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*MacBride file*

MEETING WITH KATHLEEN FOLEY FROM ST PAUL, MINNESOTA  
IN DFA, 10 AUGUST 1988

1. Ms Foley works in the office of the President of the Minnesota State Senate, Senator Jerome Hughes, and she wanted to talk to someone in the Department about the MacBride Principles campaign in the USA. She had met Jim Hennessy in Geneva who put her in touch with us. In Ray Basset's absence on leave, I saw her.
  
2. Minnesota has recently passed a MacBride Principles Bill and Ms Foley said that given her Irish/American background (her maiden name was Corrigan) she was very proud of this achievement. Minnesota was the first State outside the East Coast States to pass such a bill. She said that the British Consulate in Chicago had very actively campaigned against it and had brought out Catholics from Northern Ireland to give testimony against the Bill during the hearings. She wondered why Ireland had not been more active on the ground in St Paul in lobbying in favour of the Bill.
  
3. I explained to Ms Foley that there was no doubt about the Irish Government's support for the MacBride Principles - our Taoiseach had said as much when he was in the USA last year (Ms Foley said that she had a copy of the interview in Irish America). In fact we felt that the MacBride campaign in the States exercised a very salutary pressure on the British to move ahead with the reform of fair employment legislation in Northern Ireland. We were actively engaged in negotiations with the British on this new legislation which we hoped would be in Parliament before the end of this year and be passed early next year. While a certain amount of progress had been achieved in negotiations so far (such as monitoring, imposition of penalties etc), we felt that there were still many issues on which better proposals should be forthcoming (affirmative action, use of grants and tenders, assistance to individuals etc).
  
4. Ms Foley said that one of the arguments put forward very

strongly by the British in their campaign against the Bill was that it would harm USA investment in Northern Ireland. I told her that we could see no evidence to support this view: it seemed highly questionable to argue that legislation should not outlaw certain discriminatory practices on the grounds that it might discourage investment.

5. Ms Foley said that the British had also used statements by the SDLP leader John Hume which argued against the MacBride campaign on the grounds that they would hurt inward investment to Northern Ireland from the States. I told her that, whereas Mr Hume might have taken that point of view initially, his statements since last autumn indicated that his present thinking was that the MacBride principles should prove unnecessary if the new legislation is sufficiently forceful.

6. Ms Foley said that, even though the Bill passed with a sizable majority, there was some opposition to it in the State Senate from the majority (Democrat) leader. It seemed as if some of this opposition were directed towards the Senate President, who took a great personal interest in the Bill (he also has an Irish American background), and with whom the majority leader is in some conflict about their relative powers. She felt that the danger could not be excluded that the majority leader might try to have the law repealed at some future stage. (The legislature resumes sitting in January). She asked that we keep her informed of developments. I told her that we would be glad to stay in touch with her and that she should feel free to contact the Consulate in Chicago, or indeed ourselves in Dublin, at any time.

T. Russell

10 August 1988

TR

cc Ms Anderson

Mr Bassett

Consulate, Chicago