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Reference Code:	2017/4/182
Creation Dates:	22 October 1987
Extent and medium:	5 pages
Creator(s):	Department of Foreign Affairs
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Secret

Meeting with Patrick Doherty

22 October, 1987

Patrick Doherty, Assistant to New York City Comptroller, Harrison Goldin, called to the Department to speak about his visit to the North of Ireland. Present from the Department were Anne Anderson and Ray Bassett. Mr. Doherty provided the following information (1-7 beneath) on his visit to Northern Ireland and also spoke on developments in the MacBride campaign (8-10 beneath).

1. General Motors Plant in Kennedy Way

While he was in the North Doherty appeared on television and was quoted in the newspapers on the controversy over the possible closure of the General Motors factory in Kennedy Way. The General Motors management in the North had hoped to close their West Belfast factory and offer to transfer the workforce to its plant in Dundonald. The transfer of work to Dundonald would have resulted in most of the Catholic workforce being made redundant since they would be unwilling to travel to East Belfast. The Kennedy Way factory was closed for a temporary period in 1985 and when the West Belfast workers were transferred to Dundonald they were met by hostility by their East Belfast colleagues. It had been an unpleasant experience which made most of the Catholic workers wary of a permanent transfer.

In recent months the company has run down the Kennedy Way factory and transferred some of its responsibilities to Dundonald. This was contributing to the loss of viability and would result in Headquarters in Detroit agreeing to close the Kennedy Way operation. Doherty had made it very clear to General Motors management in Belfast and the United States that the transfer to Dundonald would be unacceptable and would create an overwhelmingly loyalist workforce. Doherty said that the question of the Kennedy Way factory gave the MacBride Campaign organisers a chance to combat the impression that they wanted disinvestment.

Doherty said that as a result of the publicity given to the question, Ambassador Price, US Ambassador to Britain, went to Detroit to meet the President of General Motors (presumably while Ambassador Price was on a visit to the U.S.). Ambassador Price told General Motors that it would not be in

the US national interest if they closed the Kennedy Way factory. He said that the resultant publicity would boost the MacBride campaign and also damage the image of US investment in the North. General Motors in Detroit agreed to the request and have informed their local subsidiary that there is no question of closing their factory in West Belfast. The workforce in Kennedy Way have now been informed and are naturally delighted at this development.

Doherty remarked that the Trade Unions in the Kennedy Way factory had not been helpful on the question of the Catholic workers reluctance to move to Dundonald. Originally they had raised no objections to the moving and only half-heartedly objected when the workforce at Kennedy Way became restless. The impression is that the engineering union involved has definite loyalist sympathies.

2. Ford

Doherty held a meeting with senior members of the Ford management concerning the recent company report on its employment practices. After the meeting the most senior Catholic in the company (second in command) contacted him privately to provide extensive information on cases of discrimination within Ford. According to the source there is a strong masonic influence within Ford which has resulted in some very strange appointments. The Head of Personnel Mr. Carswell was appointed over a much more experienced Catholic despite Carswell's lack of experience on personnel matters. The position outlined by the Ford source was a very disturbing one and would be followed up with Ford in Detroit. Doherty was at pains to point out the difficulty his source would have if he was identified as providing information on the position. The City of New York Pension Fund as a major shareholder in Ford will discuss these matters with senior management in the United States. The picture painted by their contact in Belfast made the commitments in the internal Ford report about future equal opportunity provision appear very dubious.

3. Northern Ireland Committee of ICTU

Doherty met with the Northern Committee to discuss the MacBride campaign. Terry Carlin told him that the Trade Unions were not pro or anti MacBride Principles. They had their own anti-discrimination document which they would be pursuing. Doherty was informed that cancellation of Terry Carlin's trip to the United States earlier this year had been ordered by ICTU Headquarters in

Dublin. ICTU in Dublin told their Northern Committee that they could not adopt a foreign policy of their own. Northern Committee member Mr. Bowers, who is a member of the Communist Party of Ireland, told Doherty that he was unhappy about the MacBride campaign, and said they (presumably Unionists) only wanted to retain "their own State".

