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CONFIDENTIAL

12 December 1979

Dear Nally,

We have heard from the Ambassador in Washington that he was approached on 9 December by Speaker O'Neill and Senator Kennedy, at a function to mark the Speaker's 67th birthday, and has also been in telephone contact with Dr. Cahill, Governor Carey's adviser on Irish affairs. All three raised the matter of the change of Taoiseach and Government and referred to a press report (Irish Times of 8 December) which they interpreted as meaning that the Taoiseach-designate, as he then was, had telephoned Deputy Blaney at the office of the Irish National Caucus in Washington. A copy of the press report in question is attached.

The approaches made to the Ambassador by the three major politicians referred to were to the effect that they have for some years now and at some local political cost held a difficult and in U.S. terms unpopular line which included opposition to Noraid, the Irish National Caucus and Biaggi's ad hoc committee. The basis for their line has been its relationship with the policy of the Irish Government and the SDLP, and the Big Four have publicly identified themselves over the years with Irish Government and SDLP leaders. They would not, they said, now wish the basis for their stance on the Irish question to be removed by the Irish Government identifying itself with the Caucus and Biaggi and they asked for an indication that such was not the intention.

The Ambassador reports that interest in the change of Taoiseach and in the related question of a possible change in the relationship with the leading Irish-American politicians has been stimulated by the coincidence of Deputy Blaney's presence in the U.S.A. during the last week as a guest, it is understood, of the Caucus. Deputy Blaney, speaking at a testimonial dinner of the Irish National Caucus has, according to press reports, given the impression that the Government's line on Northern policy will now be the same as that of the Deputy himself and of the Caucus.

The three leaders who have approached the Ambassador are puzzled by these developments and have asked for early clarification of the Government's position. Speaker O'Neill's analysis is that there are two Irish positions in the U.S.A., namely that

of the Big Four on the one hand and that of Biaggi, the Caucus, Paul O'Dwyer and others of their way of thinking on the other. O'Neill, Kennedy and Carey are also anxious to know as soon as possible what the intention of the Irish Government is in relation to these alternative strands of opinion and action. O'Neill has also enquired, in this connection, what if anything he should ask President Carter to say to the British Prime Minister about Anglo-Irish relations when she visits Washington on 17 December. You will of course realise that Speaker O'Neill's question, and the expectation that we would give him guidance in this highly important matter, serves to underline both the closeness of the relationship existing between the Government and him, and his associates, and also the singularly influential position which he holds vis-a-vis the Carter administration. It needs hardly to be pointed out also that the influence and importance of Kennedy, Moynihan and Carey far exceed that of Representative Biaggi or the Irish National Caucus, leaving aside the policy differences which exist between ourselves and the latter.

There is a further reason for seeking an early indication of our stance on the above matters generally and that is the fact that the National Caucus has been orchestrating a campaign of criticism of Ambassador Donlon extending to public calls for his recall. For instance, Speaker O'Neill's office received a telephone call on 7 December from Fr. McManus in which he stated that Ambassador Donlon's recall was now imminent. You will be aware of press reports (Sunday Press of 9 December Irish Times of 8 December) of public criticism of the Ambassador and the Embassy generally emanating from the National Caucus, Biaggi and, apparently, Deputy Blaney. We are naturally much concerned by such attacks on the Government's representative in the United States and would hope that they can be publicly refuted as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely,

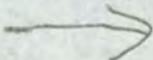


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P.S.

Since writing the above, Neligan has received a further telephone call from Donlon, who is under pressure to reply to the approaches described above.



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He has of course given details, supplied by us, of the press conference of 7 December. Further clarification of the Government's attitude towards them is however urgently needed by the U.S. political leaders if, they say, they are to withstand the constant pressure of the very active Caucus lobbyists. Sean Donlon is in fact afraid that we could lose their support if we do not react quickly.