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Your reference

Our reference

Date 22 May 1986

Dear Reg

MACBRIDE PRINCIPLES - POSSIBLE LEAFLET

Peter Bell circulated at the meeting held on 24 March a draft leaflet which might be part of a propaganda push against the MacBride Principles. I am not sure whether the leaflet could be circulated to all concerned. But it might form the basis of a "Greyband". These are briefing documents which we circulate to trusted contacts and which can be slightly more forthcoming than formal Government statements. I will of course be consulting the FCO.

At the meeting it was agreed that the idea of such a leaflet was worth exploring and those present were asked for comments or amendments in respect of the leaflet. I have not so far had any comments or amendments. I would be grateful for any suggestions as soon as possible on how the document might be improved. In particular I would be grateful if the sections in square brackets could be filled out and if the leaflet could include something on the current arrangements on fair employment, which were suggested at the meeting.

Yours ever

Dave Hill

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SIL

Encl

cc Mr Gowdy IDB
Mr Wolstencroft DEO
Mr Barrie R10, FCO
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TSB

E.R.

POSSIBLE LEAFLET

FAIR EMPLOYMENT IN NORTHERN IRELAND AND THE MACBRIDE PRINCIPLES

1. This leaflet summarises the British Government's views on the MacBride Principles, which are being canvassed by the Irish National Caucus and certain other groups in the United States.

British Policy

2. The British Government is totally committed to the promotion of equality of opportunity in employment in Northern Ireland and has taken many positive steps to give effect to this policy, including the introduction of fair employment legislation - the Fair Employment (Northern Ireland) Act 1976. The guiding principles of the Northern Ireland law are equality of opportunity, no discrimination on religious or political grounds and recruitment solely on merit.

3. Enforcement of the law is in the hands of an independent statutory body, the Fair Employment Agency for Northern Ireland. Agency rulings are legally enforceable.

4. Much progress has been made. The proportion of minority employees in many areas, particularly Government and the professions has risen. [Examples]. The British Government has repeatedly made clear its commitment to achieving further progress in fair employment in Northern Ireland and is always mindful of the need continually to review its own stance on this difficult issue. The Fair Employment Agency is to receive additional resources and officials have reported recently on how existing policies might be made more comprehensive, consistent and effective. The way forward is now being considered in the light of that report. In addition the Anglo-Irish Agreement of November 1985 provides for the Irish Government to put forward in the Intergovernmental Conference views and proposals on the role of the Fair Employment Agency and other bodies involved in this field.

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MacBride Principles

5. The MacBride Principles offer a "quick fix" which, according to its sponsors, would achieve employment equality overnight. The British Government (and the Irish Government) do not believe that they will achieve this result; and that on the contrary they will lead to greater unemployment amongst both Catholics and Protestants. This would happen for a number of reasons:

- a) MacBride Principles require hiring and promoting on a non-merit basis which would be illegal in Northern Ireland (this is the view of the Head of the Fair Employment Agency). Once they are incorporated in US State law they could be used to pursue actions against US corporations investing in Northern Ireland to implement them or face disinvestment. Faced with this possible legal dilemma, existing and future investors will choose to go elsewhere.

The sponsors of the MacBride Principles recognise the force of this criticism. "Clarifications" of the Principles have been offered. But the Principles themselves have not been revised and once they were in US law it would be open to any politically motivated group to exploit the wording of the MacBride Principles to harass US companies investing in Northern Ireland.

- b) The proponents of the MacBride Principles are not averse to using highly inaccurate data. For example ... [examples from Goldin's latest report].

Companies challenged on the basis of such inaccurate data may choose to fight in the US courts: but may equally choose to leave Northern Ireland

- c) Although the proponents of the MacBride Principles say they do not want disinvestment from Northern Ireland, the Bills which they are trying to put on the statute books of various US States would enable those States to withdraw investments from US companies investing in Northern Ireland. These powers could be used,

and extremists would push for them to be used. This would again discourage firms from investing in Northern Ireland.

The People behind the MacBride Principles

6. The MacBride Principles get their name from Sean MacBride, who in addition to the Nobel Prize, has also won the USSR's Lenin Prize and was imprisoned as a terrorist before World War II. Although the INC espouses non-violence, at least two of its leading members have family connections with the IRA. The INC's avowed aim of achieving British withdrawal from Northern Ireland pays no attention to the views of the majority of the people of Northern Ireland; is out of line with the Anglo-Irish Agreement, which the US Government support; and is out of step with the views of the Irish Government. Their aim is to cause economic dislocation, not economic progress.

The Irish Government

7. In May 1985 the Irish Prime Minister, Dr FitzGerald, indicated that there was a campaign under way aimed at discouraging American investment in Northern Ireland and that those pursuing the campaign were inflicting "a grave injustice on both communities, Nationalist and Unionist". Similarly, the Deputy Prime Minister of the Irish Republic, Mr Spring, in a reference to what he described as the campaign "to force American money to be withdrawn from any firms operating here in which discrimination against the minority population is alleged to exist", expressed the view that "there are those who have a vested interest in seeing the total destruction of society in Northern Ireland and their campaign may be designed at depriving the people of Northern Ireland of much needed investment rather than any concern about discrimination".

Conculsion

8. Pressure for adoption of the MacBride Principles obscures the progress already made in fair employment in Northern Ireland and distorts the record of American firms located there. In his statement of 15 November 1985 welcoming the Anglo-Irish Agreement,

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President Reagan said, "I am proud that Northern Ireland enterprises in which American money is involved are among the most progressive in promoting equal opportunity for all".