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subs
30.8

- 1. MR BOYS ✓ SMITH
- 2. ① PS/SIR EWART BELL *WSD 1/9.*
- ② Mr Carroll
- ③ Pa.

- cc:
- Mr Brennan
 - Mr Angel
 - Mr Merifield
 - Mr Buxton
 - Mr Burns
 - Mr Gilliland
 - Mr Wood
 - Mr Russell
 - Mr Abbott
 - Mr Alexander
 - Mr Reeve

THE HAAGERUP REPORT

I attach a note on the political background to Mr Haagerup's visit to Northern Ireland which Sir Ewart may find helpful in preparing for his meeting with Mr Haagerup next week.

Mr McCormick's note of 26 August has commissioned briefing on the economic and social issues which may arise.

David Hill

D J R HILL
SIL DIVISION
30 August 1983

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MR HAAGERUP'S MEETING WITH SIR E BELL

Background note

1. In 1982 a series of motions for resolution were tabled by members of the European Parliament urging the Parliament to involve itself in the political affairs of Northern Ireland and endorsing, to varying degrees, Irish nationalist aspirations. Messrs Taylor and Paisley were alert to the implications and tabled a countervailing motion referring to a resolution of the Parliament of May 1982 renouncing its competence to consider Northern Ireland constitutional issues. When on 23 February 1983 the Political Affairs Committee of the Parliament considered the motions, it voted to commission a general report on the situation in Northern Ireland, without reference to the specific proposals and assumptions of the motions.

2. This decision provoked considerable *press and* political comment in London and Belfast, in part due to confused early reports from Strasbourg and to Mr Paisley's strong denunciations. Westminster MPs, both Government and Opposition, were also conscious of the intrusion into matters which were the proper concern of the UK Parliament. The Prime Minister took a close interest. In response to a PNQ from Mr Molyneaux on 24 February, the Secretary of State stated that the European Parliament had no business to discuss the internal political affairs of a Member State. That remains HMG's position. In subsequent weeks backbenchers maintained their interest in the enquiry and have been keen to detect any softening of the Government's attitude, by, for instance, affording assistance to the rapporteur. It is likely that more PQs will be tabled on this subject in the next session of Parliament especially if

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publicity is generated by the Belfast visit or the submission of a report.

3. On 15 March the Political Affairs Committee appointed Neils Haagerup MEP, a Danish Liberal, as rapporteur. Mr Haagerup is a man of moderate views who has had an intelligent and informed interest in Northern Ireland for a number of years and who has visited the Province as leader of an informal working group of MEPs. On appointment as rapporteur Mr Haagerup indicated that he did not intend to meet supporters of violence nor to hold public hearings which would have given a platform to critics of the Government. He did, however, announce his intention of visiting London, Dublin and Belfast in the course of his enquiry.

4. The European Democratic Group of MEPs have ensured that Mr Haagerup has obtained published official material of the type which would be issued to any foreign opinion *former* who displayed an active interest in Northern Ireland. However, it became obvious that Mr Haagerup would expect a greater degree of co-operation from the Government. Officials had been helpful during his previous visits and the Government of the Republic could be expected to provide full assistance. In particular Mr Haagerup sought a ministerial meeting; he had met Mr Scott [redacted] before his appointment as rapporteur. He was conscious of the UK political sensitivities and deferred his approach to Government until after the general election.

5. Mr Haagerup wrote to the Secretary of State on 4 July (copy attached at "A") requesting advice on whom he should meet during his visit to Northern Ireland as similar assistance was being afforded by the Republic's Government in relation to his visit to Dublin.

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The Secretary of State discussed the issue with the Prime Minister on 20 July and it was agreed that Mr Haagerup should be received by officials in Belfast and that Mr Scott should see him over a meal in London (copy of PS/Prime Minister's attached letter at "B"). The Secretary of State replied to Mr Haagerup's letter on 26 July declining to assist in the arrangements for the visit (copy attached at "C"). However, Mr Haagerup was also informed orally of plans for meetings with Mr Scott and Belfast officials.

6. Arrangements for the visit have been made by Geoffrey Martin of the Commission's Belfast office. Mr Haagerup and his assistant, Richard Moore, will travel to Dublin on 1 September. They expect to meet party leaders in the Republic. The British Ambassador in Dublin will be present at a dinner for Mr Haagerup hosted by the Danish Ambassador. On 3 September Messrs Haagerup and Moore will travel to Belfast where they hope to meet political and church leaders and academics. It is anticipated that unionists will boycott Mr Haagerup and he has already indicated that he will not meet Sinn Fein representatives. He apparently hopes to fit in visits to Londonderry and the border area. On 6 September he will fly back to London where the following night he will meet Mr Scott at a dinner hosted by the Danish Ambassador.

7. It is imperative that the meeting with officials in Belfast does not compromise the Government's stated position on Mr Haagerup's inquiry. It is probable that, however discreetly organised, its occurrence will in time become known or may necessarily be revealed in response to a Parliamentary Question. It will then be argued defensively that its purpose was to brief Mr Haagerup on economic and social themes. Other issues may naturally emerge in the course of the conversation (eg security) but the main drift should be along

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lines which are within the European Parliament's legitimate interest
On political matters Mr Haagerup should be referred to his meeting
with Mr Scott on 7 September although Mr Merifield may wish to have
ready to hand over the text of the Secretary of State's speech to
the Assembly on 28 June, which Mr Haagerup may not have seen. An
opening statement has been prepared for delivery by Sir Ewart Bell
(copy attached at "D") which sets out for Mr Haagerup's benefit, and
for the record, the basis on which the meeting is taking place.

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