

cc. ~~Mr Carson~~
Mrs Young
Mr Ray.

Please respond
direct to
Mr Shaw.

Thanks

AMR

30.8.95



Mr Briant
Heads of Divisions, DED HQ
Mr Kane, IDB
Miss Breslin, T&EA
Mrs Godfrey, NITB
Mrs Latimer, LEDU

THE BRITISH-IRISH INTER-PARLIAMENTARY BODY - A STUDY

1. Please see the attached correspondence from Gail McKibbin, Central Secretariat, regarding a study on BIIPB to be undertaken by Professor Buckland of the Institute of Irish Studies, Liverpool University.
2. With reference, in particular to paragraph 3 of Alan Dunn's note, I should be grateful if you could forward your responses to the questions highlighted in Annex B of Mr Dunn's correspondence.
3. Please forward your returns to Central Management by close of play tomorrow, **Thursday 31 August 1995**. Apologies for the tight deadline.

Robin Shaw

Robin Shaw
Central Management & Communications
3 August 1995

Agreed to
31/08/95
Agreed - 31/8

Mr Briant

NITB are replying directly to question 23.
I propose to send a nil return from NITB Support.
Do you agree?

Terrym Cobe

31/08/95

Note

NIL return notified to CMC.

Terrym Cobe

31/08/95

Mr Kerr

Pl PA (Copy to BIIPB file)

Terrym Cobe
31/08/95



DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

FROM: GAIL MCKIBBIN
30 AUGUST 1995

DEPARTMENTAL CO-ORDINATORS - DANI
(through Private Office) DESS
DENI
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DPP

THE BRITISH-IRISH INTER-PARLIAMENTARY BODY - A STUDY

Professor Buckland of the Institute of Irish Studies, Liverpool University has been invited by the BIIPB to undertake a study covering the whole range of its purpose, conduct, relationships, impact etc. The attached note from Alan Dunn ESL sets out the purpose of the study and seeks input for briefing for Mr Bell and Ms Checkfield who are to meet Professor Buckland.

To enable me to provide the co-ordinated response from NI departments I would therefore be grateful if departments would forward to me by 2.00 pm on Friday 1 September contributions as requested in paragraph 3 of Alan Dunn's minute.

Gail McKibbin

GAIL MCKIBBIN
Central Secretariat

FROM: ALAN DUNN
ESL
29 AUGUST 1995

MRS L DEVLIN ✓
CENTRAL SECRETARIAT - B

cc Mr Bramley - B
Mrs Sear - B
Miss Foster

THE BRITISH-IRISH INTER-PARLIAMENTARY BODY - A STUDY

You will see from the attached papers that Professor Buckland of the Institute of Irish Studies, Liverpool University, has been invited by the BIIPB to undertake a study covering the whole range of its purpose, conduct, relationships, impact etc under the more general headings of (1) the origins, mission and progress to date of the Body and (2) the possible future role and composition of the Body. (See Annex A).

2. Mrs Sear is putting together appropriate briefing for Mr Bell and Ms Checkfield who are to meet Professor Buckland on 7 September to answer questions for which he has given advance notice.

3. Mrs Sear has listed the questions (see Annex B) and has already outlined in bold type some of the responses she proposes to offer. However she would be grateful for any contribution you and Northern Ireland Departments, especially those who have had direct dealings with the various BIIPB committees, may have. While contributions of suggested responses to any of the questions would be very welcome, some specific input to questions 8, 21 through 24 and 28 based on Departmental experiences would be particularly helpful.

4. It would be most helpful if you could undertake to co-ordinate responses from the Northern Ireland Departments and perhaps in view of the tight deadline let Mrs Sear have your comments by the afternoon of 4 September at the latest - with a copy to me for information.

