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IRISH EMBASSY, LONDON

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6 December 1990

Mr Brendan Scannell
Counsellor
Embassy Washington

Dear Brendan

Thank you for your fax concerning the visit to London of Congressman Joe Kennedy.

I spoke to his aide, Jim Mahoney, last week and had a chat with him about Rep. Kennedy's meeting with Northern Ireland Secretary Brooke. According to Mahoney, Brooke characterised the new Prime Minister as being pragmatic, sensible and open-minded in his handling of issues and said that he expected him to approach Northern Ireland in this way. Kennedy asked whether the new government would be taking an initiative on ending violence. Brooke responded with an account of his initiative and also added that there would be no negotiations with the IRA. In response to Kennedy's argument that there should be some way of getting through to the IRA and his offer to do anything he could, or to convey any message while in Northern Ireland, Brooke suggested that he talk to our government before doing anything. It was clear from the NIO version of the meeting that, although it confirmed that Kennedy had offered to use his good offices as intermediary, great importance was not attached to it. It was characterised as 'pleasantries'.

Mahoney was appreciative of my offer that Paul Murray could brief Rep. Kennedy on what the Government have been doing in relation to the Birmingham Six, particularly given Paul's frequent and recent visits. We made tentative arrangements for the meeting but, in the end, Kennedy's schedule did not allow him to take up the offer. The reporting of Kennedy's visit to the Six was predictable, with the qualities giving straight coverage by and large and the tabloids at the bottom of the market being vituperative in their criticism.

Yours sincerely

Brendan J. Lyons

Brendan J Lyons
Counsellor

c.c. Anglo Irish Division