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S. 19418.

Meeting with Mr. Clifford Jefferson, Lecturer in Economics,
Queen's University on 25 February 1986

I met Mr. Jefferson in his capacity as a Higher Education for Development Cooperation (HEDCO) Council member to sound him out on the inclusion in the forthcoming Government Paper on development cooperation of a possible paragraph on all-Ireland cooperation in the higher education field. Mr. Jefferson felt that public recognition would be natural and helpful, their activities in Queens with HEDCO were well known throughout Northern Ireland, there had never been an objection from any source, indeed last year at the instigation of Professor George Dawson of TCD, then Chairman of HEDCO, Queens had applied to the Northern Ireland Department of Education for a grant for HEDCO. This grant had been turned down but it was for budgetary rather than political reasons. Mr. Jefferson felt that cooperation on an all-Ireland basis through HEDCO with the two universities in Ulster should be further encouraged. He would like to see much greater participation by academics in Northern Ireland via HEDCO or through the Department of Foreign Affairs in overseas bilateral aid projects. Mr. Jefferson stated that an area which lent itself to cooperation between North and South was the educational sector as there was spare capacity in Northern Ireland particularly at third level and it could, if proper schemes were drawn up, be made available to the Republic.

Mr. Jefferson told me that he with two others had just completed a study for the Fair Employment Agency on the location of industry by the IDB Northern Ireland. He said that when the consultancy team presented their draft report to the FEA some weeks ago they were accused by one of the then board members, Mr. Tom Conaty, of having come up with conclusions to suit the Northern Ireland Office and thereby showing that there was no discrimination in choosing particular locations for investments. Jefferson said the main conclusion was that sound economic criteria were applied in choosing locations. Mr. Conaty evidently remarked at the FEA Board that their

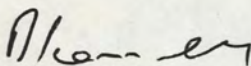
conclusions were not surprising given that three Protestant academics were involved. Jefferson said he replied to Conaty saying that one of their members "was a Donegal Catholic" and Conaty only retorted "that a Donegal Catholic was worse than any Protestant academic". Mr. Conaty apologised after the meeting for his remarks. I brought up this report when speaking to Bob Cooper of the FEA. He said the report's findings were non-contentious but at the same time he could possibly foresee the Newsletter having a banner headline saying that "FEA points out that no discrimination exists" while the Irish News would state the exact contrary, e.g. "Strabane does worst out of IDB industrial locations". He felt that the report probably struck a balance between both areas. Cooper didn't give me a firm answer as to when he expected to publish the report but broadly hinted that it might not be for a further 4-6 weeks.

On the Northern Ireland economy Jefferson felt that the present political uncertainty could only frighten away the little investment that was coming into the N.I. economy. He was in broad agreement with the recent analysis of the economy published by Coopers & Lybrands. The one area which he felt that the Cooper's study rightly highlighted was the dependency of the Northern Ireland economy on public sector employment which directly provided 45% of all jobs and provided over 75% of GDP. He felt that the report should have brought out a further linkage as it was very difficult in "a public sector economy" such as Northern Ireland to have a regional balance and the peripheries suffered accordingly. The main beneficiary of such an economy was therefore the centralised area, East of the Bann; the only exception in his view in Northern Ireland was perhaps Derry City.

Jefferson said that one of the remarkable findings from their recent work for the FEA ~~which~~ ^{that} was by District Council area, ~~was that~~ no matter the district in Northern Ireland, let it be Portadown, Strabane, Belfast, Craigavon, that without exception Catholic unemployment was $2\frac{1}{2}$ times the level of Protestant unemployment.

On the Anglo-Irish Agreement he was rather sanguine and stated that he couldn't see 'what all the fuss was about'; he felt that Paisley had exploited the situation and had brought along more moderate Unionists with him for the time being. He expected to see the more moderate Unionists' opinion manifesting itself once the wilder elements got their way at first. He did not anticipate a prolonged civil disobedience campaign as he felt from an economic viewpoint that the priority of most people in Northern Ireland was to maintain their jobs and not to put their future economic well-being at risk.

Mr. Jefferson was very friendly and open and said that he would be more than willing to help in providing information on the Northern Ireland economy if it was in his field (he specialises in econometrics and regional economics).


B. Scannell,
28 February 1986.

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