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| <b>Reference Code:</b>       | 2016/22/2032   |
| <b>Creation Dates:</b>       | 4 September 1986   |
| <b>Extent and medium:</b>    | 4 pages  |
| <b>Creator(s):</b>           | Department of Foreign Affairs  |
| <b>Accession Conditions:</b> | Open   |
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SECRET

September 1986

Mr. Eamonn O Tuathail  
 Assistant Secretary  
 Anglo-Irish Division  
 Department of Foreign Affairs

Dear Eamonn

I spent an hour and a half with Bloomfield at my request this afternoon.

I asked him for his views on the current situation here.

He spoke in a personal capacity and in much more "political" terms than British officials here normally use.

The Unionists generally will not be ready to do serious business until the Irish and British General Elections are out of the way. His own expectation is that the Irish election will take place before the Summer next year or even earlier next year and that the Opposition will form the Government. While conflicting signals are coming from the Opposition to Unionists who have spoken to Bloomfield, he expects the Leader of the Opposition to implement the Agreement with some reservations. He mentioned the attitude of the British Labour Party to the European Community by way of analogy.

He is worried about the lapse of time before the British election, possibly up to two years. He mentioned the Labour understanding with Unionists at the time of the Lib-Lab deal. He also mentioned Owen.

He believes that Hume has fundamentally misunderstood the Unionist position. He understands Hume's view to be that a confrontation with Unionists, even if a risky one, was necessary but would be followed by a dawn of reason on the part of the Unionists; in his view the present degrees of irrationality on the part of the Unionists will be replaced progressively by ever increasing irrationality. The "Marching Season" was only a prologue.

*PA  
 (Page 2, 3)  
 Rair Employment bill*



*cc Taoiseach  
 Tánaiste  
 Minister*

*Minister for Justice  
 Attorney General*

*Secretary  
 Mr Nally  
 Mr Ward  
 Mr Russell  
 A-I Section  
 Amb London*

Bloomfield was pessimistic and at times surprisingly emotional. He said the economy is seriously in decline and that there is not a single prospect of improvement in any sector. He said that there are further disasters in the pipeline, like the recent closure of Gallaghers in Belfast which "stunned" the community. Shorts' accounts for the year would be loss-making and the future was not secure. There would be major redundancies in Harland and Wolffs during the Autumn.

He said that security was the single area where there was any chance of demonstrating the benefits of the Agreement to the Unionist community. The perception was that none had been achieved, in fact the situation seemed worse than ever. The situation on the border was depressing, the IRA threats to the community were now quite frightening and the loyalist paramilitaries counter threats equally so.

He said that what was needed on the security front was real evidence of success on our side as well as on theirs in getting on top of the IRA. He accepted that damage had been done by the leaking of the internal RUC document, the statement of the Secretary of State as broadcast, and the failure of the Northern media to highlight the significance of recent Garda successes. He suggested that more intensive efforts should be made on the publicity front by our people in relation to these successes.

He said that the state of morale generally among Unionists and specifically in the Northern Ireland Civil Service was very low. He said that as Head of the Northern Ireland Civil Service he was very concerned about threats to officials and said that he himself was taking a public position on this (see attached Press Release excerpting a couple of paragraphs of a statement by Bloomfield of two days ago). "Spare a thought for us", he said.

He said he had been discussing with the Secretary of State the need for a more energetic approach by the NIO to knock the misrepresentations of the Agreement which had been put about by Unionists.

Bloomfield advocates a three-stage approach on the ground in Northern Ireland. The first stage is some sort of dialogue between the SDLP and Unionists without any involvement of either Government: the involvement of either Government would immediately require that the suspension or otherwise of the Agreement be at the centre of the agenda, which would stymie any talks.

The second stage would be agreement by the SDLP and the Unionist Parties that there be elections to an Assembly without an Executive and on the basis of participation; this could not happen unless there were some sort of talks first.

The third stage, which he sees as being a fair distance away, would be devolution.

Despite what he had said earlier about nothing happening before the two General Elections, he said that if some sort of dialogue could take place that would help the atmosphere in Northern Ireland and give people a little hope.

He felt that both Governments should avoid taking initiatives on devolution. He added that he personally had felt that the Taoiseach's earlier tentative efforts to encourage Unionists towards devolution had been "honourable and potentially valuable" but that he recognised that the British Prime Minister was opposed to such actions.

He appeared to accept the need for action in the Autumn on our side of the agenda but he said passionately that it was essential that some real successes emerge on the security front. He had no doubt that the programme of talks on this issue was useful but this was completely invisible and irrelevant to the public.

Our conversation was genial in tone and concluded with an expression by him of appreciation for the discreet way in which the Secretariat was performing.

Yours sincerely



M.J. Lillis  
Joint Secretary



## NORTHERN IRELAND Information Service

EMBARGOED UNTIL 12 NOON, TUESDAY 2 SEPTEMBER

2 September 1986

Extract from talk by Mr K P Bloomfield CB, Head of the Northern Ireland Civil Service, at a seminar on "Public Relations in the Market Place": Culloden Hotel, Tuesday, 2 September 1986

Speaking on the role of the public service in Northern Ireland Mr Bloomfield said:-

"We are drawn from the whole community and we must seek to serve the whole community. I believe that the concept of public service centred around those propositions has been a vital element in the cohesion of the wider community. It is no little thing that, in the midst of all the turmoil of recent years, we have had arguably a greater success in turning around the fortunes of our capital city of Belfast than many other cities in much more favourable circumstances. It is no little thing that in area after area the mean streets and the rotten accommodation have been replaced by well-designed modern dwellings. It is no little thing that clinics have been run, benefits paid, streets cleaned through thick and thin. We had a saying when I was Permanent Secretary of DOE and responsible for the Water Service, and so conscious of the very large cost of that service "Some of these people think that water comes out of a tap".

"Well, none of these services come out of a tap in that sense. They continue to come because people with a feeling for what public service is, leaving whatever their political or religious convictions may be at the door of the office, work together to provide the public with what it needs. And anyone who prejudices that is simply putting the whole community in danger. He is removing the guard rail which holds him back this side of the precipice. I have no remit to speak for the whole of the public services, of which the Northern Ireland Civil Service is of course only a part. But I personally will continue to assert the principles of the kind of public service I grew up in, and defend them against attack from any quarter; and I believe that the whole responsible community will want to see them defended too."

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