



An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

Reference Code:	2016/22/1899
Creation Dates:	25 September 1986
Extent and medium:	5 pages
Creator(s):	Department of Foreign Affairs
Accession Conditions:	Open
Copyright:	National Archives, Ireland. May only be reproduced with the written permission of the Director of the National Archives.

URGENT
25.9.86

TO HQ FROM BELFAS

Mr O'Callaghan (full list)
By hand PL circulate (full list)
& attach Newsletter article
25.9.86
file: SA/2

/////

LEAK OF STORMONT MEMORANDA

FOR O TUATHAIL FROM LILLIS

PSE COPY E. DOYLE AND T. HANNEY *not 4pds*

A VERY SERIOUS SITUATION HAS BEEN CREATED BY THE PUBLICATION IN FULL IN TODAY'S NEWS LETTER OF THREE DETAILED MEMORANDA ON POLICY ON THE IRISH LANGUAGE. THE FIRST AND LONGEST PAPER IS A SET OF POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FROM NEEDHAM TO KING, THE SECOND A PAPER LOOKING FOR VIEWS FROM DEPARTMENTS ON THIS APPROACH FROM SPENCE AND THE THIRD A PAPER SETTING OUT KING'S DECISIONS AND OTHER DETAILS BY HIS PRIVATE SECRETARY.

THERE ARE SOME REFERENCES, PARTICULARLY IN NEEDHAM'S PAPER, TO OUR POSITION WHICH ARE SOMEWHAT UNSATISFACTORY, E.G. REFERENCES WHICH SUGGEST THAT OUR INTEREST HAS MORE TO DO WITH SINN FEIN THAN THE IRISH LANGUAGE AS SUCH, BUT IT MUST BE BORNE IN MIND THAT THIS IS OF COURSE AN INTERNAL STORMONT MEMORANDUM.

THE OVERWHELMING PROBLEM WHICH HAS NOW BEEN CREATED IS OF A DIFFERENT ORDER HOWEVER. THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT THE IMPACT OF THESE PAPERS ON THE UNIONIST COMMUNITY AND POLITICAL LEADERSHIP WILL BE, TO QUOTE MY OPPOSITE NUMBER, 'DEVASTATING'. THE PAPERS SHOW THAT THE WORST FEARS OF UNIONISTS ABOUT THE WORKING OF THE AGREEMENT AND SPECIFICALLY THE ROLE OF THE IRISH GOVERNMENT ARE FULFILLED IN DETAIL. MUCH OF THE LANGUAGE, PARTICULARLY IN THE POLITICAL ARGUMENTATION, IS SO DRAFTED AS TO CONVEY AN IMPRESSION OF COLLABORATION BETWEEN THE TWO GOVERNMENTS OF AN INTIMATE AND VERY SUBSTANTIAL NATURE.

THIS IN ITSELF MAY REASSURE NATIONALISTS THAT THE AGREEMENT IS WORKING, BUT THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT THE LEAK IS MOST UNFORTUNATE FROM AN OVERALL POLITICAL POINT OF VIEW. OFFICIALS HERE BELIEVE THAT THOSE RESPONSIBLE ARE IN THE HIGHER RANKS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND THAT THE LEAK WAS DELIBERATELY ARRANGED TO CREATE MAJOR CONTROVERSY.

I BELIEVE THAT IT IS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT THAT OUR SIDE SHOULD MAKE NO COMMENT IN ANY WAY ON THIS DEVELOPMENT. I WOULD BE GRATEFUL IF YOU WOULD CONVEY THIS STRONGLY-HELD VIEW TO ALL CONCERNED AT POLITICAL AND OFFICIAL LEVELS AND LET ME KNOW WHAT APPROACH, IF ANY, OUR AUTHORITIES WILL TAKE.

ANOTHER CONSIDERATION OF FUNDAMENTAL IMPORTANCE IS THE SECURITY CONCERN ARISING FROM THE FACT THAT SEVERAL KEY OFFICIALS IN THE NIO, CENTRAL SECRETARIAT AND DOE ARE NAMED. THESE INCLUDE TWO COLLEAGUES IN THE SECRETARIAT. THAT THESE NAMES SHOULD BE PUBLISHED IN CONNECTION WITH CONFIDENTIAL PAPERS WHICH THEMSELVES WILL BE RESENTED FIERCELY BY LOYALISTS IS A MAJOR WORRY FOR THE PEOPLE CONCERNED. THIS REINFORCES THE NEED FOR SENSITIVE HANDLING.

THE NEWS LETTER REPORTS CONTAINING THE DOCUMENTS WERE FAXED FIRST THING THIS MORNING TO HANNEY.

