

FILE NOTE

MEETING WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF COCA-COLA BOTTLERS (ULSTER) LTD AND COCA-COLA BOTTLERS (IRELAND) GROUP

1. On Wednesday 1 April 1992, Jack Holt, Group Managing Director, Coca-Cola Bottlers (Ireland) Group and Irial Finan, Managing Director, Coca-Cola Bottlers (Ulster) Ltd called to see Mr Minnis to discuss their company's targeting by Father Sean McManus, President, Irish National Caucus, in the Linfield controversy and the MacBride Campaign in general.
2. Mr Holt began by clarifying the company's position within the Coca-Cola organisation. The Coca-Cola Company has its Headquarters in Atlanta. The Irish operation (North and South) is part of the Louventus Group, an independent company with a Coca-Cola franchise which also has operations in Nigeria, Greece and Eastern Europe.
3. Mr Holt then went on to discuss the Sunday Times article of 15 March 1992 (attached at Tab A) in which Father McManus threatened a consumer boycott of Coca-Cola by 43 million Irish Americans because of its sponsorship of the Irish Football Association (IFA) which he claimed operates only in Northern Ireland and which uses Windsor Park, the home ground of Linfield Football Club, as the venue for international matches. The article also quoted correctly from the Fair Employment Commission's (FEC) 2nd Research Report, the figures for Catholics in the 2 Northern Ireland operations (31.1% in distribution; 22.4% in bottling) and implied that there was an under-representation of Catholics because these figures were less than the 40% representation of Catholics in the population as a whole.
4. On this point, Mr Holt said that the 2 operations concerned had now been amalgamated and Catholic representation stood at 28.6% which more than reflected Catholic labour availability in the company's



catchment area. He said that he understood the FEC's reasons for publishing monitoring information but that his company had been opposed to the decision because of the dangers involved in publishing raw data which could easily be misinterpreted, as had in fact happened with the Sunday Times article.

5. Mr Holt then outlined the sponsorship agreement which exists between Coca-Cola Bottlers (Ulster) Ltd and the IFA. The sponsorship, which is part of a broader commitment by the Coca-Cola organisation worldwide to the development of sports and youth, relates only to the IFA which uses Windsor Park as its venue for international matches and has no direct relationship to any other teams which may use the ground. Windsor Park is the only ground in Northern Ireland which meets the criteria for international football matches. As part of the sponsorship, an electronic scoreboard owned by Coca-Cola and bearing its name has been installed at the ground.
6. Mr Holt gave Mr Minnis a copy of a letter which the Northern Ireland operation had provided by way of briefing for Donald Keough, President of the Coca-Cola Company in Atlanta. (A copy of the letter is attached at Tab B.) The letter was sent by Mr Keough to Father McManus, prior to the latter's radio broadcasts on St Patrick's day accusing Coca-Cola of discrimination.
7. It was obvious from the discussion that Mr Holt had a keen appreciation of Father McManus' intentions. He was satisfied that the Northern Ireland operation had acted properly to date in the handling of McManus' allegations and was confident that they would continue to do so. However, he expressed concern that the American organisation might accede to pressure from the MacBride lobby and request that the local bottling plant withdraw their sponsorship



from the IFA without realising the full implications of their action in the Northern Ireland context. To this end, he was wondering if briefing could be provided in Atlanta if required. Mr Minnis confirmed that this could be done and suggested that contact should be made initially by the company with Pamela Mitchison in the British Embassy in Washington. He also suggested that Mr Keough might like to speak to Bill Kelly of Ford, as a representative of a company which had come under intense pressure from the MacBride lobby.

8. Mr Holt and Mr Finan were each provided with information on Fair Employment and MacBride and expressed their gratitude to Mr Minnis for the discussion with him.

