



An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

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DAIL QUESTION addressed to the Taoiseach by
Deputy Brendan McGahon for answer on
Tuesday, 28th April, 1987.

QUESTION:

To ask the Taoiseach the new areas of responsibility which have been allocated to his Department; the number of extra civil servants which have been deployed as a result; and the plans, if any, he has to increase his own Department.

REPLY:

The only change in the responsibilities of my Department has been the strengthening of the co-ordination of European Community matters which already existed in my Department through the Ministerial Committee on EEC affairs. I indicated in the House on 10th March last that I proposed that a Minister of State of my Department would be specially concerned, among other duties, with the EEC co-ordination carried out by the existing Ministerial Committee. The Government subsequently appointed Deputy Maire Geoghegan-Quinn to this post of Minister of State.

One additional civil servant has been transferred on loan to my Department to work in the Office of a Minister of State.

Note for the Taoiseach's Information

One Higher Executive Officer has been transferred on loan to this Department to work in the Constituency Office of Mrs. Maire Geoghegan Quinn T.D., Minister of State.

In relation to changes in staff since the 10th March, see note at Tab A.

2. EEC Responsibilities

In relation to the responsibilities which have been assigned to the Minister of State at this Department, please see:

- (i) Government Decisions setting out the responsibilities of Minister of State, Mrs. Maire Geoghegan Quinn T.D.. (Tab B)
- (ii) Extracts from the Taoiseach's speech in the Dáil on the 10th March, announcing his appointment and moving for approval of his nomination of the members of the Government (Tab C)
- (iii) A copy of a speaking note used by the Minister of State, Mrs. Maire Geoghegan Quinn T.D. at the first meeting at the Committee on Co-Ordination of EEC matters which she chairs (see in particular page 2) (Tab D)
- (iv) Copies of Press reports suggesting that this Department is taking over the functions of the Department of Foreign Affairs in relation to Northern Ireland and European Community matters (Tab E)

3. Northern Ireland and Cabinet Committees

In regard to Northern Ireland aspects, a number of the press reports stated that a Cabinet Committee on Anglo-Irish Relations and/or Northern Ireland would be serviced in future by officials of this Department rather than by the Department of Foreign Affairs. In fact an official of this Department has been appointed Secretary of two Cabinet Committees, on EEC matters and on Northern Ireland. It is not the practice to reveal the existence, much less the business of Cabinet Committees. Under all Governments, including the previous Government, Cabinet Committees on EEC matters had secretariats provided by this Department. Since at least the early 1970s it has been the general rule that the secretariat of all Cabinet Committees has been supplied by this Department. Under the last Government, there was no formal Cabinet Committee on Northern Ireland or Anglo-Irish Relations and the group of Ministers and officials which met to deal with these matters did not have any formal Secretariat.

Because of the general practice followed over the years in regard to Cabinet Committees, the following is suggested as a possible reply to supplementary questions:

"It is not the practice to reveal details of the internal arrangements made by Governments to handle their business.