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(F)

ASST./ SEC
MM 13/8
-7 AUG 1991
CENT SEC

UNDER/ SEC 155/8
-7 AUG 1991
CENT SEC

Edward Mason Esq
RID
FCO -B

6 August 1991 7/8

ASST./ SEC 6/8
-8 AUG 1991
C.C.R.U.

- cc Mr Fergusson, Dublin -B
- Mr Hamilton, Cent Sec -B
- Mr Marsh, PAB -B
- Ms Lodge
- Mr Rickard o/r
- Mr Beeton

1. MR Maxwell - to see
Trains + boats + planes
2. MR Walker 15/8.

To see & keep
an eye -

MA

7/8

Dear Edward

PEACE TRAIN: FURTHER AMBITIONS

George Fergusson's note of 1 August to you refers.

In principle I think this is an initiative in which we should show some interest and indeed encourage.

Mr Fergusson is right of course to point up the close connection between John Hume and the (Irish-American) US scene, however, I would have to say that I was not aware of strong SDLP ambivalence about the Peace Train and indeed had thought the likes of Sean Farren (who has spent quite a lot of time in the States and has close contacts there) had been fairly supportive in the past. However perhaps that was in a personal, rather than a party, capacity.

That apart, however, we do now have a wide range of interested Northern Ireland watchers and supporters in the United States - Speaker Foley and the Friends of Ireland, the American-Ireland Fund and Co-operation Ireland, Cardinals Law and Bevilacqua and the redoubtable Rev Joe Beman, all, or any, of whom might be persuaded to endorse the idea of an Ireland US peace plane. Indeed, if carefully handled, perhaps the project could provide a platform for other helpful Northern Ireland activities in the US.

The idea of engaging Richard Branson's interest might also be helpful. Virgin Atlantic have in the last year or so greatly expanded their Trans Atlantic services and this might well fit in

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with their own public relation objectives as well as Mr Branson's personal interests - he did himself make a hot air balloon landing near Derry a few years ago.

Before responding to Mr Fergusson might I suggest, however, that you canvass the views of the Embassy and the Northern Ireland Bureau and also Brian Kirk in BIS, New York. They would be much better placed than I to comment on likely US interest and any avenues of possible support on that side of the Atlantic.

Yours ever.

(SIGNED)

JANET MCIVER
SECURITY AND INTERNATIONAL DIVISION

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