

PERSONAL

Richard - copy for your
information. This note
was not circulated.

→ Mr Buchanan
DHSS
Private Office

Aileen

19/11/85

Secretary of State

I have just seen your letter of 15 November. No copy was sent to my Department although you wrote to the Chairmen of the Boards for which I am responsible.

I am afraid to tell you that your letter did not receive universal acclaim.

Reports have come back to me that it was too long, and condescending in its tone.

Is it possible for the NIO to use a little political common sense in future?

RICHARD NEEDHAM

19 November 1985

PERSONAL

Minister - You asked to see a copy
of this letter this afternoon.
(as it is sent to Mr. Leane)

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Attached is a draft
note to SOS in the
matter.

Northern Ireland Office
Stormont Castle
Belfast BT4 3ST

R 19/11

15 November 1985

I am taking this early opportunity of sending you a personal copy of the Agreement signed at the Summit meeting between the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach. I also include copies of the Communique and Press Release issued after the meeting. My purpose in writing to you, and to others who play an especially important part in the life of Northern Ireland, is to ensure that those who will undoubtedly participate in the debate which results from the signing of the Agreement will do so fully informed of the terms of the actual Agreement. You may also be asked questions about the Agreement, and I have accordingly had prepared a short information leaflet, a copy of which I enclose. If you wish to make it more widely available, please feel free to do so.

The enclosed documents describe the Agreement in full, but I would like to take this opportunity to emphasise its main features and why we have concluded it. Our aim, which we share fully with the Irish Government, in reaching this Agreement has been quite simply to promote peace and stability in Northern Ireland, to help to reconcile the major traditions in Ireland, to create a climate of friendship and cooperation between the people of our two countries, and to improve cooperation in combatting terrorism. Both our Governments believe that this Agreement provides the best means available of making progress towards our shared objectives. The Agreement has two key features. Both Governments have affirmed, in a formally binding international accord, that any change in the status of Northern Ireland would only come about with the consent of a majority of the people of Northern Ireland, and they recognise that the present wish of a majority of those people is for no change in that status. We have also declared that if, in the future, a majority clearly wished for and formally consented to a united Ireland, our two Governments would support legislation to give effect to this wish.

The second key element is the establishment of the Intergovernmental Conference through which the Irish Government will be able to put forward views and proposals on all those aspects of Northern Ireland affairs specified in the agreement. It is there that we shall discuss the promotion of cross-border cooperation - and the Agreement makes specific reference to the enhancement of cooperation in the security field - and we are also committed, again in the interest of promoting peace and stability, to make determined efforts to resolve any differences between us. You will see from the enclosed Communique that we intend that the Conference will meet as soon as possible after the Agreement comes into

... - that is after both Parliaments have approved it. It is planned that the Conference will then discuss its future programme of work in all the fields - political, security, legal, economic, social and culture - which come within its competence. The Conference will also concentrate during its first meetings on seeking ways of improving relations between the security forces and the minority community in Northern Ireland, ways of enhancing security cooperation between our two Governments, and measures which will help to underline the importance of public confidence in the administration of justice.

I believe, however, that it is also important to say something about what is not in the Agreement. As I have already mentioned, the Agreement does not affect the status of Northern Ireland within the United Kingdom nor is it a first step to Irish unity. As the Agreement also makes clear, it does not detract from the sovereignty of the United Kingdom - or for that matter of the Republic of Ireland. As the Prime Minister and I have consistently explained over recent months, the Government of the United Kingdom, accountable to Parliament, will remain responsible for all the functions and decisions of Government in Northern Ireland. Nor does the Agreement indicate any lessening of our desire to seek to devolve powers within Northern Ireland on a basis which would secure widespread acceptance throughout the community. The Agreement contains a specific declaration that this continues to be the policy of the Government, and that the Irish Government support that policy also. I would ask you to note that if devolution is restored then those matters that become the responsibility of a devolved administration will no longer be considered in the Intergovernmental Conference. But the Agreement will encourage the elected representatives of both communities to come together to form a local administration acceptable to the community as a whole.

The Government is convinced that the Agreement offers real benefits to both communities in Northern Ireland, as well as to the United Kingdom as a whole. Both the Prime Minister and I, as is Dr FitzGerald, are committed to implementing the measures set out in Agreement with determination and imagination. We do not pretend that it will resolve all Northern Ireland's problems, but it provides a unique opportunity to make Northern Ireland a better place to live in. It will also, I hope, encourage both Unionists and Nationalists to renew their efforts to understand and respect each others' traditions and concerns and make the necessary accommodations that will enable them to work together to promote our common goals of peace, stability and reconciliation.

I am arranging for you to have this information which I hope will be helpful to you.

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Larkin

RAFT

Secretary of State

ANGLO-IRISH AGREEMENT

1. I understand that Mr Loane, Chairman of the Western Health and Social Services Board has taken some exception to the tone of your letter and will be writing to you to say so. He will not, I think, say or do anything publicly, nor is he likely to do anything foolish.
2. I have not seen the letter. I think it unfortunate that a letter of a political nature should be sent to the Chairman of a Board within my area of responsibility without my having had the opportunity to comment on it in draft.
3. This confirms my view that the publicity exercise is in danger of going off at half-cock, and that any follow up approaches will have to be very carefully planned and orchestrated.

RICHARD NEEDHAM

Richard -
Minister drafted
his own ~~reply~~ note
to SoS, a copy of
which was sent
to you yesterday.

Aileen
20/11