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[1236]
YOUR TELNO 2316: NORTHERN IRELAND: INFORMATION EFFORT (VISITS)

1. WE TOO HAVE BEEN GIVING FURTHER THOUGHT TO OUR INFORMATION EFFORT IN THE LIGHT OF THE IRISH GOVERNMENT'S DECISION TO STEP UP ITS PUBLICITY CAMPAIGN (AN INTERVIEW WITH FITZGERALD HAS JUST BEEN BROADCAST NATIONWIDE ON PUBLIC TV). IF THE HUNGER STRIKES CONTINUE WE CAN EXPECT RENEWED CONGRESSIONAL PRESSURE IN SEPTEMBER AND SOME INCREASE IN PUBLIC AND PRESS INTEREST (WHICH IS NOW COMPARATIVELY LOW) WHEN THE NATION RETURNS FROM ITS SUMMER HOLIDAY, ESPECIALLY IF THE PRESIDENT AGREES TO DISCUSS NORTHERN IRELAND WITH THE FOUR HORSEMEN (OUR TELNO 2398). ON THE WHOLE, HOWEVER, WE DOUBT WHETHER INTEREST IS LIKELY TO RISE TO THE LEVELS IT REACHED FOLLOWING THE DEATH OF SANDS AND WE BELIEVE THAT THE SCHEDULE OF MINISTERIAL AND OTHER VISITS ALREADY PLANNED FOR SEPTEMBER WILL BE ENOUGH FOR OUR IMMEDIATE NEEDS.

2. THE VISIT, UNDER US GOVERNMENT AUSPICES, OF MCCUSKER (UNIONIST), HENDRON (SDLP) AND NAPIER (ALLIANCE) COULD BE IMMENSELY VALUABLE. FOLLOWING RECEIPT OF YOUR TUR WE HAVE BEEN IN TOUCH WITH THE ORGANISERS AND UNDERSTAND THAT THE VISIT WILL INCLUDE BOSTON, CHICAGO NEW YORK AND LOS ANGELES AS WELL AS WASHINGTON. WE HAVE OFFERED OUR HELP IN ARRANGING A MEETING WITH THE FRIENDS OF IRELAND, AND WITH PRESS CONTACTS. WE UNDERSTAND THAT THE THREE VISITORS HAVE SAID THAT THEY DO NOT WANT PUBLICITY FOR THEIR VISIT. IF SO, WE THINK THIS WOULD MISS AN IMPORTANT OPPORTUNITY. A VISIT OF THREE POLITICIANS REPRESENTING THE MAIN STREAM OF NORTHERN IRELAND POLITICS IS LIKELY TO BE OF INTEREST TO THE MEDIA AND OF CONSIDERABLE POTENTIAL BENEFIT TO US AS A DEMONSTRATION THAT CATHOLIC AND PROTESTANT LEADERS CAN AND DO WORK TOGETHER. THEIR VERY APPEARANCE TOGETHER ON TELEVISION WOULD COUNTER THE CONSTANT NORAID PROPAGANDA WHICH CLAIMS THAT ALL CATHOLICS ARE TRODDEN BENEATH THE PROTESTANT JACKBOOT. IT WOULD BE HELPFUL IF NIO COULD POINT OUT THE ADVANTAGES OF PUBLICITY TO THOSE CONCERNED. IF THE THREE DO NOT WANT TO SEEK PUBLICITY AS A GROUP, WE WOULD HOPE TO BE ABLE TO ARRANGE INTERVIEWS AND BRIEFINGS FOR MCCUSKER, AS AN ARTICULATE SPOKESMAN OF THE UNIONIST VIEW POINT.