(signed)

ALAN DUNN
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DIVISION
29 AUGUST 1995
OAB EXT 6573

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PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

AIM

As part of its contribution to the present peace process, the British-Irish Inter-Parliamentary Body has invited the Institute of Irish Studies to undertake a study of (i) the origins, mission and progress to date of the Body and (ii) the possible future role(s) and composition of the Body.

OBJECTIVES

The study will investigate:

1. the circumstances leading to the establishment of the BIIPB
the original mission of the Body, with special reference to its role in creating among its members an informed body of opinion on Irish and United matters
the extent to which the original 'vision' was shared and appreciated by its original members.
2. the extent to which the original expectations have been fulfilled or exceeded.
3. the possible future role and composition of the Body with particular reference to 'East-West' relations between the United Kingdom and Ireland and any Northern Ireland settlement.
4. parallel examples elsewhere in the world of transnational bodies, providing a forum for consultation among legislatures and governments, particularly in relation to disputed territories.

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METHODS

The study will combine desk and field work. The latter will include research in libraries and archives and semi-structured interviews.

Informants will be drawn from the following categories: past and present members of the Body; government ministers, backbenchers and civil servants; 'lobby groups' concerned with Anglo-Irish relations and Northern Ireland; commentators on Anglo-Irish relations and on Northern Ireland, including academics and journalists; and witnesses who have given evidence to the Body's committees.

The study will be carried out by Mr Harvey Cox, Deputy Director of the Institute, Professor Buckland, Director. Both have written extensively on the history and politics of Ireland and Northern Ireland.

PHASES

The study will be carried out in two phases. Phase I (July-October 1995) will investigate the origins, mission and progress to date of the Body (Objectives 1 and 2 above) and an interim report will be prepared for the meeting of the Body in Cardiff, 19-21 September 1995. Phase II will be dependent on the outcome of Phase I and will investigate the possible future role and composition of the Body with particular reference to 'East-West' relations between the United Kingdom and Ireland and any Northern Ireland settlement (Objectives 3 and 4).

23 July 1995

Patrick Buckland (Professor)
Director

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BRITISH-IRISH INTER-PARLIAMENTARY BODY
A PROFILE

ANNEX B

Phase 1: Stage 1

Interview with Mr Peter Bell and Ms Clare Checkfield, Thursday, 7 September 1995

Areas of discussion

A. 'MISSION' OF THE BODY

1. When you first heard about the Body, what did you understand its mission, its overriding purpose, to be?
2. Has experience of seeing the Body in action shown your initial understanding of its mission to be correct or not?
3. How far is the mission of the Body in action shown your initial understanding of its mission to be correct or not?
3. How far is the mission of the Body compatible with British interests and policy in Northern Ireland and in Ireland?

B. RELATIONSHIPS

- 4a What is the formal relationship between the NIO and the Body?

Committee Clerks contact named NIO staff who arrange committee visits to Northern Ireland. The NIO is also provided with copies of draft reports and given the opportunity to correct factual errors.

- b How is the relationship between the NIO and the Body perceived by

- British members and officers of the Body
- Irish members and officers of the Body
- Irish officials?

- 5a How often, and in what depth, does the NIO brief the officers or members of the Body?

Infrequently. Depending on the topics being investigated, Committee members might be given a political or security briefing by NIO staff or NIO ministers when they visit Northern Ireland.

- b In briefings does the NIO make distinctions between

- British and Irish members
- British members of different political parties
- Irish members of different political parties

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No.

6. How far, if at all, does the NIO try to influence the composition, agenda or reports of the Body?

Not at all. The NIO or the NI Departments will offer comments and correct any factual errors in draft Committee reports.

7. What priority and weight do NIO ministers give to accepting invitations to address the Body?

Very seriously. The Body has been unfortunate in recent years. The Secretary of State had to cancel delivering a speech to the 1993 UK Plenary Meeting because it coincided with the launch of the Joint Declaration. Both the Secretary of State and Michael Ancram were scheduled to deliver speeches to the 1994 UK Plenary Meeting in Cardiff; Michael Ancram was also taking the question and answer session. That meeting was cancelled due to the political crisis in the Republic of Ireland.

