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3 January 1991

TO: PS/MINISTER

cc SECRETARY

FROM: R B SPENCE

MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE: APPEARANCE OF BORDER CHECKPOINTS

1. Following the Minister's meeting with Lord Brookeborough at which the adverse impact on tourists of the permanent vehicle checkpoints at the border was discussed, I raised again with John Ledlie what might be done to improve the appearance and management of PVCs. I offered to help identify the priority PVCs from the tourism point of view and to see how we might make them less intimidating in appearance and ease the flow of traffic whilst permitting the security forces to check selected vehicles.
2. Earlier in the year, Mr Ledlie and Mr Bert O'Hara had in fact visited the Cloghoge PVC outside Newry and Mr Ledlie had opened up discussions with the Chief Constable and the GOC.
3. However, the problem has now been made more difficult by the "human bomb" attacks on PVCs and the decision made on security grounds to close at night a number of cross-border roads in County Fermanagh.
4. Mr Ledlie and I agree on the need for a small group which could look at this matter on a case by case basis, weighing up the security and economic/tourism aspects. . . But it is necessary to ensure the security forces' full

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participation and understanding of the economic/tourism arguments.

5. The Ministerial Conference will, therefore, provide the Minister with an excellent opportunity to secure the agreement in principle of his colleagues to this approach.
6. The Minister may wish to draw on the following key points:-

the appearance and management of PVCs must be improved in the interests of reinforcing the message of normality and of presenting a much better image to visitors (including tourists and potential investors);

such improvements must not, of course, handicap in any way the fight against terrorism or the need to protect the members of the security forces who man PVCs;

the matter needs to be explored on a case by case basis involving the security forces and appropriate officials from NIO and NI Departments.

RBS

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13/11/90 16/90

cc PS/M of S (B&L)  
PS/Mr Needham  
PS/Lord Skelmersdale  
(DANI & L)  
Mr Spence  
Mr Gibson  
Mr McGeown  
MC

NOTE FOR THE RECORD

MEETING WITH LORD BROOKEBOROUGH - THURSDAY 18 NOVEMBER 1990

1. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss trade in the Fermanagh area, and border crossings. Lord Brookeborough began by showing the Minister a copy of the South West Fermanagh Development Organisation strategy document and he asked him whether or not he would consider giving some form of personal support to the organisation.

Lord Brookeborough said that he understood that the Inter-Departmental Group on Rural Development was responsible for looking at a strategy for the future of rural societies but said that the Minister had been so successful in areas such as Newry and Londonderry that it would mean a lot to the group in South West Fermanagh if he were able to give them some support as well.

The Minister said that he was not clear about the strategy for the area and suggested that Joan Bullock, Secretary to the South West Fermanagh Development Organisation and David Mackey the Chairman of the group should come up to have a chat with him at some stage. Lord Brookeborough agreed that this would be a very helpful gesture. (Action: PS/Mr Needham to arrange).

2. Lord Brookeborough went on to talk about the various permanent vehicle checkpoints (PVCs) around the border. He said that he understood and approved of the plans to modernise these checkpoints but pointed out that traffic flow on many of the border roads had increased very considerably in recent years and tourist traffic in particular had increased. Fermanagh was becoming an increasingly important tourist area and he was extremely concerned about the delays caused at the various

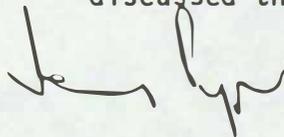
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checkpoints. He pointed out that from the point of view of the local people as well, these checkpoints were causing considerable delays and in order to avoid being caught in traffic jams while going about their daily business, many of the local people had reverted to opening some of the lesser used border roads. This in itself had caused problems for the security forces. The Minister readily acknowledged that something had to be done to improve the appearance of these checkpoints. He said that he had been concerned for some considerable time that no new thought appeared to have been given to how such checkpoints could be made more "user-friendly".

3. At this point Mr Spence joined the meeting.

The Minister explained his and Lord Brookeborough's concerns to Mr Spence and pointed out that the tourism strategy would be meaningless if tourists coming from the Republic of Ireland had to face delays at the border and go through checkpoints which gave the appearance of passing into a military zone. He suggested that it would be necessary to look at the various key border crossings to see what could be done from a tourism point of view to improve their appearance and speed of operation. Lord Brookeborough said that in Fermanagh the 3 key crossings were Gortmullan, Wattle Bridge and Roscor. The Minister asked Mr Spence to try and take forward some sort of round table discussion about these crossings and also the main crossing at Newry. (Action: Mr Spence). The Minister also suggested that Lord Brookeborough should talk to the Minister of State and to Mr Chilcot and Mr Ledlie. Lord Brookeborough agreed to do this and also agreed to talk with Hugh O'Neill who had already discussed the subject of the PVCs with the Minister at length.



JENNY PYPER  
PS/Mr Needham - DED

12 November 1990