

NATIONAL ARCHIVES

IRELAND



Reference Code:	2013/100/1079
Creation Date(s):	5 July 1983
Extent and medium:	3 pages
Creator(s):	Department of the Taoiseach
Access Conditions:	Open
Copyright:	National Archives, Ireland. May only be reproduced with the written permission of the Director of the National Archives.

ROINN AN TAOISIGH

CONFIDENTIAL

Uimhir.....

Taoiseach's Meeting with AFL-CIO Delegation, Monday 4 July, 1983,

1 The Taoiseach, accompanied by the Ministers for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Commerce and Tourism had lunch in Government Buildings with Mr Tom Donahue, Secretary-Treasurer AFL-CIO and Executive Council members John J Sweeney and James Hatfield. The lunch was also attended by Mr Terry Carlin, Northern Ireland Officer, Irish Congress of Trade Unions, Mr Sean Donlon, Secretary, Department of Foreign Affairs and Mr Brian McCarthy, Department of the Taoiseach.

2 Outlining the content of their visit to Belfast, Mr Donahue said that they had met the Secretary of State Mr Prior and the Chairman of Short's. They had also received a delegation from the Organisation of Concerned Teachers regarding plastic bullets and had a discussion with Father Brian Brady who had prepared the pamphlet on the sectarian breakdown of Short's workforce. They had also toured West Belfast and their overall impression was that the situation was much worse than they had anticipated. Mr Donahue said that he had the impression in West Belfast from the many Provo slogans there that the people were supportive of that organisation.

3 Referring to the "affirmative action" programme which had been agreed between Short's and the Fair Employment Agency, Mr Donahue said that he doubted if it was sufficient to place advertisements for job vacancies in all Belfast papers. More needed to be done to ensure that Catholics got their fair share of jobs in the Company. Measures such as the allocation of quotas, special transport to and from work would have to be considered. In normal circumstances they would be against employment quotas but the situation in Short's was not

/normal

*Mr Austin
in the afternoon
to see me
in the afternoon
he let me know
what file this
should go on
8/7. S20757*

ROINN AN TAOISIGH

Uimhir.....

- 2 -

normal. The Company Chairman had pressed for a statement from the Irish Congress of Trade Unions that there had been no discrimination in his company. Mr Carlin said that such a statement would be meaningless - it would simply not be believed. The Taoiseach and the Minister for Foreign Affairs pointed out the particular difficulties facing Catholics travelling to employment locations in East Belfast. These difficulties should not be underestimated. If the campaign against Short's resulted in their failure to secure the US Government contract for SHERPA planes, the situation could present problems in terms of North/South relations. The question of Irish/US trade union links was discussed and reference was made to the proposed attendance at the forthcoming AFL-CIO Convention of an Irish trade union representative. There was some comment on the fact that such a representative, while a fraternal delegate, would not have the right to speak at the Convention unlike his counterpart from the British TUC. The point was strongly put to the visitors that this situation was difficult to justify. The background to it was outlined by Mr Donahue who pointed out the difficulties which would arise from an organisational point of view if every fraternal delegate was allowed to speak.

4 Mr Hetfield spoke of their desire to encourage exchange visits between Irish and US trade unions at various levels. They were seeking to better inform US trade union members on the realities of the Irish situation. Mr Donahue said that the establishment of the Irish/American Labour Coalition was an attempt by them to broaden the genuine interest of their members in Irish affairs. The Minister for Trade, Commerce and

/Tourism

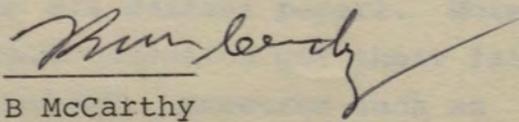
ROINN AN TAOISIGH

Uimhir.....

- 3 -

Tourism mentioned the desirability of availing of visits to the US by Labour Party members of the Government to help in the dissemination among AFL-CIO unions of Government policy in relation to Northern Ireland. Mr Donahue mentioned that the assignment of special responsibility for Labour affairs to a staff member of our Washington Embassy was important and they were grateful to the Ambassador for taking this welcome step.

5 The Taoiseach outlined Government policy in relation to Northern Ireland and in particular, the establishment of the New Ireland Forum. Following publication of the Forum's report, the US Government might be able to help ^{with} the British Government in coming to grips with the problem. The situation had dragged on for fourteen years now and we were at a turning point. Referring to the Westminster elections in the North, the Taoiseach outlined the extent of personation and intimidation undertaken by PSF. A good deal of the apparent support they had in areas such as West Belfast could be attributed to intimidation of one sort or another. There were serious dangers in the situation and there were wider implications for the whole country. There was no doubt about the total opposition of the great majority in the South to the Provo campaign of violence and to what was their ultimate aim of control of the whole island.



B McCarthy

5 July 1983

cc. Mr S. Donohue DTA ✓
Mr B. Donohue DTA ✓