/////

3420

/////

This has been reviewed by DFA & GIS

IX

FAX COVER SHEET

Fax No: _____

Date: 25.9.86 Time: _____

To: _____

For: T. HANNEI

From: DAIRE

Total number of pages, including this cover sheet: _____

Brief description of material: NEWSLETTER, 14 & 15,

Any special instructions: _____

Transmitting operator: _____

This material is being sent from Fax phone No. _____

This number should be used for return Faxing.

If there are any problems on receipt please phone transmitting operator at _____

The Gaelic

Secret is out

'must be resisted'

BY ANN PURDY

ANY move towards using Gaelic as a second language in Northern Ireland should be "strongly resisted."

That's the opinion of NIO Minister Richard Needham in a confidential document leaked to the News Letter.

In spite of Mr Needham's opposition to the use of Gaelic, he has proposed a series of measures which would allow Gaelic to be used in the Province.

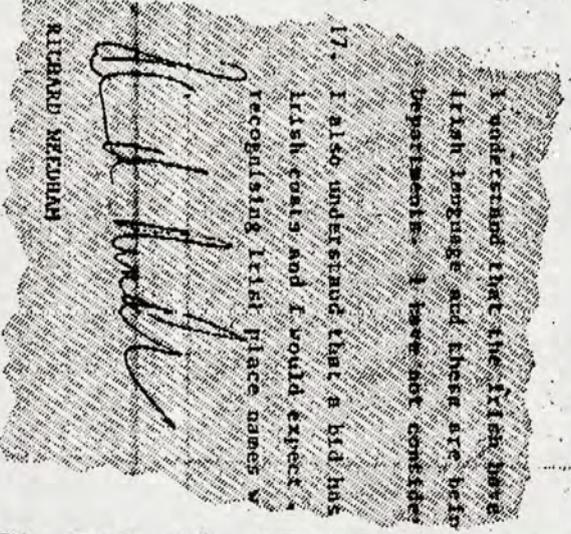
The Government is determined to go ahead with the proposals — in spite of Mr Needham's "strong convictions that any movement towards bilingualism in Northern Ireland should be strongly resisted" because of pressure from the Dublin government.

In a confidential letter to Tom King, Environment Minister Mr Needham said the use of Gaelic would have serious administrative as well as political repercussions.

The Government, however, will publish draft legislation this autumn which will put Gaelic on a similar footing to English in street and place names across the Province.

The documents were released last night by Official Unionist leader James Molyneux who has penetrated the Anglo-Ire secretariat itself in recent weeks.

Also included is a letter from Mr King's Private Secretary saying the Department of the Environment should prepare



RICHARD NEEDHAM

I understand that the Irish have Irish language and their eye being Department. I have not considered

I also understand that a bid has Irish coins and I would expect recognising Irish place names

necessary legislation.

The letters reveal the Government hopes increased use of Gaelic might help curtail both publicity and support for Sinn Fein.

The Government proposals will also include the DOE producing a Gaelic language map of the Province, even though it would not be economically viable.

Recommending a map be printed the Minister says the only case for this is political as Eire Ordnance Survey printed such a map some years ago and has yet to sell 1,000 copies.

He also expressed doubts about the implementation of dual language names and places, pointing out that there would be logistical problems in departments coping with an "admixture" of English and Gaelic place names.

"The problem, however, goes much wider than DHSS and DOE as all Northern Ireland departments and some United Kingdom departments such as Inland Revenue and the Post Office will be affected," Mr Needham said.

Pressure for the Government to improve the status of Gaelic in Northern Ireland has come not only from Dublin but also from the SDLP.

As recently as last weekend at a meeting of the British-Irish Association in Oxford, SDLP representatives were handing out the party's report on the Gaelic language.

In it, John Hume's party called for Gaelic to be put on an equal footing with English in public life.

It called for the removal of the Public Health and Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act Northern Ireland 1949 which made illegal the use of Gaelic in street names.

The document said it was the SDLP's aim for all pupils in Northern Ireland — whether in State or voluntary education — to have an opportunity to study the Gaelic language.

There should also be provision for "a large number of people" who wish their children to be educated through Gaelic, according to the SDLP.

The document also called for more Gaelic language programmes to be produced on UTV and BBC and insisted that the BBC increased their Gaelic language programming.

THE LETTERS

Mr Needham's letter to the Secretary of State:

THE USE OF THE IRISH LANGUAGE IN NORTHERN IRELAND

1. You asked me to provide a progress report by the end of July on:
 - a. the establishment of a list of place names in Irish;
 - b. sponsorship of an Irish language version of the Ordnance Survey Map of Northern Ireland with an accompanying gazetteer; and
 - c. a scheme to allow street names to be displayed in Irish as well as English where the residents so desired.

