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*Mr. O'Keefe
Pl. cc.
RD
8/2/85*

CONFIDENTIAL

INF. 25/25/1

*Peter King is the officially endorsed candidate
of "The Irish People" (edition of 9 February)*

*RD
8/2/85*

AIRMAIL

February 6, 1985.

*Mr. Sheehan
Rec'd P.S.S. (copy)
A/Reg. Section
A+1 Section
Feb: 47/4/3/1
8.2.85*

Secretary
Department of Foreign Affairs
Dublin.

Attention: Mr. Bernard Davenport

St. Patrick's Day Parade 1985

The situation now with regard to the selection of a Grand Marshall is no clearer than that indicated in previous reports. All four candidates remain in the race and to use sporting parlance "it is too close to call". Consequently we must remain concerned about the distinct possibility that Peter King will emerge as Grand Marshall.

Regardless of who emerges as Grand Marshall it is the strong recommendation of this office that, as was recommended last year, a very low key approach should be adopted both by our representation in the United States and by headquarters with regard to the announcement. There are a number of compelling reasons for adopting this approach. These include:

1. This year again determined efforts have been made to embroil the Consulate in controversy. King and his supporters have repeatedly alleged that Bill Burke is the candidate of the Irish Government for this post. All of this is calculated to provide a publicity platform for King and Noraid which it would be unwise to grant them.
2. King although an avowed supporter of the IRA has neither been charged with nor convicted of gun-running; to our knowledge he does not hold any office in Noraid and despite the publicity he has been receiving in the Irish ethnic news media etc. he is relatively unknown. His public office as financial comptroller in Nassau County does not make him a household name

even in Nassau County and it would be a serious mistake to assist, however indirectly, promoting his political future and in advancing Noraid. He is due up for re-election to his Nassau County post and this campaign is part of his re-election effort. He has repeatedly stated that his position on Northern Ireland has cost him votes with his constituents. We would question this contention. It is true that in 1980 the Executive of the Republican Party for Nassau County censured him for his views on Northern Ireland by 64-1 but it has not hurt him politically. He was elected to his present office in 1981 in a County in which the Irish are the dominant ethnic group.

3. Should a decision be taken to pursue an activist and outspoken attitude at an early stage towards King and the Parade we could well find ourselves isolated to no advantage. There is no guarantee, indeed there is reason to doubt, that the Archdiocese would take a strong line against King. Moreover it may well be that the senior Senator from New York, Senator Moynihan, with an eye to his re-election in 1988, may also opt to remain in the Parade.
4. As we were able to participate in the Parade in 1984 and as there has been a respectable interval since Michael Flannery served as Grand Marshall in 1983, our reaction can be lower keyed this year in relation to the appointment of Peter King than was recommended last year.

For all of the above reasons we are convinced that we should be very slow to respond following the selection of the Grand Marshall. We should allow adequate time for the Grand Marshall or his/her supporters to make the running with regard to the theme of the Parade etc. and if a statement or a reaction on behalf of the Government is to be given or indicated this should only be done following mature consideration and in our own time. Neither the Consulate nor headquarters should feel compelled to respond to media enquiries unless it is judged to be in our national interest to do so.

Department of Foreign Affairs
February 6, 1985
Page 3.

As the Department is aware Peter King is the least acceptable of the four candidates for the post of Grand Marshall. The reality is that each of the other candidates carries "baggage" which could prove embarrassing to the Government although we doubt that any of these candidates will set out to deliberately embarrass the Government or make pro IRA or Noraid statements following their selection. Nonetheless although the recommendations made above refer primarily to Peter King they may also need to be applied with regard to any one of the other candidates.

We should be most grateful for your early instructions on the above. We attach for your consideration an outline of the response we would make to enquiries following the selection of Grand Marshall and the strategy underlining that approach.

We appreciate that the course of action may require explanation and reassurance by headquarters so far as the British authorities, the Unionist parties and perhaps the SDLP as well as the political correspondents of the main Irish daily newspapers are concerned so as to avoid misunderstanding as to the nature of or lack of response to the appointment of the Grand Marshall. The bottom line is to deny publicity to Noraid. As we have found repeatedly specific incidents or actions have enabled Noraid to exploit the situation so as to ensure a substantial inflow of funds for them and our concern must be to avoid handing Noraid such a publicity opportunity


Consul General.

encl.

cc: Ambassador, Washington

P.S. The general expectation has been that Archbishop O'Connor will be nominated for the position of Honorary Grand Marshall. However, it would be foolish to overlook the possibility that the radicals in particular would also wish to exploit the case of Patrick Doherty whose extradition from the United States has been sought by the British Government. It will be recalled that Judge Sprizzo of the Federal District Court by decision of 12 December 1984 denied this request on the ground that Doherty's crimes were political offenses.

Annex:

Strategy regarding the 1985 Parade

Our main concern is to avoid giving Noraid and the Provisional IRA more publicity than they would otherwise gain. We believe that this can best be done by adopting a very low key approach, allowing King and his supporters to make the running generally, staying in the background, and avoid stimulating a debate or controversy

Possible responses to media enquiries

1. On the Parade in general or any individual candidate before the selection of Grand Marshall:
This is a matter for the Parade Committee
2. On the selection of Burke, Hayden or O'Hagan: No comment.
3. On the selection of King: Studying the result and have No comment for the present.
4. After we have had time to assess the effect of King's appointment as Grand Marshall we could use either of the following responses. We would prefer the first of them.
 - (a) We shall have to wait and see
 - (b) We cannot be associated with the Parade this year because of Peter King's avowed support for the IRA.

Have we nothing further to say? We made our position clear in 1983. The same holds true in 1985 and will hold true in any future year in which an avowed supporter of the IRA or of Irish Northern Aid is appointed as Grand Marshall.

Other actions: Installation of Grand Marshall

Quite obviously we could not attend the ceremony for the installation of the Grand Marshall if it were King but would not announce our intentions in advance. Our regrets would be conveyed to the Parade Committee Chairman on the day the installation is due to be held i.e. 5 March.

Attendance at Parade

As regards the Parade itself quite obviously we would all have to absent ourselves completely if it is King but need not publicise our intentions. This action in itself would draw attention to our attitude which would be fully explained after the event, thus ensuring that our position is properly understood while denying any publicity to Noraid and the Provisional IRA.

Background briefing

If necessary by way of background briefing we should be able to indicate that while clearly King is an undesirable and disagreeable leader of the Parade there is little comparison between him and the 1983 Grand Marshall Flannery. While King's election is an irritation we do not regard the outcome as a "set back" or a "blow". While we have not yet determined what our position will be we will be bearing in mind in all our action that King is a minor and relatively unknown local politician and that to our knowledge does not hold any office in the Noraid organisation.