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an exploratory meeting with Irish officials for a mixed FCO/NIO team which should include a representative from the Central Secretariat.

5. In preparation for these discussions, the meeting went on to consider (in a fairly cursory manner) some of the areas where there was some potential for political co-operation and to examine possible structures which might be set up to implement this. It was not thought necessary at this stage to mount a massive exercise within Whitehall to examine the implications of these proposals, though this might be necessary in due course. It would, however, be useful to have NICS comments at an early stage; it was noted that the proposals were in line with the general theme of Mr Bell's memorandum of 9 May.

Areas of Potential Co-operation

6. A list of the areas of potential co-operation which were discussed is attached, together with a brief summary of the comments made on them. Many are unlikely to lead, via legislative or administrative changes to complete convergence of practice but there is plenty of scope for consultation, co-operation and general statements of intent to co-operate.

Structures

7. The Irish may be more concerned with the presentation than with the substance of Anglo-Irish co-operation so there may be a need to consider new structures of co-operation. The AIEC machinery is available and has not aroused controversy. It already has the contacts within Whitehall, at Stormont and in Dublin to study the potential areas of co-operation which might be identified and to prepare reports and recommendations. It would be possible to raise its profile through increased publicity or through the establishment of a permanent joint secretariat or by the sponsoring of Ministerial meetings under its aegis. These might be formalised as a Council of Anglo-Irish Ministers on the model of the European Council of Ministers. Alternatively, it might be possible to arrange regular bi-lateral meetings between the Prime Ministers, supported by appropriate Ministers, on the model of the regular Anglo-French and Anglo-German political meetings.

David Hill

D J R HILL
Security and International Division, London

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AREAS OF POTENTIAL HARMONISATION AND POLITICAL CO-OPERATION BETWEEN THE
UK AND THE REPUBLIC OF IRELAND.

Right for UK citizens to vote in Irish elections

This might in due course lead to pressure on the UK to amend the regulations which prevent all but long-term residents of Northern Ireland from voting in local and Assembly elections. But for the moment the onus was on the Irish to do something. Haughey has publicly promised to consider the matter.

Postal/telephone charges

Driver and vehicle licensing

Taxes and excise duties

It was recognised that this was a very sensitive area indeed and that probably neither country could subordinate its monetary or fiscal policies to the need to keep in step with the other. Nevertheless there might be scope for consultation and some co-operation.

Debt collection/enforcement of maintenance payments

Harmonisation of law

Subject to advice, it was felt that this area might give rise to a lot of useful co-operation, particularly as the two countries shared the same basic Common Law. The Law Commission might be encouraged to bear Irish law in mind and to speak to the Irish Law Commission. There may be scope for more formalised mutual consultation on changes in domestic law.

Homosexual Law Reform

A specific, though thorny, example of harmonising laws. Both NI and the Republic face legal challenges to the present law in this area.

Repatriation of prisoners

This might be a sensitive issue but the Government has already agreed on the general desirability of bi-lateral arrangements in this field.

Investment incentives

It is often damaging to both NI and the Republic to bid against each other for the same investment, thus driving the cost upwards.

Regulations and standards

eg food additives, noise levels, building standards, health and safety, patents, trade-marks and pharmaceuticals.

Transport and Communications

Air routes, roads, ferries, ports, STD throughout the British Isles. Much co-operation is already taking place in these areas.

Continental Shelf

The Taoiseach's suggestion of a joint administration for the disputed areas, is a non-starter but it may mean that he will be receptive to our suggestions for ending the Carlingford Lough dispute.

Bloodstock registers, animal health and breeding regulations

The two parts of Ireland both have higher standards than GB ~~standards~~ and there appears to be close co-operation and consultation already.

Common Registers of Companies, Land, Directors etc

Reciprocal access to existing lists. Not much scope for co-operation.

Company Law

Differences are already slight because companies would otherwise move to the most favourable area.

Recognition of examination standards, vocational qualifications

It is doubtful whether any problem exists.

Direct Broadcasting by Satellite

A single satellite to cover the whole of the UK is already being considered. Perhaps it could be a British Isles satellite.

Tourism

Joint promotions may be possible but there is already a lot of co-operation and probably little room for development.

Welfare benefits/social services

It is unlikely that the Republic will wish or be able to raise its rates sufficiently.

Services in Border areas

There should be scope for co-operation in the provision of all sorts of services in border areas, eg hospital, educational and library facilities. As a minimum it should be possible to develop reciprocal arrangements.

Community and International Political Matters

The Republic is rapidly emerging as a confident and prosperous member of the European Community. There could be a great deal to be gained from presenting a united 'anglophone' front within the EC. Internationally, the Republic has great influence with Third World and non-Aligned countries which could be used to further any Anglo-Irish initiatives in international matters. Co-operation might be directed through regular summits on the model of the regular Anglo-French and Anglo-German political meetings.