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(26)
W. G. Murphy
by Kirwan
11/12 *11.12.91*

FAX

9 December, 1991

For: Mr. John Kirwan, Private Secretary to the Minister for
Foreign Affairs of Ireland

From: Seán O hUiginn

Re: Mr. Brooke's NIO Team

1. Secretary of State Brooke wishes the Minister to be aware of a switch in his Ministerial team, to be announced today. Dr. Brian Mawhinney takes over responsibility for law and order from Lord Belstead, who, in turn, assumes responsibility for matters of finance and personnel, formerly handled by Dr. Mawhinney. (The move clearly strengthens the role of Dr. Mawhinney, who retains his responsibility for political matters).

ENDS

cc: Mr. Brosnan
Mr. Nally
Ambassador London
Counsellors A-I

(26)

highly likely
PST
PSS
Mr Nally
Mr Sull
Councillors
A1
8th
9/12

SECURE FAX NO. 1196

TO: HQ FROM: Belfast - 9 December, 1991 PAGES: 2

FOR: A/Sec O hUiginn FROM: Joint Secretary

Subject: Mawhinney becomes Security Minister

1. I asked Robert Alston if there was any particular background to the attached announcement by the Secretary of State this morning that Lord Belstead, the Deputy Secretary of State, would be giving up his Law and Order responsibilities to the Minister of State, Dr. Mawhinney, and that Dr. Mawhinney would be giving up his responsibilities in charge of the Department of Finance and Personnel and the Central Community Relations Unit to Lord Belstead who remains in charge of the Department of Education in Northern Ireland. Alston's official response was that Belstead is very little in Northern Ireland at present because of duties as Spokesman in the House of Lords for the Department of Education and Science (Britain) and that he is responsible for some complex legislation that is going through that House.
2. It is likely that the change has been made for other reasons also. The immediate reaction on Downtown Radio here was that Lord Belstead had been "stripped" of his security responsibilities. He has never cut a credible figure here on security. Apart from his very English and diffident manner, his membership of the Lords made him a doubtful proposition for a job which has normally been taken by a member of the Commons. The recent escalation of violence and, especially, the IRA bomb attack on Loyalists in Crumlin Road Jail combined to put him under pressure and Unionist politicians called for his resignation after the Crumlin Road incident which is now the occasion of a review of Government policy on segregation. The change may also reflect some internal tensions. Officials have been saying to me privately for some time that neither Lord Belstead or the Secretary of State communicate very easily with the Unionists on security matters and that there are disagreements between them and Dr Mawhinney.
3. It is likely that Dr Mawhinney will present a distinctly harder image on security. His new responsibility will also make him a more important figure in the talks process where he has been the principal channel of communication for some time with the two Unionist parties; and it will of course bring him into the Anglo-Irish Conference.
4. The transfer of responsibilities marks another step forward for Dr. Mawhinney who is ambitious to gain Cabinet rank after the next election. As you know, he entered Parliament at the same time as the Prime Minister in a neighbouring constituency in East Anglia and he has remained on friendly terms. Mr Major promoted him to Minister of State and it may be that today's announcement is a further sign of the Prime Minister's favour.

Mawhinney
already Security
Spokesman in
H.C. 8th



NORTHERN IRELAND Information Service

9 December 1991

Press Release

NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE: MINISTERIAL RESPONSIBILITIES

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, the Rt Hon Peter Brooke MP, today announced the following changes in Ministerial responsibilities.

The Rt Hon Lord Belstead, HM Paymaster General and deputy to the Secretary of State, will become responsible for the Department of Finance and Personnel and for the Central Community Relations Unit. He will relinquish his responsibilities for Law and Order.

Dr Brian Mawhinney MP, Minister of State, will become responsible for Law and Order, and will relinquish his responsibilities for the Department of Finance and Personnel and for the Central Community Relations Unit.

The Secretary of State continues to have overall responsibility for the work of the Northern Ireland Office and the Northern Ireland Departments.

Note for Editors

These are the only changes in responsibilities from those set out in the NIO Press Release dated 4 December 1990 (copy attached).