3. THE VISIT OF THE NORTHERN IRELAND POLITICIANS AND THAT OF MR ADAM BUTLER (YOUR TELNO 1230, TO WHICH WE ARE REPLYING SEPARATELY) SHOULD GIVE US PLENTY OF COVERAGE FOR THE MONTH OF SEPTEMBER. YOUR OWN VISIT TO NEW YORK (21-23 SEPTEMBER), THE CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER'S VISIT HERE (25 SEPTEMBER- 1 OCTOBER), THE VISIT OF MR RAISON TO WASHINGTON, NEW YORK AND BOSTON (21-29 SEPTEMBER) AS WELL AS THE VISITS OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRADE AND THE SECRETARIES OF STATE FOR WALES AND SCOTLAND EARLY IN THE MONTH SHOULD ALSO PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR PUTTING ACROSS HMG'S POINT OF VIEW.

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4. IN THE LIGHT OF THE ABOVE WE DOUBT IF WE NEED TO TAKE UP MR. MAWHINNEY'S KIND OFFER TO COME TO WASHINGTON. WE HAVE ALERTED CHICAGO TO MR. MAWHINNEY'S PLANNED VISIT THERE. THE VISIT WILL OVERLAP WITH THAT OF MR BUTLER AND CHICAGO DOUBT WHETHER THERE IS SUFFICIENT LOCAL INTEREST TO ENABLE THEM TO ARRANGE WORTHWHILE PROGRAMMES FOR BOTH OF THEM. MR BUTLER CLEARLY HAS PRIORITY.. WE HAVE DISCUSSED WITH BOSTON THE POSSIBILITY THAT MR MAWHINNEY MIGHT GO THERE TO FOLLOW UP HIS SUCCESSFUL VISIT AT THE END OF LAST YEAR. HOWEVER, THE SMALL STAFF WILL BE THOROUGHLY STRETCHED MAKING ARRANGEMENTS FOR MR RAISON'S VISIT AND, ONCE AGAIN, THE VISIT EARLIER IN THE MONTH OF THE THREE NORTHERN IRELAND POLITICIANS WILL PROBABLY HAVE SATISFIED LOCAL DEMAND FOR MEDIA APPEARANCES ETC. WE WOULD LIKE TO REVIEW THE SITUATION NEARER THE TIME BUT DO NOT AT PRESENT BELIEVE THAT OUR OWN REQUIREMENTS COULD JUSTIFY PAYING MR MAWHINNEY FOR HIS SERVICES.

5. WE WOULD LIKE TO REVIEW THE OVERALL POSITION IN SEPTEMBER, IN THE LIGHT OF THE VISITS WHICH WILL HAVE TAKEN PLACE OVER THE NEXT FEW WEEKS. IF THE HUNGER STRIKES COME TO AN END DURING SEPTEMBER, INTEREST IN NORTHERN IRELAND IS LIKELY TO TAIL OFF FOR A PERIOD AND IT MAY NOT BE IN OUR INTERESTS TO STIR THE POT. IF THE HUNGER STRIKES CONTINUE, VISITORS FROM NORTHERN IRELAND ARE LIKELY TO BE OF MORE USE THAN AN ALL-PARTY VISIT FROM WESTMINSTER, PARTICULARLY AS WE CAN, IF NECESSARY, TAKE ADVANTAGE OF SUCH VISITS AS THAT OF THE SELECT COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS WHICH WILL BE VISITING NEW YORK (25-28 OCTOBER) AND WASHINGTON (28-30 OCTOBER). IN PRINCIPLE, THE FIRST VISIT OF PEOPLE DRAWN FROM YOUR NORTHERN IRISH LIST MIGHT TAKE PLACE IN MID-OCTOBER, STARTING WITH ONE OR TWO OF THE MORE PROMINENT NAMES EG GERRY FITT, DAVID TRIMBLE, JOHN CUSHNAHAN, A MIXED GROUP, COVERING A BROAD RANGE OF OPINION AND SPANNING THE SECTARIAN DIVIDE, HAS ADVANTAGES, LATER ON, WE MIGHT CONSIDER HAVING TWO OR THREE VISITORS AT ONE TIME, ARRANGING SEPARATE TOURS OF MAJOR IRISH AMERICAN CITIES. PROGRAMMES WOULD INCLUDE AS MANY MEDIA APPEARANCES AS POSSIBLE AS WELL AS MEETINGS WITH PUBLIC FIGURES.

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MR FERGUSSON

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