*Seán Rodgers*

S RODGERS

10 April 1992

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cc Mr Minnis  
Mr Taggart  
Mr McAuley O/R  
Miss Mitchison - faxed  
Mr Kirk - faxed  
Coca-Cola File



TAB A

## Priest launches US campaign against Coca-Cola for 'bias'

COCA-COLA is to be threatened with a consumer boycott by 43 million Irish Americans over allegations of anti-Catholic discrimination in Northern Ireland.

In radio broadcasts across America on St Patrick's day, on Tuesday, Father Sean McManus, head of the Washington-based Irish National Caucus, will accuse the soft-drinks corporation of funding discrimination by sponsoring the Irish Football Association.

The priest has already organised an Irish American boycott campaign that forced

by Terry McLaughlin  
Belfast

Ford to implement the controversial MacBride principles at its Northern Ireland plant. The principles, named after the Nobel prize-winner Sean MacBride, recommend that US companies operate a policy of positive discrimination in favour of Catholics in Northern Ireland.

McManus will threaten Coca-Cola with a similar boycott if the company does not accede to his demands.

Catholics make up about 40% of the population in Northern Ireland. Coca-Cola employs fewer than that — 31.1% in its distribution network in the province and only 22.4% at its bottling plant. But what has angered the Irish National Caucus is the firm's £70,000 sponsorship of Northern Ireland football.

McManus insists that the Irish Football Association, which despite its name operates only in Northern Ireland, should receive no more money from Coca-Cola until

*Continued on page 24*

Sunday Times 15 Mar 92  
(Irish Edition only)

## Priest threatens Coca-Cola boycott by Irish Americans

CONTINUED FROM P.1

severs its links with Linfield Football Club, which has a strongly loyalist following and an image similar to that of the largely Protestant Glasgow Rangers.

The football association uses Linfield's Windsor Park ground for important matches, and has installed a large electronic scoreboard that displays an advertisement for Coca-Cola.

The US campaigners first

seized on the issue when Eric Bowyer, Linfield's manager, gave an interview to a fanzine saying that it was impossible for him to sign Roman Catholic players. Bowyer said this was because of the sectarian violence gripping the province.

Such a statement would normally fall foul of the province's fair employment laws, but the legislation does not apply as Linfield players are part-timers. Now McManus has compiled what he describes as an discrimination

dossier on Linfield's recruitment policy.

Yesterday, however, Derek Brooks, the Linfield club secretary, denied it had ever operated an official anti-Catholic policy. "We are in the business of fielding the best team available," he said.

"We have been subjected to a campaign of totally unjustified criticism and slurs by people who know very little about the problems of sport in Ulster.

"We have always been pre-

pared and willing to sign Roman Catholic players. During the past two seasons a number of Catholic-born players were approached and actually played trial games.

"But there are many sides to this complicated issue. There are pressures from many sources and if in the end a player, for whatever reason, does not feel he can cope with that pressure, there is very little that we can do, no matter how much we regret the situation."

The official line from the

Linfield. The secretary of the association, David Bowen, said there was no evidence that Linfield practised discrimination against Catholic footballers.

McManus rejects this claim, however, along with the argument that the association is committed to equal opportunities in soccer. "Windsor Park is used by the association for their international matches. It is used by a soccer club whose manager has said publicly that he could

not envisage signing Catholic players," he said.

It was up to companies such as Coca-Cola to ensure that American dollars were "not tainted by the stench of sectarianism", he added. "The way to stop discrimination in its tracks is to find the connection between discrimination in Northern Ireland and US funding. By stopping US dollars subsidising anti-Catholic discrimination, one confronts

the issue in a very powerful manner."

Other options, said McManus, included seeking the support of trade unions and institutions that hold Coca-Cola shares — which is an important part of the campaign against Ford.

Coca-Cola in Northern Ireland said the company sought to provide help for football in all areas of the province. "Father McManus seems to have got hold of the wrong end of the stick on this one



TAB B

16.3

Dear Fr. McManus:

I am responding to your letter of February 18 to Donald R. Keough regarding the advertising of products of The Coca-Cola Company at Windsor Park, Belfast.