My approach to this matter is based on a strong conviction that any movement towards bilingualism in Northern Ireland should be strongly resisted. I consider it reasonable to recognise and respect the interest which a comparatively small number of people in Northern Ireland may have in the Irish language. To do more than this would, however, have serious administrative as well as political repercussions.

Place Names

3. Our aim might be to produce a list of the Irish version of the major place names in Northern Ireland which would be accepted in correspondence and official purposes by all public bodies. The matter is, however, by no means straightforward.

Our aim might be to produce a list of the Irish version of the major place names... which would be accepted in correspondence and official purposes by all public bodies.

RICHARD NEEDHAM

4. The present place names in Northern Ireland have different origins — some are the anglicised version of the original Irish; others are English names of new settlements for which no Irish name existed. Through custom and practice the Ordnance Survey Northern Ireland has become the custodian of place names but there is no legislation which gives status in place names or provides for names to be changed. There is, therefore, no simple straightforward Irish version for all place names and the compilation of a comprehensive list agreed by the experts could take many years. We have established through contacts by officials that the Place Names Commission in

any clear policy on the matter throughout the public sector. The general issues raised in paragraphs 6 and 7 would, I suggest, need to be considered at the centre.

Irish Language Map

8. The Irish Ordnance Survey already publishes an Irish language map which covers Northern Ireland. I understand that since it was produced some years ago sales have not yet reached 1,000 copies. It is unlikely that there would be any commercial basis for a similar map to be produced by Ordnance Survey NI and the case for doing so could only be presented on political grounds.

9. The most appropriate scale for such a map would be 1:250,000 (4 miles to the inch) which would identify practically all settlements of any significance; the map could be accompanied by a Gazetteer listing the Irish equivalent alongside the usual English name. This could be based on the work described at paragraph 5.2.

Street Names

10. I gather that the Irish place heavy significance on early progress in removing the prohibition on the use of any language other than English in street signs. Apparently they consider that this would help to reduce the publicity and support which SF has obtained through the use of street signs in Irish. The Irish are accordingly pressing strongly for us to publish in the autumn proposals for a draft Order. I have considered what form our proposals might take and I have concluded that:

11.1 A simple removal of the prohibition on the use of Irish is unlikely to be sufficient; it would fall to District Councils to act and in practice only Nationalist Councils would move to erect dual language signs. In Belfast the Council would do nothing and SF would continue to make the running in areas where they have influence.

11.2 Dual language street signs should only be erected where it is clearly the wish of the local community to have them. This would have to be determined by a local ballot. I had previously thought this might be conducted at Ward level but as one would have to be able to demonstrate that a substantial majority of the electors in a specific location desired the change I have concluded that it would be more sensible that the decision should be taken on a street by street basis. The definition of 'street' will, however, require careful consideration.

I consider it reasonable to recognise and respect the interest... in the Irish language.

RICHARD NEEDHAM

On a matter such as this a simple majority would not be appropriate as one needs to show an overwhelmingly majority in favour and I have in mind that the majority required should be as high, say, as 85 per cent.

11.3 Responsibility for the erection of street signs should remain with the District Council but safeguards will have to be provided to prevent a Council imposing dual language signs where they are not wanted or refusing to erect them in areas which have expressed a desire to have them. I would wish to avoid setting up a formal appeal procedure involving my Department, the Courts or some new QUANGO created for the purpose.

12. Accordingly I envisage an Order in Council which would provide that:

12.1 The prohibition on languages other than English shall be removed.

12.2 Where a District Council is satisfied that at least 85 per cent of the local government electors in a street so desire the Council shall erect the street sign in Irish as well as English.

12.3 In order to satisfy itself as to the electors' wishes the Council shall, if so requested by a Councilor or by a petition signed by more than half of the electors in a street, cause a ballot to be held.

13. Any aggrieved person who considered that the Council had failed to discharge its statutory responsibilities could then seek redress in the Courts in the normal way.

14. The likely cost to District Councils of a change to dual language signs is difficult to estimate. In the Newry Council area for example if all the 1,300 listed streets had dual language signs the cost would be around £80,000 with the cost of balloting to be added. The degree of take up would of course vary from Council to Council. I would expect that Councils, particularly those controlled by Unionists, would demand that Government should meet the cost.

Conclusion

15. Subject to the views of colleagues I propose that we should proceed as follows:—

15.1 DoE should fund research leading to a comprehensive list of place names in Irish.

15.2 DoE should draw on the work already carried out by the Irish authorities and produce an interim list of the Irish version of major place names.

15.3 NIO and Central Secretariat should consider further the implications of official recognition of place names and personal names in Irish.

