



An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

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QUESTION NO. 1

DAIL QUESTION addressed to the Taoiseach
by Deputy Desmond O'Malley for answer
on Wednesday, 6th May, 1987.

QUESTION:

To ask the Taoiseach the Department which is now responsible for the day-to-day operation of the Anglo-Irish Agreement and the operation of Anglo-Irish relations generally; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

REPLY:

In accordance with the position over the years, policy on Northern Ireland is primarily the responsibility of the Taoiseach.

The Minister for Foreign Affairs is the Permanent Irish Ministerial Representative to the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference. His Department has primary responsibility for the day-to-day operation of the Anglo-Irish Agreement and of Anglo-Irish relations generally. Other Ministers are also involved as Members of the Government with collective responsibility and to the extent that their responsibilities require.

UNREVISED

A.

(Add No. 17)

Mr. D. O'Malley: Have any officials from outside the Department of Foreign Affairs been appointed to the Anglo-Irish Conference or to the secretariat at Maryfield?

The Taoiseach: No.

Mr. D. O'Malley: Are any such appointments in contemplation?

The Taoiseach: That is a matter to be decided.

QUESTION:

Has the Taoiseach changed the staffing levels in his Department's Northern Ireland Section?

SUGGESTED REPLY:

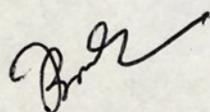
No. The staffing levels remain the same.

QUESTION:

Has the Taoiseach appointed a Special Advisor on Northern Ireland?

SUGGESTED REPLY:

No. I have not appointed any Advisor with responsibility relating exclusively to Northern Ireland.



Possible Supplementary Questions

QUESTION:

Will the Taoiseach comment on press reports that he has brought Northern Ireland policy more directly under his own control?

SUGGESTED REPLY:

As I have stated in my reply, policy on Northern Ireland is primarily the responsibility of the Taoiseach. This has been the position over the years.

QUESTION:

[Any question on Cabinet Sub-Committee on Northern Ireland.]

SUGGESTED REPLY:

In accordance with long standing practice I do not propose to comment here on any aspect of Cabinet Sub-Committees. Such Committees relate to the internal workings of the Government and are not a matter on which a member of the Government is answerable to this House.

In fact there may have been ~~no~~ departures under this Government or under previous Governments I headed from the norms that have applied over the years in this area.

QUESTION:

If responsibility for the implementation of the Agreement rests with the Minister for Foreign Affairs, surely it would make better sense if the Minister also had overall responsibility for Northern Ireland policy?

QUESTION:

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SUGGESTED REPLY:

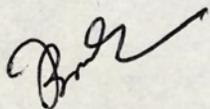
No. The staffing levels remain the same.

QUESTION:

Has the Taoiseach appointed a Special Advisor on Northern Ireland?

SUGGESTED REPLY:

No. I have not appointed any Advisor with responsibility relating exclusively to Northern Ireland.



SUGGESTED REPLY:

I do not agree. Northern Ireland is an issue of such major importance that my predecessors in office have taken responsibility for policy on it. The advent of the Agreement and the Conference does not change the situation.

[Further supplementary to follow] att

Note for the Taoiseach's Information

1. The position over the years has been that policy on Northern Ireland is primarily the responsibility of the Taoiseach (See TAB A - previous P.Q.s). However, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, as the Permanent Irish Ministerial Representative, has responsibility for the implementation of the Anglo-Irish Agreement (See TAB B - Gov. decision). His Department, under the Ministers and Secretaries Act, 1924, has responsibility for communications and transactions between the Irish Government and any other State or nation which encompasses Anglo-Irish relations (See TAB C - extract from Act).
2. In response to a recent supplementary question put to the Taoiseach by Deputy McGahon he said that Anglo-Irish relations, of which the Anglo-Irish Agreement forms a very significant part, are a matter for the Government as a whole (See TAB D). If asked how this statement differs from the reply to this P.Q. he could cite ~~the Ministers and Secretaries Act, 1924~~ which determines that the Government shall be collectively responsible for all matters concerning the Departments of State administered by Ministers (See TAB E - extract from Act).
3. The question may have been prompted by recent newspaper articles (See TAB F).
4. A copy of the Taoiseach's reply to the recent Parliamentary Question by Deputy McGahon along with a copy of the note for the Taoiseach's information, paragraph 3 of which is relevant, is at TAB G.

Article 28
4. 2° of the
Constitution