4. Meeting with the SDLP

While in Belfast Doherty met Eddie McGrady. It began very frostily but improved greatly during the course of the meeting. Doherty felt that McGrady was misinformed about the MacBride campaign. Doherty said that he found there was a lot of common ground between the two parties on discrimination. McGrady who is an employer readily took on board several points about investment and the need for fair recruiting practices. Doherty also met Brian Feeney and felt that Feeney was a very impressive figure. Feeney provided him with details on the Fire Services in Northern Ireland. (Note: Feeney has also supplied this material to the Department). Doherty said the material is particularly useful because the New York Firemen Pension Fund is looking at the possibility of adopting the MacBride Principles. Doherty felt that the information provided would be useful to him in pushing for their adoption. Doherty felt that Brian Feeney was not, however, representative of SDLP opinion.

Doherty was critical of John Hume and accused him of continually misrepresenting the MacBride campaign. He said Harrison Goldin wished to organise a seminar to encourage investment in Northern Ireland with John Hume's assistance. Because of Hume's continuing criticism of the MacBride campaign, there was now no possibility of this taking place. Goldin would seek other sponsors for the event and Doherty mentioned the possibility of asking for Irish Government endorsement. The holding of such a seminar would help to counteract the image of the MacBride Principles as anti-investment.

5. Contact with Sinn Féin

During his visit Doherty had talks with Sinn Féin representatives. Sinn Féin told him that they are examining the possibility of having Omagh and Fermanagh District Councils adopt the MacBride Principles as employment guidelines. Doherty said he strongly advised Sinn Féin against this. It would provide the

British Government with an opportunity to test the legality of the MacBride Principles in a Northern court, something which he felt was better avoided.

6. Meeting with the NIO

John McConnell together with some civil servants from the DED went to lunch with Doherty. They explained to him their objections to the MacBride campaign and the difficulties they faced in enacting legislation. Doherty said they should use the campaign in the States as an excuse for taking action on this issue. Doherty was pleasantly surprised by the NIO response and feels that there is a realisation and a desire to take some action. He said that he would wait and see if this apparent desire to do something was reflected in legislation.

7. Meeting with the DUP

Doherty had a two-hour meeting at DUP headquarters with Gregory Campbell. He has been in regular contact over the last 2 years with Campbell over alleged discrimination against Protestants in Derry. He said that Campbell was very short on specifics and hard evidence and during the meeting said that discrimination was really one side looking after its own and he saw nothing wrong with it. Doherty believes that the DUP activities are an attempt to cloud the issue.

8. The Fish/D'Amato Bills

Doherty said that Fr. McManus had arranged for the Fish/D'Amato Bills to be tabled without consulting him. He felt that the timing for a Federal Bill was not yet right. There needed to be more States adopting the Principles before pushing at Federal level. The Sullivan Principles had been successful in Congress because of the ground swell at local level.

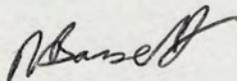
There had been no movement on the Bills because Biaggi had experienced severe difficulties during the year. With Biaggi effectively finished Doherty felt that somebody else in the Ad Hoc Committee would push the Bills and movement could be expected in the near future. Doherty said he supported the use of sanctions as outlined in the Bills against companies not adopting the MacBride Principles.

9. The MacBride Campaign at State level

The key committee in Pennsylvania had just overwhelmingly passed the MacBride Bill. It would now go forward to Plenary in March next year. He is very confident that Pennsylvania will adopt the Principles. For the first time the pro-MacBride lobby are confident of victory in Illinois. They had always felt that it would be close but now feel that they will win with a little to spare.

10. The Irish Community in Britain

The pro-MacBride campaign people are anxious to develop links with the Irish Community in Britain. On their visit in September Goldin and Doherty were entertained by Brendan MacLua, editor of the Irish Post, to one of his famous suppers which lasted all night. MacLua and his Irish Post have been extraordinarily supportive of the MacBride campaign. Doherty felt that MacLua and his friends in the IBRG were however unrepresentative of the Irish Community and wished to develop links with the Federation of Irish Societies. Doherty said he would contact Seamus McGarry soon to set up a meeting.



R. Bassett,
Anglo-Irish Section,
27 October 1987.

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