

CONFIDENTIAL

13524/4
Mr P Bell, SIL - M

IRISH ATTITUDES ON MACBRIDE

Thank you for sending me a copy of the Independent article of 27 March 1987. You sought information about collateral for the article in your covering minute.

As you will no doubt be aware contact was made with the Irish through the AIC following the publication of the article and a statement was issued on Talkback (a Radio Ulster programme) on 27 March 1987 that 'the reports in the London Independent are without foundation, no such instruction has been issued and the issue of discrimination and fair employment is under discussion in the light of the Anglo-Irish Conference'. A copy of the transcript of the interview is attached for your information. From the discussion it would seem that Mr Doyle has obtained his information from Irish diplomatic sources and considers that comments by Mr Scott, and others on the British side, confirm a change in the RoI position.

P. Wilson

P1 R WILSON

1st April 1987

cc Mr Fell	Mr Burns - M
Mr McAllister	Mr Chesterton - M
Mr Mayne	Mr Kirk - M
Mr Spence	Mr Dewberry, FCO - M
Mr Elliott	Mr Sheinwald
Mr Gowdy	Mr Snoxell
Mr McConnell	
Mr Wood	

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INTERVIEWER:

It has been reported this morning that Charles Haughey has decided to lend Irish Government's support to an American campaign to improve the economic lot of Catholics in Northern Ireland. If confirmed, this will undoubtedly come as a boost to Irish American activists who have long supported the so-called MacBride Principles, which called on American firms in the Province to positively discriminate in favour of Catholics. There are now fears that the campaign might be used by NORAID to frighten US money out of Northern Ireland. Again if the story is confirmed there is the possibility of conflict between the Dublin and London Governments over the whole question of positive discrimination, which is illegal in the UK. A few months ago I spoke to Leonard Doyle, the journalist who wrote the story in this morning's independent newspaper and asked him what evidence he had to support his assertion.

MR DOYLE:

Well, it's quite true there are messages coming down the line to the Irish diplomats in the United States that they should now change their tune and instead of sitting on the fence as it were with respect to the MacBride Principles, that the line is that of the Haughey Government endorsing them and supporting them.

INTERVIEWER:

Well, you may or may not know, that the Department of Foreign Affairs have shown us and Government absolutely no substance to that story. So what do you say to that?

MR DOYLE:

Well, that may well be that they would prefer to put their own gloss on it and they'd prefer to unveil their change of provision in their own time but I'm quite confident in my own diplomatic sources and indeed quite apart from that the shift in provision has been noticeable for some time now and the participation of the Irish diplomatic effort in the MacBride initiative if every other paths of level has been increasing and we have in place now a series of diplomats who are not opposed to the MacBride Principles and are willing to at least consult or have been willing to consult up to now as the various pieces of legislation are put before the various State Legislatures across the United States.

INTERVIEWER:

You say there has been a shift for some time and that shift being a diplomatic one rather than a political one, because Mr Haughey's predecessor Dr Fitzgerald was known to be opposed to the operation of the MacBride Principles in Northern Ireland.

MR DOYLE:

Well that's correct but I think that^{as} it became clear that the likelihood of the change of Government in the Republic was on the cards it also became known in the United States it became quite obvious that the policy was changing now they were preparing the ground for a future change in policy and if I have it now quite strongly that message has come down the line and it's only a matter of time until it's officially brought into the public.

INTERVIEWER:

Well, if the Irish Government is now seen to be rowing in behind as it were organisations like like NORAID and other Irish-American groups, how much pressure will that exert upon the US administration to implement the MacBride Principles in the same way as they implement the Sullivan Principles over South Africa?

MR DOYLE:

Well I think first of all the Irish Government have been very reluctant to say they they're siding up beside NORAID. I think they will continue to strenuously oppose them on this particular issue if they don't see NORAID or for that matter if the Irish National Caucus as being the main runner in this campaign, they would see it as a broader based campaign and they would disagree with the argument that it can necessarily lead to disinvestment that will be their position. On the point of view of administration, it's unclear as to whether the administration is needed for this particular issue and if it reflects the phenomenon in current American political life that cities, municipalities, and states - they need to conduct their own foreign policy quite successfully and indeed have been challenged before the law and succeeded. It's quite a different initiative and then of course the pressure is being brought on at the company level against the likes of Ford Motor Company and just last week we saw Ford Motor Company giving in somewhat at least to the pressure from the Irish/American lobby on this issue.

INTERVIEWER:

Well, the British Information Services have been lobbying very hard against the imposition of MacBride Principles. I presume if your sources are correct, then something of a shiver has run through that particular organisation in the last few days.

MR DOYLE:

Yes, that's the distinct impression that I get - I think they tried quite hard to avert this particular shift by the Irish Government - I think they were expecting it at the same time however and I don't believe that they will allow it to feed in so to speak into the Anglo-Irish Agreement. That's the distinct impression that I have from conversations here with people such as Minister Mr Scott and other people who have been travelling around and lobbying quite hard, and

MR DOYLE:

indeed have enlisted in support of John Hume on their behalf to lobby against the MacBride Principles.

INTERVIEWER:

On what basis is that lobby being made, are they making it on the basis that existing law copes with discrimination, ^{or} are they making it on the basis that positive discrimination would in fact be illegal in the UK.

MR DOYLE:

Well, I think first and foremost, the line they're giving to politicians and to company officials here is that they want jobs not principles and then in order to defend that provision they express the fear quite clearly that the what they call the hassle factor of the MacBride Principles could cause disinvestment to take place or could cause people not to come to Northern Ireland in the future. The question of the illegality or the supposed illegality of affirmative action is also used as the reason why this will take place but that's a difficult one to play in this country because affirmative action is very much part of the political theme here. Most people believe in it. Just yesterday we had a ruling on the issue of affirmative action in favour of women so it's quite a part of the political life and it's a difficult one to fight.

INTERVIEWER:

That was Leonard Doyle, the New York correspondent of the London Independent. The Department of Foreign Affairs in Dublin refused to offer anyone for interview this morning on the subject but they have issued a statement which says that the reports in the London Independent are without foundation, no such instruction has been issued and they added that the issue of discrimination and fair employment is under discussion in the Anglo-Irish Conference and in a statement this morning the Northern Ireland Department of Economic Development said that the Government while still committed to the principles on equal opportunity remains opposed to the MacBride Principles because they are unnecessary given the existing legal requirements in Northern Ireland and the Government determination to secure further progress, and they will be counter-productive because they would serve as a barrier to further inward investment.