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Mr O'Neill to see
you please. 18/19

BRITISH-IRISH ASSOCIATION

BACKGROUND NOTE

1. The annual meeting of the British-Irish Association has traditionally been an important event in the calendar of those interested in Anglo-Irish relations. The Conference is modelled on that of the Anglo-German Society's meetings at Koenigswinter and provides a venue where politicians, officials, academics and journalists can exchange ideas and views freely on Northern Ireland. Successive Irish Governments have been represented at political and official level at the Conferences. The Conference operates on "Chatham House rules" which means that remarks are off the record and no remarks, either in debate or socially, may be attributed.

2. The theme of this year's Conference is "Who Runs Northern Ireland?". The intention is to examine how Northern Ireland functions under direct rule. The underlying proposition is that, in the absence of devolved government, Northern Ireland is being administered with minimal accountability and democracy. On Saturday morning the participants will be split into four working groups in order to consider four individual sectors from this point of view:
 - The Rule of Law;
 - Economic Management and Employment;
 - Health and Social Policies;
 - Education: policy and practice.

A series of questions, some of which involve comparisons with the Republic, will serve as the framework for the discussions within each group. The questions are annexed to this note. The group discussions will be followed on Sunday morning by a Plenary Session and a Final Session.

3. Speaking points for a possible intervention on behalf of the Irish Government in the Final Session on Sunday morning are included on the brief. These range across the major issues to be covered by the Conference. The BIA has dropped its earlier practice of inviting Ministers from both Governments to deliver formal speeches over dinner on the Friday and Saturday evenings.
4. The British participants this year will include Peter Brooke, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland; Richard Needham, Minister of State at the NIO; and Sir Patrick Mayhew, the Attorney General. The Unionist representatives will be Ken Maginnis M.P., Reg Empey and Chris McGimpsey. The attendance of Sammy Wilson of the DUP is uncertain. The SDLP will be represented by Mark Durkan, Sean Farren and Brian Feeny. Deputies Dermot Ahern and Michael Martin (Fianna Fail) are due to attend. Fine Gael will be represented by Deputy Jim O'Keefe, Labour by Deputy Ruairi Quinn and the Progressive Democrats by Michael McDowell SC. The British Labour Party will be represented by its Northern Ireland spokesman, Kevin McNamara M.P., and by Clare Short M.P.. The final list of participants will be available on arrival.

Anglo-Irish Division

September 1991

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