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ROINN GNÓTHAÍ EACHTRACHA
DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

BAILE ÁTHA CLIATH 2
DUBLIN 2

13 Eanáir 1972

Dear Nicholas

Further to our recent conversation about the structural arrangements at Civil Service level to deal with the North we have been giving some further thought to the matter here and I have prepared the attached note which reflects our current thinking. I enclose a second copy for Dan O'Sullivan.

I am hoping that we may be able to have a further discussion on the subject in the course of the day if you are free.

Yours sincerely

An Dr. N. Ó Nualláin
Rúnaí
Roinn an Taoisigh

Riúnai *[Handwritten initials]*

We discussed this with Mr. McLann on the 14th inst.
I presume that you have made a note of the amendments of the attached note on which we agreed.

[Handwritten signature] 24.1.72.

Ed

1. In the light of the present situation in relation to the North it seems necessary to consider the structural arrangements at Civil Service level which would be most appropriate for dealing with the question from now on.
2. While over-all policy must rest with the Taoiseach, in practice official advice on the development and expression of general policy has naturally originated in the Department of Foreign Affairs. This seems desirable inasmuch as the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the officials concerned are also intimately concerned with Anglo-Irish relations which is a main fulcrum of general policy in relation to the North and a key factor in regard to any possible solution. No change is recommended in this situation and indeed it would be difficult to visualise any change which would produce a more rational arrangement.
3. Anglo-Irish relations are directly involved as the key to the solution rests largely with London. This aspect of the matter, the soliciting of the good offices of other Governments, action in the UN and Strasbourg and Information activities to influence opinion abroad are obviously matters primarily for the Department of Foreign Affairs.
4. Security aspects are for the Department of the Taoiseach, the Department of Justice and the Department of Defence with a measure of liaison with the Department of Foreign Affairs where external aspects arise.
5. Cooperation with the North in economic and social matters is primarily for the home Departments concerned but the Department of Foreign Affairs should be kept informed of any significant contacts or developments.

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6. Contact with Northern opinion on the political level is mainly for the Department of the Taoiseach and the Department of Foreign Affairs but other Departments may obviously feel it desirable to develop such contacts in their own specialised fields.

7. Possible Constitutional changes in the context of unity are primarily a matter for the Taoiseach and his Department.

8. Dáil Questions and speeches on the Northern question have an important bearing on policy and they should be dealt with by the Taoiseach's Department, the Department of Foreign Affairs being consulted where Anglo-Irish relations and other foreign policy considerations are involved and providing drafts on request. Other Departments would require to be consulted in matters affecting their particular fields.

9. In view of recent developments in relation to the North and of the fact that unification is now a live issue, the Department of Foreign Affairs has decided to allocate work in relation to the North full-time to one Assistant Secretary and to bring into the same Division Information activities which must concentrate more and more on the North and receive increasing attention in this context.

10. In this new situation the terms of reference of the Inter-Departmental Unit need to be re-examined. It is suggested that the IDU should not be concerned with general day-to-day policy and, indeed, it is not an appropriate or necessary instrument for handling that function. In the new circumstances it is considered that it should concern itself solely with the study in depth of practical problems of Irish unity and possible solutions for those problems. Where these involve specialised subjects, e.g. financial implications, social services, education, the Unit might set up sub-committees

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chaired by the appropriate home Department. The Unit should continue to report to the Taoiseach through the Minister for Foreign Affairs.

11. The question of servicing an inter-Party Committee on Northern Ireland may arise as well as servicing the wider inter-Party discussions envisaged in the Wilson proposals when these become a reality. The former would normally be for the Taoiseach's Department but the latter, as they involve external relations, would also concern the Department of Foreign Affairs. In view of the likely evolution to the larger grouping if there is to be any progress a joint secretariat provided by the Department of the Taoiseach and the Department of Foreign Affairs would seem to be a good solution.