

P 27 FEB 2003 7

Mary Bunting

Sent by: Liz Murphy

To: HOCS/OFMDFM/DFP@DFP

Subject: COR/37/2003 - REQUEST FOR A MEETING TO DISCUSS A  
COMMUNITY RELATIONS MATTER

07/02/03 12:51

Please see attached.



SOS 81 03 - REQUEST FOR A MEETING TO DISCUSS THE CHURCH ROLE IN COMMUNITY RELATIONS  
Thank you.

Liz Murphy  
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7/2/03  
1. Mr. Walker  
2. Mr. Mallon  
To see & P/Apl.  
P. McAuley  
7/2/03

Mr. Ard  
Mr. Maguire  
Ms. Ward  
to see  
& pa  
on  
'Religious Ethos'  
file

7/2/03

Timing:

Draft advice and reply for Secretary  
requested for 7 February.

Presentational Issues:

None at present.

Recommendations:

That the Secretary of State speaks to Archbishop  
Eames on the telephone and follows up with a  
meeting if he considers this necessary.

Background:

1. On 14 January the Prime Minister met the leaders of the four main Churches in  
Northern Ireland over breakfast in Downing Street. The Secretary of State was  
present at the meeting. (A confidential note of the meeting is attached for ease of  
reference.)

2. The meeting covered a general political overview and the Churches' role on  
community relations. A number of other matters were dealt with through  
correspondence. Archbishop Sean Brady handed over letters on Iraq and on



# THE OFFICE OF THE FIRST MINISTER AND DEPUTY FIRST MINISTER

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Mary Bunting, Director**

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**FROM: MARY BUNTING  
7 FEBRUARY 2003**

**cc Will Haire  
Chris Stewart  
Patricia McAuley  
Rosalie Flanagan  
Stephen Grimason  
Stewart Johnston**

**TO: NIGEL HAMILTON**

**COR/37/2003 - REQUEST FOR A MEETING TO DISCUSS A COMMUNITY  
RELATIONS MATTER**

**Summary:**

Following a meeting between the leaders of the four main Churches in Northern Ireland and the Prime Minister in January, the Most Reverend Dr E H A Eames has written to the Secretary of State requesting an opportunity to speak personally to him on a community relations matter.

**Timing:**

Draft advice and reply for Secretary of State requested for 7 February.

**Presentational Issues:**

None at present.

**Recommendation:**

That the Secretary of State speaks to Archbishop Eames on the telephone and follows up with a meeting if he considers this necessary.

**Background**

1. On 14 January the Prime Minister met the leaders of the four main Churches in Northern Ireland over breakfast in Downing Street. The Secretary of State was present at the meeting. (A confidential note of the meeting is attached for ease of reference.)
2. The meeting covered a general political overview and the Churches' role on community relations. A number of other matters were dealt with through correspondence. Archbishop Sean Brady handed over letters on Iraq and on a



reference to religion in the proposed EU Constitution and Russell Birney handed over a letter on the state of agriculture in Northern Ireland. Archbishop Eames mentioned the Single Equality Bill and indicated that the Churches would write to the Prime Minister on this in due course. (This letter has now been received and a draft reply was forwarded on 4 February from the Secretary of State's Private Office to Matthew Rycroft in No. 10).

3. During the discussion on the political situation there was some discussion about a possible role for Church leaders on decommissioning. I understand that Archbishop Eames did not warm to this idea and had concerns about Church leaders involvement and that Archbishop Brady was equally cautious.
4. The letter from Archbishop Eames is very vague as to what the matter he wishes to discuss with the Secretary of State might be. It may touch on some of the issues raised through correspondence at the meeting in January but I think this is unlikely since he indicates that the matter is causing him "considerable concern" and that in light of the discussions with the Prime Minister he feels sure that the Prime Minister "would be concerned in respect of the matter" to which he refers. He also indicates that this problem is something that David Trimble is aware of and that he understands that Mr Trimble would be speaking to the Secretary of State concerning it. This would suggest that the matter may be related to the ongoing political process and that the Secretary of State may already be aware of what the issue is.

#### **Recommendation**

5. It is recommended that the Secretary of State speaks to Archbishop Eames on the phone and then follows up with a meeting if he considers it necessary.
6. A draft submission from you to the Secretary of State is attached.

**MARY BUNTING**

**☎ Ext 22735**



**DRAFT**

**FROM: NIGEL HAMILTON**

**cc (see below)**

**TO: SECRETARY OF STATE (B&L)**

**SOS 81/03 – REQUEST FOR A MEETING TO DISCUSS THE CHURCH ROLE IN COMMUNITY RELATIONS**

**Summary:** Following a meeting between the leaders of the four main Churches in Northern Ireland and the Prime Minister in January the Most Reverend Dr E H A Eames has written to you requesting an opportunity to speak personally to you on a community relations matter.

**Timing:** Draft advice and reply requested for 7 February.

**Presentational Issues:** None at present.

**Recommendation:** That you speak to Archbishop Eames on the telephone and follow up with a meeting if you consider it necessary.

**Background**

1. You were present at the Prime Minister's breakfast meeting on 14 January with the leaders of the four main Churches in Northern Ireland.
2. The meeting covered a general political overview and the Churches' role on community relations. A number of other matters were dealt with through correspondence ie Archbishop Sean Brady handed letters on Iraq and on a reference in religion in the proposed EU Constitution and Russell Birney handed over a letter on the state of agriculture in Northern Ireland, Archbishop Eames mentioned the Single Equality Bill and indicated that the Churches would write to the Prime Minister on this in due course. (This letter has now been received and a draft reply was forwarded on 4 February from your Private Office to Matthew Rycroft in No. 10).
3. During the discussion on the political situation there was some discussion about a possible role for Church leaders on decommissioning. I understand that Archbishop Eames did not warm to this idea and had concerns about Church leaders involvement and that Archbishop Brady was equally cautious.



4. The letter from Archbishop Eames is very vague about what he wishes to discuss with you. It may touch on some of the issues raised in correspondence at the meeting in January but I think this is unlikely since he indicates that the matter is causing him "considerable concern" and that in light of the discussions with the Prime Minister he feels sure that the Prime Minister "would be concerned in respect of the matter" to which he refers. He also indicates that this problem is something that David Trimble is aware of and that he understands that Mr Trimble would be speaking to you concerning it. This would suggest that the matter may be related to the ongoing political process and that you may already be aware of what the issue is.

#### **Recommendation**

5. **It is recommended that you speak to Archbishop Eames on the phone concerning this and then follow up with a meeting if you consider this necessary.**

**NIGEL HAMILTON**



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