NIO Ministers welcome the fact that the 1995 UK Plenary session is taking place in the parliamentary recess. Both the Secretary of State and Michael Ancram were scheduled to attend and make speeches. The Secretary of State withdrew, because he is making an official visit to Australia at that time.

[The Body does itself no favours by making separate approaches to individual members of the NIO Ministerial team to attend plenary sessions. The Secretary of State, Michael Ancram and Baroness Denton all received invitations. It would not be practical for three of the NIOs ministerial team to attend a plenary session.]

b. How seriously do NIO ministers and officials take the concerns raised by members in questions to ministers?

8. What priority and weight do the NIO and other government departments give to responding to reports of the Body and to implementing their recommendations?

9. How important is the Body to the NIO in carrying out British policy towards Ireland and Northern Ireland?

10. How far, if at all, are there different perceptions of the role and importance of the Body between the NIO in London and the NIO in Belfast?

C. RELATIONSHIPS II

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11a What are the relative 'workloads' of the NIO and the FCO in connection with the Body?

b How far do the interests of the NIO harmonise with those of the FCO in relation to the Body?

12. How far is there an overlap between the membership of the Body and the membership of the Foreign Affairs and Northern Ireland Select Committee?

[I would welcome comments from Mr Lambert on these questions]

13a How far has the absence of the Ulster Unionists affected the credibility and working of the Body?

It is clearly for the Unionist parties to decide whether or not they should take their seats on the Body. We doubt that they will do so while the Body is perceived to be a child of the Anglo-Irish Agreement and considers issues such as policing in Northern Ireland which Unionists believe are nothing to do with Irish TD's.

b What steps has the Body taken to persuade them to participate?

c What further steps, if any, can be taken to persuade Ulster Unionists to participate?

14. With what departments and officials in the Republic does the NIO deal in relation to the Body?

[Can the NI Departments offer any advice and assistance?]

15a How far, if at all, is the Body more important to the Irish government than to the British government?

b How far does the close involvement of the Department of Foreign Affairs in the Body affect the independence of the Body?

Difficult to comment. But the close links between the DFA and the Body do nothing to encourage a view that this is an independent body, and will not encourage unionist participation either.

D. IMPACT OF THE BODY

16a How far is it true to say that, according to one journalist, 'the value of the Body lies in providing a meeting ground for red-necked Irish republicans and the bluest of English Tories', thus reducing 'Irish prickliness and British insensitivity' (Austin Currie) and peeling away 'the veils of mistrust and misunderstanding' (Tom King)?

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How far would you agree with the comment that the Steering Committee has been too cautious in promoting debate, particularly public debate, on sensitive issues because of a desire to avoid political controversy?

Agree entirely. A 1992 report on Permanent Vehicle Check Points and Border Check Points was not published - presumably so as not in the Body's view - to provoke controversy. The NIO felt that this was a good and balanced report which brought together views of the Governments, the Irish Government, the RUC Army, Garda and the Irish Army for the first time. We would have liked this report to have been made widely available and to have been discussed in an open rather than closed session.

17. How far would you agree with the view that the Body gives Irish members the right and the opportunity to interfere in and comment upon the internal affairs of the United Kingdom, but does not offer United Kingdom members equal opportunity to comment on the internal affairs of the Irish Republic?

18. What impact has the 'peace process' had on the standing and work of the Body?

How far has participation in the Peace Forum affected the standing of the Body?

19. How far would you attribute differences in the performance of Committees to

- the effectiveness or otherwise of the Committee Chairmen
- the inability of the Steering Committee to prompt action
- the sensitivity of the issues involved
- the difficulty of getting members together?

