



21 March 1991

TO: SECRETARY  
FROM: R B SPENCE

CC PS/MR NEEDHAM (B&L)  
MR HAMILTON  
MR SMARTT  
MR COOKE  
MS McALISTER 22.3.91

cc Individual files  
- extracts

Mr Henderson  
Mr Kirk  
Mr Lindsay - para 9  
Mr McAuley  
+ 1 copied 22.3.91

## VISIT TO THE USA

### Introduction

1. This note highlights the main points which arose during my visit last week to Washington, New York and Boston.
2. The main purpose of the visit was to give me a better grasp of MacBride issues and to explain our proposals in relation to section 30 of the Fair Employment Act. In practice, I found that most of the exchanges required me to deal with these matters in the wider contexts of the efforts to target more effectively the most disadvantaged areas and people and of HMG's general policies in NI.

### ALEC

3. We had a very useful discussion with Ms Patricia Finn of the American Legislative Exchange Council. The Council claims to be the largest bipartisan organisation representing state legislators across the USA. It is to the right of the political spectrum, strongly favouring private enterprise, less government and the free market. It is strongly against the MacBride principles and indeed consideration was being given to trying to mount



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campaigns to repeal MacBride legislation, though they were sensitive to the fact that such action might provide fresh propaganda opportunities to the MacBride campaign.

4. An annual conference is planned for Seattle in August (to which Mrs Thatcher has been invited) and this event might provide us with an opportunity for a NI person to address a meeting of (or to meet members of) ALEC's taskforce on trade, travel and tourism.
5. I would strongly support a visit by ALEC members to see NI at first hand, provided we can minimise the risk of the MacBride lobby making capital about a "Government funded junket".

#### Congressional Staffers

6. A lunch with a number of Congressional staffers provided an opportunity to report progress on implementation of the fair employment legislation and to explain the significance of the Secretary of State's speech on TSN, though their main interest was in security and political issues.

#### IRRC (Investor Responsibility Research Center)

7. There was a useful meeting with Carolyn Mathiasen and Heidi Welsh in Washington and a long phone call with Ken Bertsch in Boston, which enabled me to explain the proposals to amend the 1989 Act and to stress the importance of the TSN speech. Ken Bertsch and Heidi Welsh will be in Northern Ireland from mid-May for 3 weeks and we will obviously need to make maximum use of



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this visit to increase their (already extensive) knowledge of NI.

8. I was quizzed by both Heidi Welsh and Ken Bertsch about the composition of the "academic panel" which, they understood, would advise CCRU in its review of employment equality. I had the clear impression that they were aware of the debate about Dr McCruddin's possible involvement.

#### US Catholic Conference

9. We had a difficult meeting with John Carr and Gerry Powers of the Office of International Justice and Peace. It was clear that the Catholic Conference was under heavy pressure from Irish Catholic organisations to attack HMG's performance in overcoming discrimination and inequality in NI. They were looking for clear evidence - ie prosecution of employers - that HMG meant business.
10. I gave a robust defence of our position, explaining the section 30 issue and TSN. I said that we believed widespread prosecution of employers would not be necessary. However, we will hear more of these arguments and may have to work hard to prevent the Catholic Church in the USA moving towards support for MacBride.

#### State Department

11. A meeting with Dick Erdman - Deputy Director, Office of Northern European Affairs - concentrated on political and security issues, but I provided an update on fair employment and TSN issues. The meeting was also used to



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exert further pressure on the State Department to withdraw the "travel advisory" on Ireland.

#### Information Officers' Conference

12. A full morning session of this conference of Embassy and Consulate information officers from across the USA was devoted to NI affairs. I made a detailed presentation on fair employment and TSN.

#### Northern Ireland Bureau

13. I spent some time with the two former DED officers attached to the Bureau and am taking up separately a number of issues which arose.

#### New York

14. I met over breakfast Mr Tom Pandick, Officer of Investor Affairs, State of New York, to brief him on the latest fair employment developments.

#### NITB

15. I called at the Tourist Board's New York office and met Ms Meabeth Fenton who give an impressive report on her work to promote NI as a serious holiday destination.

#### Harvard

16. In Boston, I had lunch with Elizabeth Gray, Secretary to the Corporation Committee on Shareholder Responsibility, who had written to Mr Dudley Fishburn MP about the



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section 30 problem. I explained our response - the Consul General had already forwarded copies of the proposed legislation - and outlined the other measures being taken to tackle disadvantage in NI.

#### Other Contacts

17. During the visit other contacts included Bob Mahony (Director of the Catholic University of Washington); Michael McDowell (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation); Raymond Helmick (Jesuit Community, Boston); and Diathi O'Ceallargh (the Irish Consul General in New York). A couple of planned meetings in New York had to be cancelled because of non-availability of individuals at the last minute.

#### Some general impressions

18. The following are some general impressions:-

- 18.1 Although we have recently had a good run with MacBride (no Bill has passed since May 1989) and our hand has been greatly strengthened by the new fair employment legislation, the campaign is not going to go away. There will be further battles to be fought and the most testing and important one could be in California.
- 18.2 Northern Ireland is not a big issue in the USA; one recent survey revealed that NI did not feature in the top 50 news stories last year. It is the



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large security stories which grasp US attention; last week the release of the Birmingham Six totally obliterated the Secretary of State's statement on the talks about talks.

18.3 We can also exaggerate the interest of Irish Americans in NI issues. As one Bostonian put it to me "there are over 40m Irish-Americans and a couple of hundred "nuts" and you concentrate too much on the "nuts"! On the other hand, there is often a vague desire amongst Irish-Americans to do something about Ireland which can - and has been - turned to our advantage.

18.4 Our problems in NI pale into insignificance when viewed against the magnitude of the problems in USA facing minorities - poverty, unemployment, poor housing, bad public services, violence, drugs, etc, etc.

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