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RBS/210/86

cc. PS/PUS (B&L)  
PS/Mr Bloomfield  
Mr Brennan  
Mr Stephens  
NI Perm Secs  
Mr Chesterton  
Mr Innes  
Miss Pease  
Mr S Hewitt  
Miss F Elliott  
Mr Bell  
Mr Pearson  
Miss Owens

Mr M Elliott

PUBLIC APPOINTMENTS AND THE ANGLO-IRISH AGREEMENT

The proposed arrangements for handling public appointments in the context of Article 6 of the Anglo-Irish Agreement were discussed at PUS's meeting today with NI Permanent Secretaries. Account was taken of the names which are now beginning to reach us from the Irish.

There remains a lot of unease about the proposed arrangements and it was agreed that an early informal exchange with the Secretariat might be helpful. At such a meeting, I would want to bring out the following points:-

- (1) the extent to which Ministers are obliged by statute to fill vacancies on the nomination of various bodies and organisations;
- (2) the comparatively small number of cases where Ministers are concerned with "balancing the two communities" as distinct from finding people with the appropriate experience/skills and balancing the interested groups involved;

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- (3) our general concern to secure sensible continuity in public bodies, especially to select chairmen with the necessary experience in the area of activity concerned;
- (4) the possibility that the Irish search for names may result in some insensitive canvassing of forthcoming vacancies, and so annoy existing members of the public body and perhaps be seen as "SDLP patronage"; and
- (5) the dangers that mishandling of this matter (and the resulting publicity) could feed the Unionist claims about joint sovereignty.

RM

R B SPENCE

6 May 1986

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