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EXTRACT OF PETER WESTMACOTT'S LETTER TO JOHN HOLMES

MacBride

8. The White House was coming under heavy pressure from the MacBride lobby, and from Irish Americans generally, to get the President to sign an Executive Order giving effect to the MacBride language in the Foreign Relations Authorisation Act which Clinton vetoed (on other grounds) in April. The President was in favour of the MacBride Principles, and had said so on a number of occasions. The domestic policy people in the White House were saying that Tony Lake's recent letter distancing the President from MacBride had been a tactical mistake and Clinton should now sign the Executive Order to get the lobby off his back. Soderberg said that, here again, she would welcome our advice. There were alternatives, such as simply allowing the latest MacBride bill (tabled by Congressman Eliot Engel - details with the NIO) to take its course and die in the Senate. Alternatively, a different version could be tabled in the House, in a form which might get it through the Senate. She recognised that the exercise was entirely symbolic (I ran through the usual arguments about the irrelevance of MacBride legislation). But it was becoming difficult for the White House to hold the line.

9. I said we would like to discuss further, and to see any draft the White House prepared. Any Order linking MacBride to the US contribution to the IFI would go down badly with the IFI themselves, as well as with Unionists (she wasn't clear whether the proposed Order would be linked to the IFI or not). I will suggest that Soderberg also seeks John Hume's views - he has, in the past, been sensible on this issue. We do not want any further gratuitous blows to investor confidence.

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