



# An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

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AMBASAID NA HEIREANN

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EMBASSY OF IRELAND

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*Mr. Gallagher*  
*(This arrived while I am away last week with the President.)*

*MD 20/10/87*

PERSONAL AND CONFIDENTIAL

9 October 1987

Mr Noel Dorr  
Secretary  
Department of Foreign Affairs

Dear Noel

I thought I should bring to your attention the attached account of a private conversation which Martin Burke had yesterday with Tom Foley, the House Majority Leader at a luncheon in the Embassy in honour of the Lord Mayor of Dublin. From this you will see that Foley repeats the concerns voiced earlier by other members of the Friends of Ireland group at the implications and significance of what they perceive as a shift in policy on the MacBride principles in light of the Taoiseach's recent "Irish-America" interview. Obviously, Martin Burke, as his report indicates, tried to put the Taoiseach's remarks in context by pointing to his observation that government policy remained as set out in the Tanaiste's statement of the 7th May in the Dail. Nonetheless, it is evident that Foley's and others' concerns persist and that they are exacerbated by the prospect of the MacBride Principles legislation

introduced by Congressman Fish and Senator D'Amato reaching the floor of the House and Senate. This, in Foley's view, would be a very divisive development which could do damage to the cohesiveness and strength of the Friends of Ireland in Congress as a force apart at all from the negative impact, as he sees it, of such legislation in Northern Ireland itself if it were to succeed. I must say that I share Tom Foley's misgivings, especially in regard to the divisive effect of a vote on the MacBride principles issue as articulated in terms of the Fish/D'Amato bills in the House and Senate. The sole beneficiary of such a development would be the Irish National Caucus, the Ad Hoc Committee and other proponents, witting or unwitting, of the Sinn Fein/PIRA agenda.

At a more general level, Tom Foley's concerns, it seems to me, illustrate the extent to which the emergence and progress of the MacBride campaign has created dilemmas in different ways for several distinct sets of actors on the political scene here - The Irish Government, the Friends of Ireland, the SDLP, the U.S. administration and the British.

In the case of the Government, obviously the MacBride campaign has its attractions in that it has served, to some extent, to impel the British to promise or pursue reforms in the area of fair employment. Consequently, one might argue, why not support the campaign? However, unqualified support of the campaign runs the risk of seeming to fall in line with those whose demands will never be satisfied by fair employment and the growth of jobs and investment in Northern Ireland but whose aims are disinvestment and the deliberate destruction of the Northern Ireland economy, by this route as well as via the bombing of enterprises and the discouragement, or worse, of entrepreneurs and investors. Outright support of the campaign also runs the risk of putting the Government on a collision course with the British, with

the U.S. administration and with those in Congress who regard a Dublin and London entente and cooperation as the most effective way forward in Northern Ireland and the approach which alone will guarantee sustained U.S. support.

At the same time, it is also clear that a negative approach to the MacBride campaign has disadvantages - appearing to be against what are unexceptionable and apparently laudible norms of economic fair play, and of appearing to acquiesce in or be complacent about the status quo and existing discrimination in Northern Ireland. Moreover, outright opposition would also risk drawing the Government into a conflict in which some proponents of the MacBride campaign would only be too happy to embroil them, namely that between the British on the one hand and the Irish National Caucus, Noraid and other IRA support groups in the United States on the other. It is hardly necessary to spell out the problems which the campaign poses for the British and the SDLP. The recent tour by Tom King and statements by John Hume are sufficient evidence of their concerns in this regard.

However, predictably and ironically those who face no dilemmas or qualms about the MacBride campaign are Noraid, the Irish National Caucus and some members of the AOH who support the campaign as a vehicle for promoting disinvestment and economic collapse in Northern Ireland, rather than as a means of exerting pressure for reform. It is hardly an accident, it seems to me, that in the wake of the Taoiseach's 'Irish America' piece, Congressmen have come under pressure from proponents of the MacBride campaign who have no scruple about representing the Taoiseach's remarks as a change in policy and no compunction in exploiting this to press Congressmen and Senators to take a position on the issue accordingly.

In the same vein too, supporters of the MacBride campaign have endeavoured and

will continue to try to reap tactical advantage by representing the Government's position as one of outright support for the MacBride campaign itself and for legislation which seeks to give it effect. The attempt to impose conditions on the Tanaiste's attendance at the recent AOH dinner in Rockland County by trying to prescribe what he should speak about (MacBride, Extradition, the exclusion of Sinn Fein representatives to the U.S., Section 31, Joe Doherty, etc) and the tendentious interpretation of the Tanaiste's speech on the occasion as evidenced by Joe Roche's letter to me of 6 October (sent to you under Fax 277) and the thinly veiled attempt therein to whip diplomats into line are merely some of the more transparent examples of this kind of opportunism.

