E.R.

CONFIDENTIAL

27 March 1986

ME/106/86/SB

cc PS/PUS (L&B)
PS/Mr Bloomfield
Mr Fell
Mr McAllister
Mr Mayne
Mr Chesterton
Mr Bell
Mr S Hewitt
Mr Pearson

259/85C

Mr Spence

CATHOLIC EMPLOYMENT AT MACKIES AND THE ANGLO-IRISH AGREEMENT

Mr Fell's minute of 26 March to Mr Bell on this subject prompts me to intervene with a pragmatic suggestion.

2. I have much sympathy for Mr Bell's view that it may be difficult for us in practice to resist Irish attempts to put forward views on major industrial development cases which appear to them to raise issues of general principle. At the same time it is clearly right that we should preserve both the independent position of the IDB and the confidentiality of its relations with investors.

3. As regards the "complaints bureau" point, our rule of thumb has been that we can accept requests for information, and in replying to them can usefully enlighten the Irish as to the policy considerations which underlie our decisions if we so wish, but that this need not amount to using the Secretariat as a means of examining complaints.

4. As you know the Irish have asked for a discussion with you about policy issues and public expenditure (your minute of 21 March to Dr Quigley, not to all). I think that we could use discussion on that occasion as a means of defining more precisely the areas where we can respond to Irish interest. However I hope that we shall not attempt to resist making any reply to Irish expressions of interest in particular industrial development cases of which they have become aware. Our reply need not be especially forthcoming, and we need not go out of our way to bring particular cases to Irish attention. But the Irish do have a legitimate interest in equality of employment opportunity, as you say in your original minute of 29 January; and within this interest they must be allowed to raise particular examples.

Mark Elliott 27/3

M ELLIOTT

CONFIDENTIAL

E.R.

6/86 PA.

CONFIDENTIAL

RBS/131/86

cc. PS/Mr Bloomfield
Mr Pearson

Mr Fell
Mr McAllister

CATHOLIC EMPLOYMENT AT MACKIES AND THE ANGLO-IRISH AGREEMENT

You will have seen Peter Bell's minute of 17 March commenting on how we should consult or inform the Irish about significant industrial development issues.

My initial view is that we have to rely on common sense to identify the small number of industrial development cases where the interests of the minority community may be "significantly or especially affected" and where it would be prudent to, depending upon the circumstances, seek the views of the Irish or give them some prior information about a forthcoming announcement.

I am sure that we don't need to set up elaborate arrangements to do this.

I would welcome your views.

R B SPENCE
Central Secretariat
20 March 1986
/JH

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

E.R. TP12713 Please Minute 97/86

22/2

(8) DA IC.

Mr Spence - M

cc: PS/PUS (L&B) - M
PS/Mr Bloomfield - M
Mr Fell - M
Mr McAllister - M
Mr Chesterton
Mr M Elliott - M
Mr S Hewitt - M
Mr Pearson - M

88/86

CATHOLIC EMPLOYMENT AT MACKIES' AND THE ANGLO-IRISH AGREEMENT

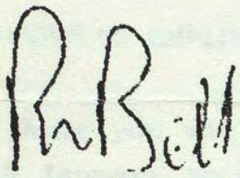
I hope you will forgive some belated comments on your minute of 29 January to Mr S Hewitt. In this you argued (paragraph 6) that we should discourage the Irish from raising in the Secretariat substantial proposals going to the IDB. Otherwise you suggested that the confidential relationship between the IDB or companies in Northern Ireland could be seen to be eroded.

2. What concerns me is that we may be in a weak position to do this. After all the Irish have a right under Article 5c to put forward views on proposals for major legislation and on major policy issues within the purviewof the Northern Ireland Departments where the interests of the minority community are significantly or especially affected. There is of course no final way of resolving what falls into this category, but I have no doubt that the Irish would see the possible relocation of Mackies', or any other major, and even minor, industrial development that might affect job opportunities for Catholics as falling within it. And with some justice. It would be equally hard not to regard the activities of the IDB as "within the purview of the NI Departments" even though it is a separate entity from the DED.

3. Rather than try to give the Irish the brush-off in cases such as this where the Irish may well have a legitimate interest, I wonder whether our approach should not be to give such

E.R.

information as the Irish request in confidence and listen to their representations, if any. I am sure that it is not the practice of the IDB to take decisions without any regard to the political context, and knowledge of Irish views (especially since they are meant to reflect those of the nationalist community within the North itself) is surely part of that context.



P N BELL
17 March 1986

E.R.

P 1A

CONFIDENTIAL

RBS/33/86

cc. PS/Mr Bloomfield
Mr Pearson

Mr Fell
Mr McAllister

CATHOLIC EMPLOYMENT AT MACKIES

There was some discussion at PCC yesterday about how we might handle the query from the Irish side of the Anglo-Irish Secretariat about this matter. I would be grateful for any comments you wish to make on the following draft response:-

1. You asked for advice on what if anything you might say to the Irish about reports that Mackies are considering closing down their main Springfield Road Factory and relocating some 500 yards up the Springfield Road in a site between Springmartin and Woodvale Park. The implication behind the Irish request was that such relocation might result in a reduction in job opportunities for Catholics.

2. The Irish will be aware that Mackies have experienced some trading difficulties and that they have recently announced a lay-off of 400 from the current workforce of 1400. The Company needs to review its present manufacturing arrangements and consider how it can best modernise its operations.

3. I think you can say to the Irish that the current debate about relocation is premature. The Company has engaged consultants who are examining a number of options, including the possibility of relocation. You may say that the consultancy report is not expected to be completed until April or May of this year. Furthermore any proposal emanating from the consultants' report will have to be proved commercially viable before any Government assistance through the IDB can be offered.

CONFIDENTIAL

E. R.

CONFIDENTIAL

4. In advising the Irish you can also say that Mackies workforce currently includes 20% to 30% Catholics and that everyone involved - Government, Management, ~~of~~ the Trade Unions, are aware that relocation to a particular location might be perceived by the Catholic workforce as being to their disadvantage. You can also stress that the Government will continue its active policy of supporting equality of opportunity in employment whilst of course respecting the right and responsibility of management to make investment decisions.

5. While emphasising that no decisions have been taken, you might also add - in order to show the many factors involved - that relocation of the factory might release land which could be very useful in relieving housing pressures for Catholics in West Belfast.

RM

R B SPENCE
Central Secretariat
23 January 1986
/JH

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