

From: PS/Secretary of State  
3 December 1990

NOTE FOR THE RECORD

Mr Cooke - B

CONGRESSMAN JOE KENNEDY

The Secretary of State was grateful for Mr Bone's minute of 26 November. Congressman Kennedy and his entourage (including his sister Courtney and his "staffer" Mr Mahoney) called on the Secretary of State on 28 November.

2. Congressman Kennedy began by asking whether the appointment of Mr Major as Prime Minister would provide an opportunity for new initiatives to be taken. The US perception was that Mrs Thatcher had adopted a tough approach. Perhaps now it would be possible to breath new life into the process and consider new ways of viewing the problem. The Secretary of State responded that he had found Mr Major to be pragmatic, sensible and cautious. So far as Mrs Thatcher was concerned, the editor of the New York Times had remarked publicly that the Anglo-Irish Agreement would be seen historically as one of the most important arrangements with the Republic of Ireland.

3. Continuing, the Secretary of State explained the origin of the current political initiative and where matters now stood in familiar terms. He emphasised that as a result of the discussions the political climate had improved significantly. This in turn led to increased business confidence, investment and reduced unemployment. Mr Kennedy queried what was meant by "constitutional political

1. Ce. Mr Spence  
Mr Murphy  
2 pla. Mr M. G. ~~DR~~ 10/12  
1513/02 6:12-90  
Copied  
JL  
10/12  
P/A. Kennedy  
cc PS/Sofs (B&L) - B  
PS/Mofs (B&L) - B  
PS/Dr Mawhinney (B&L) - B  
PS/Mr Needham (B&L) - B  
PS/PUS (B&L) - B  
PS/Sir K Bloomfield - B  
Mr Pilling  
Mr Fell, DED  
Mr Thomas - B  
Mr Smartt, DED  
Mr Hill, CPL - B  
Mr Hill, ESL - B  
Mr Rickard - B  
Mr Davies, RID, FCO - B

*Mr. Mahoney*

parties in the North" as he understood Sinn Fein to be a constitutional party - not, he was quick to aver, that he had ever supported Sinn Fein or the IRA, and indeed had refused to see the latter despite several approaches from them. The Secretary of State explained that "constitutional" was short-hand for those parties who espoused constitutional policies. Sinn Fein itself was not unconstitutional, but because it refused to condemn violence, as a matter of practical politics, let alone morality, there could be no inter-party discussions with them.

4. Congressman Kennedy asked whether the Secretary of State's policy statement on 8 November would not appear to Catholics to be pro-Unionist. The Secretary of State then referred to his 9 November speech, which was handed over to Mr Kennedy during the meeting, and said this made it clear that the British Government did not have some overall strategic or economic reason for staying in Northern Ireland. British troops would remain only for as long as there was a terrorist threat. The terrorists' aim was of course that the British should leave, ignoring that about one million people of Unionist stock were in fact British. Mr Hume had quoted extensively from this speech of the Secretary of State's speech, with approval, and, significantly, Mr Gerry Adams had also publicly commented on it.

5. Congressman Kennedy then referred to situation in respect of Shorts and said that ways needed to be found to increase the number of Catholic firms undertaking sub-contract work. There also appeared to be a lack of Catholic constructors who could take advantage of funds from the International Fund for Ireland. Father Miles Kavanagh (?) had advocated the use of smaller contracts. The Secretary of State replied that Shorts, who were now a wholly non-public organization owned by Bombardier of Canada, were now much better managed. He had not seen the Chairman since September, but next time he saw him, he would look to raise the point made by Congressman Kennedy. So far as the International Fund for Ireland was concerned, there was close co-operation between the UK and Republic of Ireland, with some success. The inflow of money had helped enormously, and had put the terrorists in a difficult position. He himself was with the Taoiseach earlier this week to

open a joint canal project which had received a contribution from the International Fund. He recommended that Congressman Kennedy should speak to Mr McGuckian, the Chairman of the International Fund.

6. Returning to political matters, Congressman Kennedy wondered whether the intervention of a third party [by implication himself] might help. The objective was clearly to stop the violence, and it could seem odd to some that governments were willing to talk to Saddam Hussein but not to terrorists even though this could lead to an opportunity to negotiate a "cease fire". The Secretary of State commented that Sinn Fein and the IRA were more likely to talk to other nationalist parties before they came to HMG. He counselled Congressman Kennedy to talk to the Government of the Republic, who could "mark his cards better".

7. The meeting ended with the Secretary of State thanking Congressman Kennedy for his interest and for the contribution that the people of Boston had made to improving the lot of the ordinary people in Derry. Congressman Kennedy said that despite the different perspectives of the British roles in the North, he wished the Secretary of State well in his attempts to bring people together.

8. The Secretary of State would be grateful for a draft letter to send to Congressman Kennedy, covering Mr Adams' public response to the Secretary of State's 9 November speech (paragraph 4 above).

Signed



A J D PAWSON  
Private Secretary