

112/93

CONFIDENTIAL

FROM: P N BELL, AUS(L)
27 May 1993

UNDER/ SEC 984/S
27 MAY 1993
CENT SEC

Mr Cooke

cc PS/PUS (L&B)
PS/Mr Fell
Mr Ledlie
Mr Thomas
Mr Steele
Mr Watkins
Mr Williams
Mr Brooker, CPL
Mr Dodds, ESL
Mr Maccabe
Mr Quinn
Mr Rickard
Ms Lodge
Mr Caine
Mr Archer, RID
HMA, Dublin

1. Mr Haffell
2. Mr McCumber
27.5
[Signature]

ASST 763/5
SEC 27 MAY 1993
CENT SEC

NOTE FOR THE RECORD

CONVERSATION WITH LARRY ROBINSON, FIRST SECRETARY, US EMBASSY

Mr Robinson called on me, at Mr Brooker's suggestion, last Friday to discuss a report on 'security strategy' which he is preparing for the State Department. I drew his attention to the (revised) Statement of Security Policy, with which - surprisingly - he did not appear familiar; discussed the legal background, including the concept of terrorism as crime, partly to damp down the thrust of his argument that what we were dealing with in Northern Ireland partook largely of the nature of a 'counter-insurgency' which, for well known political reasons, we could not call by its true name; and also drew his attention to the efforts which we had nevertheless been making on the operational side to improve the co-ordination of security force activities. I explained that if he wanted a fuller and more up to date briefing on all such matters, our Belfast colleagues were the (helpful) experts.

2. Not least because I tried to bring out the way in which our strategy for dealing with terrorism was not confined to security measures, but required a complementary social and economic policies, our discussion took us quickly into wider fields. So that I spent a

CONFIDENTIAL

SMJ/AUSL/26288

CONFIDENTIAL

good deal of time taking Mr Robinson through in some detail and frankly, the phenomenon of 'Protestant alienation'. It seems to me eminently sensible that the Americans should be aware from a wide range of sources pressures from this quarter on our policy making, and indeed of the efforts of the RUC to deal with it when it turns to criminal activity.

3. But it was what Mr Robinson had to say on political matters that was perhaps most worth recording, though only briefly:

- a. the consistent pattern of US political reporting from Northern Ireland, including meetings the Ambassador and Mr Archard had had with NI politicians, was that there were no grounds for expecting compromise that would favour the kind of accommodation that we (including that is, the US) had in mind;
- b. Mr McNamara had apparently directly approached the Embassy immediately after the Liverpool speech, not merely strongly criticising it, but also claiming that we were pursuing a settlement based on 'majority rule' in Northern Ireland. As Mr Robinson volunteered, this was nonsense. As he pointed out, it was one of the options specifically excluded in the speech. But it is interesting to know how Mr McNamara is thinking or operating these days;
- c. we had no difficulty in agreeing that maintaining the impression that the Talks process was, in some sense alive, constituted a most sovereign prophylactic against a Peace Envoy. (I almost had the impression that Mr Robinson was congratulating himself and his colleagues on their ingenuity in steering the Administration away from this particular lunacy, and will be genuinely disappointed if their efforts eventually come to nought.)

- 2 -

CONFIDENTIAL

SMJ/AUSL/26288

CONFIDENTIAL

4. Finally, Mr Robinson mentioned that Mr Archard would be passing on proposals put to him by a community worker whose name he could not recall, from Strabane, that there should be 'Peace Talks' between Republican and Loyalist paramilitaries to be held on 'neutral territory', a designation which, in his view - and that of Mr Archard - encompassed Ardnalvalley. He told me that his Embassy were likely to be sceptical of any such proposals. I told him that, in my view, they were right to be so. While HMG yielded to no one in our preference for peace, the prospect of various groups of hoods 'cutting a deal' - possibly, as on occasion in the past, at the expense of the rest of the community - did not instantly attract. Nor did the enhancement of prestige which both, eminently unpleasant sides might derive from being seen to be the arbiters of Northern Ireland's destiny. Mr Robinson did not dissent, and I suspect that is the (welcome) message that will be fed back into US circles. But, as he was so unspecific about the proposals, those with better contacts might like to find out what, if anything, is going on.

5. I had not had a lengthy conversation with Mr Robinson before on political matters. Only hitherto at social functions, where he has given me his views on aspects of the Pacific War on which he lectured when in the US Navy at Annapolis. (He is not a military bore, I should add; we are both interested in Japan.) But he strikes me nonetheless as someone with whom, provided one always takes account of where Americans can come from on Irish matters (and I also have an idea that he may have an Irish wife), it is possible to set out our position both fairly and frankly in the reasonable expectation that it will not be distorted out of recognition on later transmission. (He said very nice things by the way about his relations with SIL - but I am still inclined to trust him.)

(Signed PNB)

P N BELL
OAB 6469

- 3 -
CONFIDENTIAL

SMJ/AUSL/26288