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Meeting with Mr. Johnston, Deputy Head of the
North European Division, State Department,
19 October, 1987

Mr. Johnston was accompanied on his visit by Steve Worrel of the U.S. Embassy. Present from the Department were Anne Anderson and Ray Bassett. Mr. Johnston was on a visit to Ireland and Scandinavia and wished to discuss several topics.

1. MacBride Principles

Mr. Johnston said that the State Department had a major constitutional problem with individual States passing legislation on the MacBride Principles. The question of the U.S. foreign policy was a matter for the Federal Government and not one for State legislatures. In recent years individual States were taking up positions on two foreign affairs issues, the Sullivan and MacBride Principles. The State Department would resist this entry by State legislatures into international affairs.

Mr. Johnston said that the State Department would also oppose the MacBride Principles because they believed that the imposition of an extra hurdle on potential U.S. investors would scare off investment. He said that the U.S. State Department looked at Irish Government statements on the MacBride Principles and used the the most "quotable" from their point of view.

Ms Anderson replied that it was difficult to reach any definitive judgement on the thesis that the MacBride Principles scared off potential investment. It was impossible to quantify such assertions. There appeared to be no concrete evidence that the MacBride Principles had such an effect. In regard to Irish Government statements on the MacBride Principles, it was essential that they be represented accurately by the State Department. She raised the recent letter from the State Department to a Pennsylvania legislator in which the Irish

Government position was not accurately reflected. Any representation of our position should include the Tánaiste's PQ reply of 7 May and the Taoiseach's interview in Irish America. Mr. Worrel said that he was aware that the Irish Embassy had raised the issue of the letter with the State Department in Washington.

2. The International Fund

Mr. Johnston said that the State Department was reasonably happy with the Fund. He expressed some concern at the slow rate of progress in the Fund's activities in Ireland. He said that the State Department wished to have a solid report to give to Congress on the Fund. He felt confident that they would be able to do this. He said that the Fund was not a State Department programme but was a Congressional one. There was little enthusiasm within the State Department for the Fund while the State Department's own funds were being cut. He questioned the morality of giving money to Ireland while cutting back aid programmes in Africa.

Ms. Anderson replied that the reason for the relatively slow start-up of the Fund was that the Board was determined to use the Fund's money in a way that would have lasting benefit. This involved careful evaluation of projects before agreeing funds. Much of the groundwork had now been done and a number of projects were in the pipeline. We were aware of the State Department's lack of enthusiasm for a U.S. allocation to the Fund and we appreciated the fact that the impetus came from Congress. We were also aware of the debate in the U.S. about cutting back funds to Africa while countries like Israel and Egypt benefit from enormous aid transfers. The aid to IFI - though generous and very welcome - is tiny by comparison.

3. Immigration issues

Mr. Johnston said that he was aware of efforts by Irish American members of Congress to push through legislation on this issue. He did not feel that the Kennedy Donnelly Bill

would be successful. He admitted however that the Irish Embassy in Washington probably was in a better position to make a prediction.

Ms. Anderson replied that our assessment was more optimistic than the prediction given by the State Department. Naturally we strongly supported the Kennedy-Donnelly Bill. The Bill of course concerned a number of other 'seed' countries in addition to Ireland.

RB
R. Bassett,
Anglo-Irish Section,
23 October, 1987.

c.c. Mr. Gallagher
Counsellors A-I
Ambassador Washington

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