in recent discussions on the issue with the Irish and British Government all sides, including the Irish Prime Minister, had expressed support for it. In response to a question from Congressman Engel on the apparent lack of support for the MacBride Principles in Northern Ireland, Mr. Havesi said that he did not wish to assign motives to any of those who objected. He went on, however, to say that while John Hume was a man whom he greatly admired for his untiring efforts in promoting peace, and was indeed a supporter of fair employment, Mr. Hume's main constituency was Derry, where most of the businesses were Catholic and did not have the same difficulties with fair employment opportunities as businesses in other parts of Northern Ireland. Mr. Hume was therefore unenthusiastic about supporting a proposal which might be seen as a disincentive to attracting new investment.

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