The political and security committee has had an unfortunate history insofar as its visits to Northern Ireland are concerned. This has involved, difficulties in setting dates, though only some members being available, through plans changing late in the day. Furthermore, there has been a reluctance of committee members - particularly Irish TD's to spend any more time than absolutely necessary in Northern Ireland. There may be many good reasons for this. But, the perception that the Body is some sort of deluxe Anglo-Irish dining club - a point to which Ken Maginnis has referred in a radio interview - continues to prevail.

20. To what extent do members of one Committee take an interest in the work and reports of the other Committees?

[I do not believe that we can answer this question].

21. How assiduously does the Body follow up on its reports and the responses of government departments?

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[Comments, particularly from the NI Departments would be appreciated]

22 Which of its reports or Plenary Sessions do you consider to have been the most helpful in forwarding the general aims of the Body?

23 Has the Body, in your opinion, been able to influence specific policies or events in relation to, for example,

- | | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| ■ the peace process | ■ European regional aid |
| ■ security in Northern Ireland | ■ environmental implications of energy policy |
| ■ cross-border security | ■ freight transport |
| ■ extradition | ■ tourism |
| ■ the transfer of prisoners | ■ education |
| ■ 'wrongful convictions' | ■ pensions and associated benefits |
| ■ the Irish in Britain? | |

24a How does the performance of the Body compare to that of other parliamentary committees of which you have had experience in relation to, for example,

- quality of membership
- regularity of attendance
- widespread participation in debate
- formation of alliances/groups?

b Are there, in your opinion, any differences in these respects between

- Irish and British members
- Irish members of different political parties
- British members of different political parties?

25. Do you think that the Body has in any way encouraged the impression that it is a body 'which meets in private, publishes little information about its activities, and normally meets on dates which co-incide with Rugby Internationals so that its members will have public funded trips to such matters'.

See the answer to question 19.

26a What do you consider to be the main strengths and weaknesses of the Body?

b How far has the Body fulfilled your own or the NIO's expectations?

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E. FUTURE

27. Mr Reynold, addressing the Body as Tablescach on 28 April 1994, said that

- (i) 'if circumstances justified it' Ireland might enter into a 'closer relationship' with Britain which could be modelled on examples between EU countries 'such as the Nordic or Benelux countries enjoy or indeed France and Germany, though they of course are of much more equal size than we are'; and
- (ii) the Intergovernmental Council and the Parliamentary Body were envisaged back in 1980 and 1981 as 'an embryonic form of such a possible structure'.

How far would you agree with both or either of Mr Reynold's statements?

See separate briefing on the NORDIC Council.

28a How far have the NIO and other departments given consideration to the future of the Body?

b Why did the Framework Documents not assign a role to the Body?

29. In the event of a 'settlement' in Northern Ireland, do you think that the Body

- should cease to exist altogether
- should continue in the same form
- should be re-constituted?

30. Apart from issues relating to Northern Ireland, what East-West matters do you think that the Body, either in its present form or in a different form, should deal with?

31. If the Body were to continue in substantially the same form, would you suggest any changes in, for example, its composition and procedures to increase its effectiveness?

32. If the Body were to be reconstituted in some way, do you think that it should

- remain essentially an advisory body
- become a formal part of the legislative process of both parliaments, perhaps providing a 'committee stage' for legislation of common interest
- become a 'sort of court of appeal' for any settlement in Northern Ireland?

33. How far do you think that the effectiveness of the Body might be increased if it had, for example,

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- a separate full-time secretariat, including research facilities
- its own dedicated premises
- the power to summon witnesses
- ministerial representatives
- more varied ways of initiating business, including interest groups?

34. How far do you think that matters of common concern between the United Kingdom and Ireland might be effectively dealt with by joint meetings of the relevant committees of both parliaments?
35. In any decision about the future of the Body, how far would the interests and concerns of the NIO coincide with those of the FCO?
36. Why should relations between the United Kingdom and Ireland be overseen by such a Body and not Ireland's relations with other countries.

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