



An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

Reference Code:	2018/28/2168
Creation Dates:	27 May 1988
Extent and medium:	3 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.

NOTE FOR 5A/2^v AND 5C/1

5A/2^v

MAWHINNEY PROPOSALS: IRISH LANGUAGE

I met with Dónall O Móráin of Gael Linn on 27 May to discuss the outcome of the Dungannon meeting of Irish teachers which had taken place the previous Saturday.

Mr. O Móráin said that the meeting had seen the highest congregation of Northern Ireland teachers of Irish in many years; some 70 were in attendance (despite the fact that it was a Saturday, he added, with temperatures in the 70's).

Mr. O Móráin made the following points:

1. The Mawhinney proposals were perceived in Dungannon as already having a deleterious effect on the status of the Irish language. This, he explained, was due to many parents and students - rather than schools - "jumping the gun" and assuming them to be a "fait accompli", thus basing next year's subject choices on the proposals. Students were simply not prepared to take risks and if the situation deteriorated one could have a scenario, Mr. O Móráin said, whereby Irish would be pushed out altogether.
2. In Dungannon many suggestions of varied hue were made as to how to best approach the Mawhinney downgrading of Irish. These ranged from ignoring it, to re-adopting the Gael Linn document (cf. 23.1.88) to opinions which said that Mawhinney had made his bed and now he should lie in it; why should he be given the assistance of counterproposals! O Móráin saw the latter response as being "very Belfast" and naive, springing, he felt, from their extreme disillusionment with the Minister's attempt to impose a formula without any recourse to regional sensitivity.
3. From all the diversity of response success was achieved in Dungannon when consensus was reached on a counterproposal on the Irish language. The formula of words is attached. It reflects the linguistic emphasis of the language groups (i.e. they were not inclined to opt for "Irish Studies" like Coleraine - indeed the latter have very good utilitarian reasons for so doing!)

4. The "Dungannon formula" is much like the one suggested by Mr. Holohan to Mr. O Móráin at an earlier meeting and stems from two concerns

- (i) the absence at primary level of any provision whatsoever for Irish and
- (ii) the desire to pre-empt any perceived threat on the part of DENI regarding, e. g., French.

The motivation is clear. The proper place for Irish is seen to be at "the upper end" of the teaching core i. e. within the 75% of time. Gael Linn see the promised remainder of 25% for sharing among other subjects as illusory.

5. Mr. O Móráin passed me some papers of interest viz. submissions from

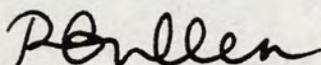
- (a) Comhaltas Uladh
- (b) St. Mary's, Belfast
- (c) Lagan College.

He was particularly concerned that we treat (c) with the utmost confidentiality. (I assured him we would). Given their perspective Mr. O Móráin felt we would find Lagan's defence of Irish interesting.

6. Finally we spoke about the Irish Primary Guidelines (due out since late 1986 but promised for later this year). I told Mr. O Móráin that we were very concerned lest an attempt be made to "supercede" these with the Mawhinney proposals. He told me that he had heard similar fears expressed in Dungannon by Phil Stewart (St. Mary's, Belfast).

Note: This ties in with what Mr. Holohan and I heard from Msgr. McCaughan and later Brian Feeney, while in Belfast last month. The Secretariat may be interested.

7. At the close of our meeting Mr. O Móráin asked if our Department could let him know what we thought of the "Dungannon formula". I undertook to keep in touch with him in the coming weeks.



Patricia Cullen

Anglo-Irish Section

27 May 1988

W0400

Counterproposal adopted in
Dungannon May 1988 by N.I.
Teachers of Irish. handed to me
27/5 by O'Mearain, Cyril Linn

- (a) that, at both primary and secondary levels, Irish be recognised as an optional extra 'foundation' subject and
- (b) that at secondary level Irish be recognised as a modern 'foundation' subject language, through the deletion of the word 'foreign' in paragraph 11 of the Ministry's proposals.

MB 27/5