

**Address to the Joint Committee
for
Foreign Affairs and Trade**

21st Feb. 2012

Embassy Closure was not Economic but Ideological

(3 No. pages in total)

I am a parishioner of St. Paul's Parish, and have recently become a member of our parish pastoral council. Like so many, I would consider myself as just an ordinary practicing catholic. I listened to Enda Kenny's famous speech with a sense of tolerance (despite the fact that it had some flaws), feeling that I understood the sentiment behind it. Then came Eamon Gilmore's decision to close the Irish Embassy in the Vatican. I was completely taken aback, thinking that this was a step too far. I felt helpless and ignored, and wondered what I could do about this situation. In a moment of private reflection, I wondered if there were any other people who felt the same as I did. I saw an article in the Irish Catholic newspaper about the 'Ireland Stand Up' group and surfed the 'net' to find them. It was then that I discovered other like-minded people. I was not alone.

My plan was to have the Irish Embassy to the Holy See reopened. This aim was soon expanded to include a wish to have an official invitation being extended to the Pope by our government, to visit Ireland in time for Eucharistic Congress in June of this year. To this end, a postcard campaign was set in motion, of which many of you would be familiar. The number of cards that were distributed by 'Ireland Stand Up' and sent to the government by ordinary people was 15,000. Many thousands more cards were sent by other groups across the country. A truly grass-roots movement was born. It was started by a young mother in Dublin. She was also upset by the decision of the Tánaiste, and sought out other people who felt the same way as she did. They have a website under www.irelandstandup.org, and all of the work associated with this movement is voluntary.

My argument for reopening the Irish Embassy in the Vatican is as follows: -

Firstly, I respectfully contend that the reason for closing our embassy to the Vatican was not made for economic reasons, but for ideological ones.

There is a paltry amount of money in question here, and hardly anybody is buying the economic argument put forward by the government. There were other options open to the government that could have been taken to save such a derisory amount of money. One of these alternatives would have been to close our embassy to Sweden, since Sweden has just recently closed their embassy in Ireland. This would have saved the appropriate level of funds.

It does not help clarity for our government to group our Embassy to the Holy See with that of Iran and East Timor, it makes the sum involved seem greater, i.e. €1.25 million in total. However, since we own the Villa Spada itself, it doesn't take a genius to do the mathematic, and work out an approximation of the small sum involved.

To most Catholics in this country, the closure of the Irish Embassy to the Vatican is unacceptable, and with respect, I do believe that this issue will not end here, but if unresolved, will only intensify as we go into the future.

The Vatican has supported the Irish politically on many occasions over the centuries, in our struggle for independence. A prime example of this would be the Confederation of Kilkenny, where the main supporter of our fledgling confederacy was the Papal States. They provided both material and political

backing. Material in the form of ordinance of war, which was given to Owen Roe O'Neill, and political in the form of the Papal nuncio Giovanni Battista Rinuccini in recognition of our new state. The Vatican was quick to recognise Ireland when we got our independence. We in turn reciprocated when we achieved our aims of statehood, by opening an Irish Embassy in the Vatican. This demonstrated our sovereignty and freedom of action to the world.

There is a huge Catholic constituency in this country that is being completely overlooked at present. The 110 acres of the Vatican is a completely independent state, which is not constrained by any other state, particularly Italy. This is very important because it means that any declarations coming from the Vatican are completely independent and uninfluenced by any other country. Embassies are the trappings of statehood, and that aforementioned large Catholic constituency wants to give the Vatican that platform from which to conduct its affairs with the wider 1.2 billion Catholics around the Globe.

I mentioned previously that I believe the reasons for closing the Irish Embassy to the Vatican was an ideological one. This is because it has become clear to me and many others that the Labour Party is pushing an aggressive secular agenda in recent times. This can be illustrated clearly by what is known as the 'Clontarf Report' produced by the Clontarf Branch of the Labour Party, with a view to having it adopted as official party policy. The substance of the report is packaged in a very legalistic way, but its intent soon becomes very clear. This document is designed to eradicate God from our national schools. Not only is it anti-religion of all faiths (in substance and in tone), but anti-Catholic in a staggering way. I can briefly summarise the salient points in the above report as follows: -

1. It refers to religious 'indoctrination' instead of religious education, instruction or formation.
2. It prefers to call a parish a catchment area.
3. It contends that religion should be expelled from the normal operating hours of our national schools.
4. All faiths are mentioned, but the Catholic Church is singled out for particularly negative attention.
5. Section 8 of the document shows a table giving the demographic layout of our country based on religion. This table comes under the heading 'Consequences of Illegal Discrimination'. However, the table in question merely displays the fundamental historical position in this country, with Catholics numbering between the high eighties and low nineties in percentage terms. In fact, it is amazing that the Catholics should have such high numbers, given our history of discrimination against Catholics, i.e. Cromwell's 'to hell or to Connacht' followed later by The Penal Laws etc. This is a most disingenuous display of information.
6. See Section 11, Recommendations, Clause 7: 'The State should unambiguously declare that it cannot (constitutionally) and will not support religious indoctrination'.
7. See Section 11, Recommendations, Clause 15: 'All senior official appointments in state bodies which are likely to have to deal with the Catholic Church should be screened to ensure that they will not show inappropriate deference to the Catholic Church. Those who feel that they are 'Catholic first and Irish second' should have no influence on the control of education'.
8. The state will withhold funds from schools that are non-compliant.

The latest government proposals to unfairly increase the teacher pupil ratio in classrooms, is threatening many of our small rural schools of all faiths. This policy would be disastrous for many small protestant schools in particular, which could be forced to close or merge, if they have less than twenty pupils. The Clontarf Report recognises that national schools are a primary means of religious indoctrination.

The ideology of the above summary is clear. Those who are pushing this secular agenda have clearly identified the Catholic Church as the linchpin of religion in this country. They think this largest church needs to be brought down, in order to achieve their ideal secular state. The remaining churches would then be too small to stand against their hostile policies.

Even if the above report is withdrawn, it is too late, the horse has bolted and the fundamental sentiment still exists. The true ideological intentions of elements of the Labour Party have been laid bare. Together with the closure of our embassy to the Vatican, the pressure on our small rural schools of all faiths by the minister for education Ruairí Quinn, and the contents of the Clontarf Report, a clear image can be developed. This is a picture of a very aggressive policy of secular non-belief leading towards a society that is ordered in such a way as to make George Orwell proud. The Clontarf report can be downloaded from the Web. You can find it through Google, or you can visit www.irelandstandup.org and find the appropriate link. I hope you have found this address interesting.

Respectfully Yours,

Joseph McCall