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Mrs Toni Verstandig
Subcommittee on International Security
and Scientific Affairs
House Foreign Affairs Committee
2401 A Rayburn House Office Bldg
Washington DC 20515

Your reference

Our reference

Date 27 January 1986

Dear Toni

We had a word last week and again this morning about Fr Sean McManus' letter of 15 January to Congressman Fascell.

/ I enclose our standard letter giving the British Government's views on the MacBride Principles. It is identical to the one I sent you in September. I have no objection to your using it freely. As you know, we have no doubt that espousal of the MacBride Principles would serve to discourage, rather than stimulate overseas investment in Northern Ireland, and we oppose the MacBride Principles for this and other reasons explained in the letter. It follows that we are opposed to the INCs effort to place conditions on the provision of US assistance to Northern Ireland and the Republic. We hope that Congressman Fascell will be able to explain to the INC why linkage with the MacBride Principles would be undesirable.

At the same time I see no objection to making absolutely clear that there would be no question of "subsidising anti-Catholic discrimination". The purpose of international funds would be to promote reconciliation and economic and social development for the benefit of all the people of Northern Ireland (see Article 10(a) of the Anglo-Irish Agreement). I also see no harm in disposing of McManus' red herring about use of any US assistance "for military or security reasons or for intelligence gathering".

I hope this helps. Let's stay in touch. A copy of this letter goes to Martin Burke at the Irish Embassy.

*Yours
Migel*

N E Sheinwald
First Secretary



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Dear Toni

FAIR EMPLOYMENT IN NORTHERN IRELAND AND THE "MACBRIDE PRINCIPLES"

There is continuing interest in the question of employment law and practice in Northern Ireland. The British Government welcomes debate on these issues in Northern Ireland itself and elsewhere in the United Kingdom, and we welcome it too here in the United States.

The British Government is fully committed to the promotion of equal opportunity throughout the UK, and has taken positive steps to promote equality of opportunity in employment for Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland. The Fair Employment Act prohibits discrimination in employment on the grounds of religious or political belief; and the Government has appointed an independent Fair Employment Agency to work for the elimination of discrimination. The Act, and how it operates, are explained more fully in the enclosed booklets. As well as considering individual complaints in investigating employment practices, the Agency encourages employers and organisers to subscribe to a Declaration of Principle and Intent, affirming their commitment to promote and protect equality of opportunity in employment. Over 7,000 employers and trades union, employers' and other vocational organisations have signed this Declaration. The Agency also works with firms to improve their recruitment techniques and, where desirable, to formulate affirmative action programmes.

This represents a considerable and unequivocal commitment to equal opportunity. But the Government realises there is much to be done. The establishment of equal opportunity for new jobs cannot change overnight the balance of the workforce in particular companies; and what can be achieved more rapidly in an expanding economy is vastly more difficult in an economy like Northern Ireland's which is still dependent upon ageing manufacturing industries and has been scarred by the problems of the past 15 years. The British Government is determined to see further advances. The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland recently announced that he had ordered the urgent preparation of further options for action to underpin equality of opportunity in employment.

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The British Government does not, however, support the so-called MacBride Principles. As you may know, these Principles (named after Sean MacBride, the Nobel and Lenin prize winner) are being canvassed by the Irish National Caucus and certain other groups in the United States. We believe that the MacBride Principles are unnecessary because of the extensive legislation which already exists in Northern Ireland and the continuing progress in implementing it. We also believe that attempting to overlay the MacBride Principles on existing fair employment law would create confusion among Northern Ireland companies and dilute the authority of the Fair Employment Agency whose efforts we regard as vital.

Our main concern, however, is that attempts to force American firms to apply the MacBride Principles will inevitably damage the climate for badly-needed American investment in Northern Ireland. In doing so, they threaten to reduce employment opportunities for Catholic and Protestant alike. This is recognised by a wide spectrum of opinion in Northern Ireland, including John Hume, leader of the Social Democratic and Labour Party, the main political party supported by Roman Catholics. For the same reason, the MacBride Principles have been criticized by the Irish Government. The Irish Prime Minister, Dr FitzGerald, said in Boston in May, that the present campaign discouraging American investment in Northern Ireland was "inflicting a grave injustice on both communities, nationalist and unionist".

What Northern Ireland needs is more jobs, not more rules. The average unemployment rate is over 20%. Without new investment, the prospects are bleak for everybody. Investment by American companies has made and continues to make a vital contribution in this field. For example, a major US investor in Londonderry has a labor force which is roughly two-thirds Catholic and one-third Protestant; and there are other American companies which operate in areas which are mainly Catholic. American companies are also amongst the leaders in progressive employment policies. We are proud of what the labour force in Northern Ireland has to offer, and hope to attract more US firms there.

Please let me know if you require any further information on employment practices in Northern Ireland or would like to discuss these issues personally.

Yours
Nigel

N E Sheinwald