15.4 DoE should produce an Irish language version of the 4 miles to 1 inch map of NI.

15.5 DoE should sponsor legislation to be published in the autumn to remove the prohibition on the use of Irish in street name signs and requiring District Councils to erect dual language signs where a substantial majority of the electors in a street so desire.

16. I understand that the Irish have tabled further ideas about the use of Irish language and these are being considered by officials in NIO and NI Departments. I have not considered these further ideas in this response.

NEWS LETTER 25.9.88

7. I also understand that a bid has been made to the Treasury to meet Anglo-Irish costs and I would expect any costs incurred by Departments in recognising Irish place names would be included under this head.

RICHARD NEEDHAM
10th July, 1986.

Copies of the letter were sent to: Ministers, Mr Bloomfield, Mr Brennan, NI Permanent Secretaries, Mr Chesterton, Mr Elliott, Mr Gilliland, Mr Spence, Mr Bell, Miss Elliott, Mr G Hewitt, Mr S Hewitt, Mr McConnell,

CONFIDENTIAL

This letter arising from Mr Needham was sent to: Mr Quigley, Mr Barry, Mr Fell, Mr Parkes, Dr Jack, Mr Hayes, Mr McAllister.

USE OF IRISH VERSION OF PLACE NAMES AND PERSONAL NAMES

You will have seen a copy of Mr Needham's minute of 30th July to the Secretary of State about the use of the Irish Language and PS/SOS's minute of 15th August.

I would be grateful for the views of Departments on the implications of giving official recognition to the Irish version of place names and personal names. What is the current practice in your Department when someone seeks to use the Irish versions? Are there any legislative obstacles to giving recognition to the Irish versions?

I understand that in Wales there is no statutory authority for the use of Welsh names and addresses. We await further information about the legal situation in the Republic.

I would suggest that at this stage we confine our considerations to the implications for NI Departments and leave for a later date consideration of the impact on public bodies.

In view of the Secretary of State's wish to consider this matter on his return from leave, I would welcome a response by the end of August.

B SPENCE

Central Secretariat
15th August, 1986

Copies of the letter were sent to: Mr Bloomfield, Mr Reid, Mr Erskine, Mr Chesterton, Mr M Elliott, Mr S F Elliott, Mr McConnell, Mr Sullivan.

CONFIDENTIAL

This letter was sent to the NIO Ministers Rhodes Boyson, Richard Needham and Brian Mawhinney on behalf of the Secretary of State.

THE POSITION OF THE IRISH LANGUAGE IN NORTHERN IRELAND

The Secretary of State was grateful for the progress report from Ministers submitted in response to my

minute of 27th June and has commented as follows:—

(i) he agrees with the proposals set out in Dr Boyson's submission of 30th July for including questions on the Irish language in the 1987 Continuous Household Survey;

(ii) he has noted from PS/Dr Mawhinney's minute of 31st July that officials will be pursuing with the Arts Council questions relating to the funding of Irish cultural activities — the Secretary of State would be grateful if this could be pursued urgently once the Arts Council Director has returned from leave as he wishes to review the position in early September;

(iii) having read Mr Needham's minute of 30th July, the Secretary of State has said that he foresees difficulties over the question of official recognition of Irish place names and will wish to discuss the issue on his return from leave. In the meantime NIO (Miss Elliott) and Central Secretariat should press ahead urgently with consideration of the implications, as recommended by Mr Needham.

Any aggrieved person who considered the Council had failed to discharge its statutory responsibilities could then seek redress in the Courts.

RICHARD NEEDHAM

(iv) as for the other recommendations in Mr Needham's minute, the Secretary of State is generally content with what is proposed in relation to drawing up an interim list of Irish place names, funding research into the subject and producing an Irish language version map. He will wish on return to discuss the degree of support required in a street for the erection of dual language signs (see Mr Scott's note of 5th August); in the meantime DoE/NI should continue with the preparation of the necessary legislative framework.

2. Paragraph 17 of Mr Needham's note raises the possibility of the costs of these schemes being met under the head of "Anglo-Irish costs". I should be grateful for advice on this point from Dr Quigley.

J A DANIELL

Private Secretary
15th August, 1986

It was circulated to: Mr Scott, Lord Lyell, PUS, Mr Bloomfield, Mr Brennan, Mr Barry, Dr Quigley, Mr Parkes, Dr Hayes, Mr Chesterton, Mr Elliott, Mr Gilliland, Mr Spence, Mr Bell, Miss Elliott, Mr S Hewitt, Mr McConnell, Mr Costan.

News letter

25.9.86

(cont.)

P.04

02317 2057

RISECT. MARYFIELD

10:43

1986-09-25