

129/95

R E S T R I C T E D

FROM: J MCKERVILL  
POLITICAL AFFAIRS DIVISION  
10 May 1995

RECEIVED 15 MAY 1995 DB/370/as

UNDER/ 484/s  
SEC  
1 MAY 1995  
CENT SEC

- cc PS/Secretary of State (B&L) - B
- PS/PUS (L) - B
- PS/Mr Fell - B
- Mr Thomas - B
- Mr Legge - B
- Mr Williams - B
- Mr Watkins - B
- Mr Bell - B
- Mr Wood (B&L) - B
- Mr Stephens - B
- Mr Brooker - B
- Mr Smyth - B
- Mr Maxwell - B
- Mr Kyle - B
- HMA, Dublin - B
- Mr Lamont, RID - B

*in column*  
*5/20/95*

- 1. Mr Maccabe [We are working hard to pull someone else's chestnuts out of the fire. CGM 10/5]
- 2. PS/Michael Ancram (DENI, B&L) - B

FOUNDATION FOR A CIVIL SOCIETY: 6-8 JUNE

- 1. Helen Murray's minute of 28 April, in response to my submission of 27 April, sought further advice from PAB on the extent of the Minister's involvement in the Foundation for a Civil Society Conference in Belfast on 6-8 June. Peter Westmacott's letter of 8 May to PS/Secretary of State (not copied to all) is also relevant.
- 2. At a delegation meeting in the Anglo-Irish Secretariat on 4 May the British side explained that the Secretary of State would not be attending the Conference although there was a possibility that Michael Ancram would be present. The Irish were told that there could be no question of the Irish co-hosting a dinner but that we were considering the possibility of Michael Ancram hosting some sort of function. The British side of the Secretariat have advised that the Irish have been made aware also about the inappropriateness of their seeking to host a dinner alone.
- 3. Since receipt of Ms Murray's note, PAB have been speaking to Professor Paul Arthur about the Conference and he, in turn, has been

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liaising with Tim Phillips in New York. Predictably Professor Arthur was disappointed that HMG would not be co-hosting the opening dinner with the Irish Government although he accepted - at least in discussion with Mr Maccabe - that his raised expectations were caused not by the British Government, but by the Irish and Dick Spring in particular.

4. We have now learned however from Peter Westmacott in Washington that Tim Phillips is trying to bring pressure to bear on him on the basis - for which there is no evidence - that during their previous visits to Northern Ireland they had been given the impression that the NIO would have a high-level presence at the Conference and were now reneging. There was also the added implication that non-attendance by NIO Ministers would give the impression that the British Government was less than wholehearted about the peace process. Helpfully, Peter Westmacott points out that there is no Anglo-US reason for HMG to become too involved with this Conference.

5. PAB believe that we should not be unduly pressurised by Tim Phillips - by raising the issue with the Embassy in Washington he has hardly helped his cause - and that we should continue to consider Ministers' involvement in the Conference only on its merits.



6. You have told PAB that the Minister has agreed to make the opening remarks welcoming the delegates to Belfast - now scheduled at 1845 on Tuesday 6 June - to be followed by the keynote address which the Foundation hope ex German President Von Weiszacker will deliver. (President Havel of the Czech Republic is unavailable.) A reception and dinner will follow at 2000.

7. On the basis of Helen Murray's minute, and knowing that the Irish will neither be host or co-host, we have had further

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discussions with Professor Arthur about possible HMG assistance towards either the reception and/or the dinner. In particular, Professor Arthur has asked whether HMG would be prepared to host the dinner, if not for all the delegates, then at least for the international visitors and keynote speakers. It would however be strange, particularly in the case of a Conference opening dinner, for delegates to be divided into a "them and us" situation with the possibility of criticism being directed toward HMG. We therefore believe that HMG should either host a dinner for all the delegates, or not at all. That said, we see no compelling reason why HMG should host the dinner. We have not been consulted about the arrangements - which seem less than well organised to say the least - nor have we made any previous commitment to that effect.

8. However, if the Minister is inclined to be helpful to the Conference, he could show HMG's support by offering to fund, or perhaps even host, the pre-dinner reception for all the delegates. On balance, PAB would recommend this. The Minister will also wish to consider attending the dinner, assuming it will be hosted by the Foundation and not, as the Secretariat tell us, by the Irish. Indeed there is a political argument for a NIO Minister to be present at the dinner, if the Tanaiste is also likely to be there.

9. The Minister is invited to:

- (i) note the developments surrounding the organisation of this Conference as outlined; and
- (ii) agree to make welcoming remarks at the opening of the Conference, to host or fund a pre-dinner reception and to attend the opening dinner.

10. By side copy I attach a draft reply for PS/Secretary of State to send to Peter Westmacott explaining the background to Phillips' alleged grievance. Once the Minister has decided on the extent of

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his involvement in the Conference, I will submit to the Secretary of State's office a revised draft reply to Phillips' invitation.

11. In the meantime it would be helpful to know who in the NIO have received invitations to participate in the Conference. I am aware Messrs Fell and Williams have been invited. I should be grateful to know from copy recipients if others have been so privileged.

[signed JMCK]

J MCKERVILL  
SH EXT 27088

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DRAFT LETTER FOR SIGNATURE BY PS/SECRETARY OF STATE

Peter Westmacott Esq  
British Embassy  
3100 Massachusetts Ave NW  
WASHINGTON DC

May 1995

FOUNDATION FOR A CIVIL SOCIETY CONFERENCE 6-8 JUNE 1995

Thank you for your letter of 8 May reporting your telephone conversation with Tim Phillips. It is rather irritating and unhelpful to his cause for Tim Phillips to be taking such a line. We have not, in fact, had any second thoughts about this Conference.

When Phillips, along with Eric Nonacs and Professor Paul Arthur, met the Secretary of State last October, Sir Patrick had initially been sceptical about their work and the potential read-across to Northern Ireland of other international conflict experiences. By the end of the meeting his attitude, he confessed, had turned to one of benevolence. But at no time did the Secretary of State commit himself to attending the Conference nor to co-hosting a dinner with the Tanaiste. Indeed the Secretary of State specifically warned Phillips that because of HMG's commitment to the exploratory dialogue, the completion of the framework document and the need to keep the momentum of the peace process, no official assistance would be possible. At a number of meetings with David Fell, warm noises were made but no commitments given.

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You should be aware that the idea of co-hosting a dinner with the Irish Government came not from us, but unilaterally to the organisers from the Tanaiste, without any prior consultation with us. It is the Irish who have raised expectations, not us.

In April the Secretary of State received an invitation from Tim Phillips to open the Conference by offering welcoming remarks to the delegates on behalf of the British Government. Regretfully, because of a previous engagement he was unable to accept the invitation, but Michael Ancram has agreed to participate in the opening session. We are at the moment considering whether he should offer to host or fund the reception and/or dinner on the opening night. In addition a number of NIO officials have received invitations to the Conference and are likely to attend at least part of it.

We would be happy for you to rehearse any of the above in conversation with Phillips. None of it should come as any surprise since Paul Arthur has relayed all this to him already.

MARTIN HOWARD

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