As you know, against this complex background and in the face of the dilemmas I have described, the Government has sought to steer a middle course. First by emphasising that while the MacBride principles are unexceptionable or acceptable, and at the same time voicing a concern lest they bring unintended results e.g. disinvestment and discouraging needed job creation in Northern Ireland and secondly by stressing the need for effective legislation on fair employment in Northern Ireland which would "subsume" the MacBride Principles and render the present campaign in the U.S. redundant. This may be indeed as far as one can or should go in present circumstances. But it does not make it easy to cope with direct questions as to how the Government regard individual bills in State Legislatures or possibly even in Congress if the Fish/D'Amato bills come to the floor. Obviously, the British will have no difficulty in saying where they stand nor indeed likewise the supporters of the MacBride campaign.

Apart from the desirability, from the point of view of the Embassy and Consulates of having a clear line on this issue, it seems to me that it would be desirable, in the broader context of maintaining the cohesion and

effectiveness of the Friends of Ireland group as a force in Congress, and as a guidance to them and legislators at the State level on how to proceed, if the present prudent position adopted by the Government were articulated and explicated more extensively and precisely. For example, a suitable occasion might be used to set out policy objectives in regard to fair employment in Northern Ireland in general and the specific need for effective legislation to this end. The problem posed by the MacBride campaign might be addressed by emphasising our acceptance of the Principles themselves while at the same time stressing the need for more jobs equitably distributed geographically and between the two communities in Northern Ireland and in this connection advertng to the need also to avoid unintended results - the creation of barriers or disincentives to investment or the promotion of actual disinvestment in Northern Ireland. In the latter context, it would be useful, but perhaps too much to hope for, that a reference might be made to those who are seeking to exploit the genuine concern for an end to employment discrimination in Northern Ireland as a weapon to damage the economy there and to sow further discord between the two communities.

As you know, much if not all of the foregoing has already been said in one way or another by the Taoiseach or Tanaiste on different occasions but it would be useful to have the strands drawn together and the Government's position articulated in a comprehensive fashion. This would have the merit of at once serving as guidance and instructions to those of us who have the task of carrying out policy here and of making it plain to those who question that policy or our vigour and commitment in discharging it. It would serve as well as guidance and support to those friends who have consistently sought to advance our policy aims in Congress or with the administration. Other advantages of the course I am suggesting in the context of relations with London you will be best placed to judge yourself.

I realise that this may be a rather tall order but I am concerned at the

dangers that what currently is perceived as a lack of clarity or ambiguity in regard to the MacBride campaign holds for the maintenance and development of coherent and effective support for Government policy here.

Yours sincerely

*Pádraic Kirby*

Ambassador

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COMMUNICATIONS

AMBASSADOR

1. At the lunch which you hosted for the Lord Mayor of Dublin today, the Majority Leader Tom Foley, in private conversation, brought up the MacBride principles issue. He said that he supported the views expressed by the Tanaiste (referring in particular to the P.Q. answer on 7 May which I had given him some time ago) and John Hume in relation to this question. He was however concerned as to whether the Taoiseach's recent comments in the Irish America interview indicated a different approach of unqualified acceptance of the MacBride principles. I explained that the Taoiseach had prefaced his remarks by referring to the Tanaiste's 7 May statement which remained Government policy and that the Irish Government saw the discrimination question as a priority issue to be pursued within the context of the A.I. Agreement with a view to legislation with statutory obligations and penalties. I also pointed out that the Taoiseach had been responding to specific questions in the course of the lengthy interview.

2. Majority Leader Foley feels that the proposed MacBride legislation in Congress is not in the best interests of Northern Ireland and that he would oppose it vigorously if it ever reaches the floor of the House. In his view it would have the effect of dividing those who would normally be constructively supportive on Irish issues but who would find it difficult to vote against what on the face of it appeared very reasonable but which contained negative aspects. He mentioned the fact that the MacBride principles had been modelled on the Sullivan principles (South Africa) but felt that it would be ludicrous to equate the two situations. However, for many members of Congress, there would be a strong feeling that there is a relationship and that any anti-discrimination measure should be supported.

3. He strongly favoured the Irish Government's policy of vigorously pursuing through the A.I. Agreement fresh legislation on discrimination which contained statutory obligations and penalties. While the MacBride campaign was a pressure point on the British, Foley felt that the enactment of MacBride legislation would have a detrimental effect in relation to disinvestment, attraction of future investment and in imposing restrictions on imports. This could only result in loss of existing or possible future jobs making the discrimination issue even harder to tackle.

A handwritten signature in black ink, enclosed in a hand-drawn oval. The signature is cursive and appears to read 'Martin Burke'.

Martin Burke  
8 October 1987