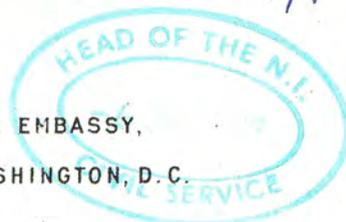




BRITISH EMBASSY,
WASHINGTON, D.C.



29 December 1986

A D S Goodall Esq CMG
FCO

2. cc Mr Fell ✓

1. Mr Bloomfield ✓
2. P. W. 1/2.

Dear David,

MACBRIDE PRINCIPLES

1. As you know, the Northern Ireland Industry Minister, Mr Peter Viggers, visited the United States earlier this month. Before his visit, Jimmy Mellon chaired a meeting of those in New York and Washington involved in work on the MacBride Principles, and it was agreed that we would subsequently review where we stood and our future strategy.
2. The Anglo-Irish Agreement, although strongly supported by the US Administration, Congress and media, has had little effect on the MacBride campaign against State and city legislatures and US companies located in Northern Ireland. There has been relatively little media attention, but so far editorial comment is generally on our side. MacBride bills have passed in Massachusetts and New York, and we can expect them to be introduced, or reintroduced, in half a dozen other states in 1987. US companies already installed in Northern Ireland have been firmly resisting MacBride, but the latest threats of boycotts have worried some, eg Ford. Many of them will have to contend with MacBride shareholders' resolutions in the Spring of 1987: such resolutions, though unlikely to be adopted, will create unwelcome publicity and worsen the investment climate.
3. Our own lobbying effort will continue, but we must accept that we may not be able to avoid the passage of further MacBride bills in certain state and local legislatures. The issue is seen as primarily one of domestic politics: few local politicians are inclined to resist a vocal ethnic group, especially when there is little in it for them. The opposition to MacBride of the Reagan Administration and the ineffectiveness so far of efforts to promote MacBride on Capitol Hill do not help much at the local level. And the MacBride campaigners have in their favour the continuing disparity in unemployment levels between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland; and the widespread acceptance in this country of the principle of affirmative action to remedy past discrimination. Against this background, the autumn Consultative Paper, a real step forward in Northern Ireland terms, has had little impact here and certainly has not silenced the MacBride proponents.
4. We understand that departments in London and Belfast are now taking a fresh look at MacBride strategy after Mr Viggers' visit.

/We

RESTRICTED



We hope they will pay particular attention to the following:

- a. Should we, as a fall-back, have a form of words with which we can live (eg something modelled on the draft Declaration of Practice at the end of the Consultative Paper) to offer to state legislators instead of the MacBride Principles? This could be presentationally powerful in giving moderate politicians a positive alternative to MacBride. (This seemed to be the Irish Government line over the New York legislation.)
 - b. Could the NIO and FCO produce a succinct brief targeted on MacBride and related issues? What we need here is punchy, straightforward and professionally-produced briefing for public distribution, covering housing civil rights and employment; and a handout with quotable successes - companies with significant Catholic workforces, examples of inter-communal cooperation, export orders, etc.
 - c. Could thought be given again to encouraging the SDLP to come out with a clear statement on MacBride? John Hume spoke helpfully about disinvestment at the recent SDLP conference, but this ducks MacBride itself. When he was last in Washington, he seemed keen to help; and, as you know, his views carry real weight here.
 - d. Could the TUC be persuaded to make clear to their counterparts in the AFL-CIO and individual American unions how damaging the MacBride campaign could be for employment and investment prospects in Northern Ireland? The AFL-CIO endorsed MacBride two years ago, and Irish American trades union groups have been very active in the campaign in state legislatures.
 - e. Is this a subject which might be taken up with the Irish in the Secretariat or informally in the Inter-Governmental Conference? So far we have kept in close touch with the Irish Embassy and Consulates-General on MacBride; and they have been generally helpful. But there is some evidence that the Irish Government may be willing in future to roll with the MacBride punches in the state legislatures, leaving us exposed.
5. New sessions of state legislatures will begin early in the New Year. We hope therefore to have an early account of the Belfast/London MacBride review. I understand that Department of Economic Development and/or IDB officials may be planning to visit the United States in January. If the timing could be so arranged, it would be useful for them to discuss all this with our New York/Washington coordinating group.

Yours ever,

Michael Jenkins

M R H Jenkins

/cc:

RESTRICTED



/3

cc: K Bloomfield Esq, CB
Head of the NI Civil Service

D Chesterton Esq, NIO(L)
R F Stimson Esq, DUBLIN
Consuls-General in the USA

RESTRICTED