

Tribute to Sean

THE DEATH of Sean MacBride (January 16 1988) marks an end of the life of an outstanding and dedicated advocate for peace. He was a man of tremendous skill and energy.

As the Irish Times (January 19) coverage of his funeral acknowledged, those who knew Sean MacBride will testify to his dedication and tenacity when it came to fighting for causes he believed in. I would like to pay tribute here to the consistent support he gave to the question of Namibia.

In particular, as the United Nations Commissioner for Namibia (1973-77), MacBride helped establish the UN Institute for Namibia (UNIN), set up in 1976 in Lusaka, Zambia, and the enactment by the United Nations General Assembly in 1974 of the UN Decree for the Protection of Namibia's

Natural Resources. These were the two more distinctive projects ever undertaken by the United Nations with regard to Namibia.

UNIN has trained hundreds of young Namibians and conducted research into educational, economic and constitutional options for an independent Namibia.

The Decree was promulgated to try to prevent the further extraction of Namibia's fast dwindling natural resources before independence. MacBride always saw the decree as a practical piece of legislation, not just a political statement. Last year the UN took legal steps under the terms of the Decree against the Dutch uranium firm, Urenco, which enriches uranium from Namibia. MacBride continued to actively support the Namibian cause even when it was no longer his direct responsibility.

Although physically frail for some years, MacBride had great strength of conviction and dedication to his work for human rights and justice, right to the end. A meeting with him was always guaranteed to rekindle one's own energy and determination. Namibians will miss his strength but will continue to be inspired by the memory of him.

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