

P/A on Regist File N° : C 97. **RESTRICTED**

FROM: P N BELL
BRITISH SECRETARY
15 June 1998

Don McLean
18/6/98.



cc See Distribution List

Mr Ferguson

cc Mr Gibson
Mr Warnock
Mr Ray *Mr*
✓ 18/6/98.

NORTH/SOUTH CO-OPERATION: LIAISON ARRANGEMENTS

attached!
Thank you for sending me a copy of your minute of 8 June. I do not dissent in the slightest from what you propose, but I should be grateful if - as I understand Tim O'Connor will be doing on the Irish side - you could ensure that we in the Secretariat are kept abreast of developments. This is, partly, for tactical reasons; we should avoid a situation where the Secretariat, with our interests in all A-I matters affecting NI, is blind to an increasingly important aspect of our relationship with the Irish while it remains the responsibility of a single Secretary of State. Second, because in parallel with the arrangements you propose, we are also embarking here on a series of working lunches with NI Permanent Secretaries to whose exchange on North/South matters the Irish now attach great importance. (To ensure, from the NI Departmental side as well, that there are no blind spots, I have arranged for you to attend each of these lunches.)

2. As to what the Irish are now doing, which your proposed arrangements seeks to mirror, my understanding is as follows. The Irish have established a Steering Group to monitor full aspects of the implementation of the Agreement. This is chaired by Dermot Gallagher and, in addition to DFA representatives, the Departments of the Taoiseach, of Justice, the AG and others are represented. There is, however, a Subgroup responsible for Strand II matters. Very recently, I understand, Dermot Gallagher chaired a meeting with all

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the relevant Dublin Secretaries-General as much to ensure the policy was fully understood, and that implementation programme was carried ahead with all deliberate speed as to discuss detail. The immediate effect of that meeting was that Tim O'Connor and Wally Kirwan were sent round the Dublin Departments to discuss the possibilities in greater detail. Their aim, after consulting their own colleagues, is to meet your select group toward the end of this month.

3. As I have mentioned to you, it would seem therefore that Irish staff work is a little less developed than our own. I therefore thought it useful, as did David Donoghue, to take them through the thinking underlying your own useful note. My hope, as with the similar strategy I am pursuing over the BIIGC, is that the Irish will, in the absence of any clear and distinct ideas of their own, seize on and make their own ideas (good ones, as it happens) that we have fed them.

4. I should be grateful for any further advice, independent of the lunch programme, on further ideas that you might want me to feed into the Irish system.

Signed

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 DEPARTMENT OF
 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

17 JUL 1998

cc All Permanent Secretaries
 Mr Jeffrey
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 Mr Brooker
 Mr Fergusson, RED
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 Mr Smyth
 Mr Gamble

PS/Mr Semple

NORTH/SOUTH CO-OPERATION: LIAISON ARRANGEMENTS

1. Mr Semple and I discussed in Dublin last week how we might organise on our side in preparation for further ad hoc liaison with the Irish on areas for North/South co-operation and the work programme envisaged in the Agreement. I had hoped to speak separately to a number of colleagues around the office but (except for Stephen Quinn) I've failed to do so. I thought nevertheless I should get a proposal down on paper.

Current Liaison Arrangements

2. We have already agreed at an earlier meeting of the Liaison Group that there should be an ad hoc group comprising a sub-set of the membership of the main Group to deal with the specific issue of North/South co-operation and the practical implications of the Agreement (arrangements for the Ministerial Council, its Secretariat, the work programme and so on). Liaison on feasibility assessments of the areas for co-operation will be an element of the ad hoc group's work.

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**FROM: DAVID FERGUSON
CENTRAL SECRETARIAT
8 JUNE 1998**

cc NI Permanent Secretaries
Mr Jeffrey
Mr Watkins
Mr Stephens
Mr Hunter
Mr McCusker
Mr Bell
Mr Brooker
Mr Fergusson, RID
Mr Gray, OLC
Mr McCartney
Mr Smyth
Mr Gamble

PS/Mr Semple

NORTH/SOUTH CO-OPERATION: LIAISON ARRANGEMENTS

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Levels of Liaison

3. It was acknowledged at Tuesday's Liaison Group meeting that in broad terms there were two levels on which we need to engage on feasibility assessments for the areas listed in the Agreement (p.13, Annex A):

- ♦ cross-sectoral, common issues, mainly in the finance, personnel and legal fields (for example, funding arrangements, terms and conditions and the legal status of an implementation body);
- ♦ sectoral issues specific to each of the areas under consideration (for example, technical or administrative matters relating to, say, inland fisheries or the environment).

4. The split may not always be neat in practice, but the distinction is nevertheless worth making and keeping in mind.

Proposition

5. It was also agreed at the Liaison Group meeting in Dublin last week that on feasibility assessments Tim O'Connor will lead on the Irish side and that I will lead on our side. Following a conversation which I had with Tim in the margins on Tuesday I suggest we set up a small team to engage with the Irish on cross-sectoral issues. This would mirror arrangements that are being put in place in Dublin. The team would comprise:

- a Central Secretariat representative (me for the moment);
- a central finance representative (Stephen Quinn, at least initially);
- a central personnel representative (John Hunter or Carol Moore?);

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- a legal adviser (Denis McCartney and/or George Gray?).
- 6. The team would also facilitate exchanges on sectoral matters, bringing together the relevant experts in Departments on particular areas of co-operation. It should not get in the way of normal, routine, bilateral meetings between officials at senior level, although it will be important for the cross-sectoral team to know what is going on, especially if discussions touch on areas for enhancing co-operation.
- 7. Colleagues in London may wish to suggest a representative for the cross-sectoral group but I suggest no more than one, to keep things tight.

Conclusion

- 8. I do not anticipate a meeting with the Irish on any of this for at least 2 or 3 weeks, partly because (as I have said to some) they are a bit behind us in their thinking and partly because we need to do some work ourselves on pulling together our own feasibility assessments.
- 9. Meanwhile, I'd welcome views on what is proposed.

David Ferguson
DAVID FERGUSON
PB 28196

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