

NATIONAL ARCHIVES

IRELAND



Reference Code:	2011/39/1801
Creation Date(s):	December 1981
Extent and medium:	3 pages
Creator(s):	Department of Foreign Affairs
Access Conditions:	Open
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Funds for Visits to the United States by members of the
SDLP and others

(and a U.S. file?)

There are a number of possible ways in which the fund proposed by Mr. Hume might be established; some suggestions are set out below. It might be as well to mention at the outset some considerations which would be likely to arise with a fund of this kind, however constituted.

An important consideration is whether a fund of this kind would appeal to sufficient Americans to make it a profitable concern. There are already several established funds active in the United States whose purpose is to draw contributions from wealthy Americans for worthy causes in Ireland, including Northern Ireland. Foremost among these is the Ireland Fund, though there are also Ireland's Children, the Inter Church Emergency Fund for Ireland and the American Irish Foundation. In addition, frequent fundraising visits are made to the U.S. by charitable organisations such as the Glencree Centre for Reconciliation, Tyrone Crystal, various Cooperatives and individual church and youth groups. Granted, the fund which Mr. Hume has in mind is of a different kind but it is as well to remember that many wealthier, well intentioned Irish Americans have been approached already for various worthwhile causes. That is not to say that there is not a large reservoir of untapped interest which might contribute.

Some of the organisations already in the field have put considerable effort into their fund raising and might not welcome "competition". A way to avoid this problem might be to try to involve the established organisations in the proposed fund.

The political aspects of such a fund, both in Ireland and the United States, would need to be looked at carefully. A basic prerequisite would be bipartisanship in both countries to ensure continuity and forestall any accusations of one-sidedness.

On the Irish front, there could presumably be no difficulty about sponsoring visits by SDLP members but might there not be difficulties about Government sponsorship of Unionist politicians? And would Unionist and other non-SDLP politicians accept sponsorship from a fund of this kind?

It may be expected that Representative Biaggi and his supporters could oppose the fund in view of their opposition to the SDLP in the past.

If a board of directors were to be nominated by the two Governments great care would clearly be needed in choosing the people involved. The sensitivity of such a fund's activities is obvious. Also it is the case that on the Northern Ireland issue generally some of those who have been prominent in helping and promoting Ireland over the years have not seen eye to eye at all times with the Irish Government. Presumably it would be possible to get U.S. Government support, whether in the form of direct involvement or indirectly (e.g. as patrons) through such figures as Speaker O'Neill and Deputy Secretary of State Clark.

- (i) American Irish Foundation. This would appear to be a possible model for the fund, consisting as it does of a U.S. registered corporation set up under the auspices of the Irish and American Governments with considerable initial input from official sources. It has a board of directors originally nominated by the Irish Government, stated charitable aims and rules of procedure. The certificate and articles of corporation of the Foundation are attached. The Embassy at Washington might be asked to find out if there would be legal difficulties about setting up the proposed fund in similar terms if this approach is to be pursued. (It might be noted that Art. 2.10 of the Certificate of Incorporation provides that the Foundation will not "in any way, directly or indirectly engage in carrying on propaganda".) The Embassy could also presumably advise on other particulars such as the likelihood of being able to secure a suitable board of directors.

- (ii) The Ireland Fund. This is an entirely independent body also set up as a U.S. charitable corporation. Its President is Tony O'Reilly and its directors consist of distinguished wealthy Irish Americans. There is an Irish Advisory Committee. This body could also form a model for the fund although the Ireland Fund specifically describes itself as non-political and non-sectarian. Again the Embassy would need to be consulted on the legal aspects.
- (iii) It would be possible, instead of forming a Corporation to have a less formal ad hoc body consisting of nominees of the Friends of Ireland, which would seek funds from groups such as the Ireland Fund, the American Irish Foundation and U.S. charitable funds such as the Ford Foundation and the Carnegie Trust.
- (iv) Another alternative to an independent Corporation would be to ask one of the established organisations to extend its activities to include funding this type of visit on a regular basis.

December 1981