We fully share your abhorrence of bigotry. The Coca-Cola Company is opposed to prejudice and unfair discrimination in all its forms, and our operating policies and practices fully reflect this philosophy in the more than 185 countries in which we do business.

Your letter addresses the appropriateness of a piece of sports advertising. Throughout the history of The Coca-Cola Company, we have taken the view that organized sporting events bring together people of diverse backgrounds for the common purpose of sharing in the pursuit of excellence through effort and achievement. We know of no other activity that expresses so well a universality of wholesome values that transcends individual backgrounds and beliefs. That is why The Coca-Cola Company and its licensed bottlers hold the world's longest tradition of sustained funding for sport at every level.

The support of our business system for the Irish Football Association is one component of a multi-tiered sponsorship of non-sectarian sports and community activities throughout Northern Ireland. It is consistent with the extensive funds we allocate to sporting activities in the Republic of Ireland and in the many other countries throughout the world where communities value sport as a common language.

Coca-Cola Bottlers (Ulster) Ltd. has an exemplary record of non-discriminatory employment and operating practices and is in complete compliance with all relevant regulations. Its support of charitable bodies, educational programs and sporting activities is extensive and well-known. Our youth soccer programs alone reach more than twenty thousand schoolchildren across Northern Ireland.

The painted Coca-Cola sign you refer to in Windsor Park was established through an agreement with the Irish Football Association and is our expression for the basic principle of supporting football as a decent and wholesome sport. Windsor Park is the only site in Northern Ireland capable of hosting matches of international calibre. As you know, it is the home ground for the Northern Ireland Team, which includes both Protestants and Catholics in its membership.

We are bringing your concerns to the attention of the Fédération Internationale de Football Associations ("FIFA") to seek their assessment in the context of the principles of fair play we all so diligently adhere to.

RPW/MCMANUS.W02/03/16/92



Talking points re: relationship in Northern Ireland with football, Irish Football Association (IFA), sponsorships and agreements

\* There is a misunderstanding by U.S. based lobbying groups of the issues surrounding the relationship of the Coca-Cola bottler with the Irish Football Association (IFA).

\* Nonetheless, when issues which allege discrimination or taking political sides are raised against the Company or its bottlers, we make every effort to address the concerns raised. As a result, we have requested a review by the ~~Union of European~~ <sup>IFA</sup> Football Associations (UEFA) of allegations raised involving the Irish Football Association (IFA) in Northern Ireland, with which we have sponsorship agreements.

Background:

\* The Coca-Cola bottler in Northern Ireland has recently signed an agreement with the Irish Football Association to promote sporting excellence among the youth of Northern Ireland. This effort, which will impact over 20,000 Protestant and Catholic youth throughout Northern Ireland, is in direct contrast to the linkage with discrimination which has been alleged against the Company.

\* The Coca-Cola Company and its bottler in Northern Ireland in no way support discrimination of any kind. The bottler's workforce composition is an excellent example of the effort made by our system to manage our business in a non-political, non-discriminatory manner.

\* The sponsorship of the Irish Football Association by our bottler is part of a broader commitment by the Coca-Cola system worldwide to the development of sports and youth. It is a further example of the system's efforts to support the communal spirit of man through sports, music and other leisure activities which transcend national and sectarian differences.

\* Signage at Windsor Park is the result of agreements between our bottler and the IFA, which uses Windsor Park as its home park for international matches and has no direct relationship to any other teams which may use the park. Windsor Park is the only park in Northern Ireland which meets the criteria for international football matches, involving both Catholic and Protestant teams and players.



URGENT

For Operator Use Only

No of Pages 1+6

Date/Time 10/4/92

TO: 1. Miss Mitchison.....  
 2. Mr. Kirk.....  
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 .....

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From ... PETER TAGGART .....

SUPPLEMENTARY MESSAGE TO RECIPIENT

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 .....  
 .....

SIGNATURE  .....

EXTENSION 2299 .....