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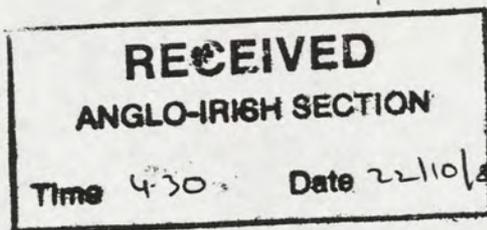
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The Maguire/Birmingham Six/Guildford Four Cases -
a brief comment from the Home Secretary

Dear Eamon

Along with the Minister for Justice and Assistant Secretary Matthews from his Department I attended a private dinner at the house of the Home Secretary, Douglas Hurd, on Monday night, 20 October. Mrs Hurd, Nick Scott and his wife and two officials from the Home Office (Deputy Under-Secretary Roy Harrington, and Hurd's Private Secretary) were also present.

For the most part the discussion turned on other matters but, as I was sitting beside Douglas Hurd, I had a chance of a brief private discussion with him on these cases.

Hurd asked me if I had seen the three members of the Dail/Seanad delegation (Deputies Andrews and Durkan and Senator Flor O'Mahoney) after their meeting with him last week?

I said I had had a few minutes discussion with them before they left for the airport and that I thought they had been appreciative of the way he had received them and listened to the case they had made. I would myself have liked to have joined them but I had thought it better simply to have them accompanied by an Embassy official (Breifne O'Reilly) who had also given me an account of the meeting.

As we were talking informally and privately I ventured to comment to Hurd that the visitors had found him rather wary at the outset but that they felt he had been more willing to discuss the issue with them in view of the reasonable approach which they had taken in putting the case. He acknowledged this with a smile. I went on to express appreciation of the fact that he had fully accepted their concern and interest without in any way questioning their status as coming from another jurisdiction. I said I was sure he was aware of the widespread public feeling in Ireland on this issue. Hurd replied that he was; and he showed full acceptance of the status of Irish Parliamentarians in raising the issue.

He said they were studying the cases carefully but he just could not say how long more the examination would take or when a decision would be reached. He acknowledged - with a measure of sympathy I thought - that there is rather widespread concern about these cases but, he said, the problem for him is that people would like him to refer the cases back

to the Court of Appeal on grounds of general concern even if in particular cases there is no new evidence.

I mentioned, conversationally, that I had met the Maguire family for the first time a week ago at a private function to launch Robert Kee's book (a function which had also been attended among other by Lord Fitt and Sir John Biggs Davison) and that, like everyone else who had met them, I had been impressed by their demeanour and attitude - particularly that of Mrs Annie Maguire.

Beyond the foregoing, I thought it better not to try to press the Home Secretary further on the substance of the cases. For what it is worth I had an impression from our discussion of a measure of cautious concern on Hurd's part about these cases - but I think it would be well not to be too sanguine about his ultimate decision.

Yours sincerely



Noel Dorr
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