

AW/202/87

SEAN McBRIDE INTERVIEW

I attach a transcript of a recent BBC TV interview with Mr McBride. Two notes of caution:-

1. this is a transcript of the whole - uncut - interview: only the underlined sections were actually broadcast. If the transcript is to be quoted from or referred to publicly, only these sections should be quoted.
2. We cannot vouch for the absolute accuracy of the transcriptions. The quality of Mr McBride's speech is such that, despite frequent replays and educated guesses, we still cannot be absolutely certain of his words, although the overall sense is clear enough.

Wary Forbes

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A WOOD
6th October 1987

RADIO/TV TRANSCRIPT

Northern Ireland Information Service, Stormont Castle, Belfast

Programme: BBC Television - 5.40 pm

Broadcast on:- 18.9.87

Channel/Station: ~~*UNDERLINED TEXT DENOTES EXTRACTS USED~~

Transcribed on: 6.10.87

Interviewer: Can I ask you Mr MacBride why are your Principles and the philosophy behind them still relevant now in 1987?

Sean MacBride: I am afraid it is a very good indication of the failure of the Governments in Northern Ireland to have taken any steps to remedy the disparity in employment. You see, to a large extent, partition itself is based upon discrimination. If the Catholic population were allowed to live in the area - get work and houses! - they would increase too rapidly, and therefore in order to prevent the Catholic population from increasing there was a very systematic method of discrimination introduced in regard to housing and with regard to employment. That went on and became a habit, and that went on until now and people realised it can't go on any more.

Interviewer: Would you give the British any "Brownie Points" for improving conditions?

Sean MacBride: So far they haven't but I do give them Brownie Points for at last realising that something has to be done. I was very glad to see Mr King issue a kind of a "Catechism of Good Intentions". Now hopefully he will follow up those good intentions by implementing legislation.

Interviewer: If he does implement legislation or the British Government does, would you accept those guidelines to replace your Principles?

Sean MacBride: Well, I haven't seen them yet. Unfortunately Mr King did not send me a copy of his good intentions so I don't really know. But I take the guidelines as pretty standard and there should be no problem getting an agreement if there is a will to put an end to discrimination.

Interviewer: How do you react to the attacks, even by the American Ambassador, who says that the insistence of your supporters on your Principles being emplaced is totally counter-productive?

Sean MacBride: I don't think it is. But even if it is, the best way of preventing them from having an adverse effect is to remedy the situation. And I hope this has been realised now.

Mr MacBride was then asked if he was not in fact seeking adverse discrimination.

Sean MacBride: No, I am not. I am quite satisfied that if there is a fair attempt at non-discrimination: you can't get absolute equality in employment but we will be quite satisfied with any reasonably fair system, as obtains in lots of countries.

Interviewer: Of course there are others who suggest that by insisting on the MacBride Principles there will be disinvestment in Northern Ireland - that American companies will be forced to pull out and more jobs will disappear.

Sean MacBride: No - that would only happen if the system were not rectified. And we haven't asked for disinvestment in any case. What we have asked is that in making investments, that American companies should assure themselves that their money will not be used in order to create more discrimination against Irish people in Northern Ireland.

Interviewer: A parallel by some of your supporters is put between Northern Ireland and South Africa. Do you accept that?

Sean MacBride: I do to a certain extent that the MacBride Principles really were a replica of the O'Sullivan Principles which were evolved about 20 years ago by an American Black Clergyman actually who drew up a list of Principles for Equality in Employment, which were adopted by the United Nations at that time in order to rectify the imbalance in employment in South Africa.

Interviewer: Do you welcome the trip then by Mr King and the Irish Foreign Affairs Minister Mr Lenihan to America to push for more investment in Ireland, particularly in Northern Ireland?

Sean MacBride: I think that they would be wise to rectify the whole question of discrimination first. (unclear passage). I think probably most of the people in America have heard of the MacBride Principles, have heard of Northern Irish discrimination and I think it will probably take the best part of the year for that to wear away, and there is some evidence that the situation has been improved and changed.

Interviewer: Mr King argues that your Principles will only bring about not equality of opportunity but equality of misery if jobs disappear. Do you accept that?

Sean MacBride: No. We don't want jobs to disappear, but we want jobs given out impartially. We don't want the situation to continue as at the moment where you have two-and-a-half times more Catholics unemployed than non-Catholics.

X Interviewer: So your message to American companies like Ford, Boeing and others is not to pull out of Northern Ireland but to change their workforce?

Sean MacBride: Change their workforce to bring about a fairer system in their workforce.

Interviewer: Would that not lead to more trouble in Northern Ireland?

Sean MacBride: No, I don't think so. I think that non-Catholics understand the situation quite well.

Interviewer: Do you not see a backlash from loyalist workers who may be put out of a job?

Sean MacBride: I don't. They have had it too good for too long. And they know that.