NOTE OF A MEETING HELD IN NIO(L) ON 5 JUNE TO CONSIDER THE SCOPE FOR DEVELOPING POLITICAL CO-OPERATION WITH THE REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

RID, FCO

Mr Newington )

Mr Thomas

1. The purpose of the meeting was to consider how to take forward the commitment made by the two Prime Ministers on 21 May "to develop new and closer political co-operation between their two Governments".

Those present: Mr Moriarty

Miss Kelley
Mr Buxton
Mr Derek Hill
Mr David Hill

- 2. Progress ought to be made with this before the next summit meeting. We might be able to put this off until the beginning of 1981 but Mr Newington reported that Mr Haughey had already requested a 10 minute meeting with the Prime Minister in the margins of the Venice European Council and might use this to maintain the momentum of their relationship with a view to holding the next summit in September.
- HMG could give a fairly positive response to any Irish desire for practical co-operation. Our aim was "to keep Mr Haughey sweet", ie to maintain good relations by being as forthcoming as possible in the area of Anglo-Irish co-operation with a view to dissuading the Irish from making unhelpful comments on NI matters. The trend of history over the previous sixty years has been to raise barriers within the British Isles and it might be possible to promote convergence instead of divergence. Mr Haughey would be able to present such developments as part of a process of removing barriers to eventual Irish unity but HMG should ensure that they were defensible against accusations that it was promoting Irish unity. In this context it was noted that co-operation in some areas would lead to self-evident mutual advantage and that, in general, it was very much in line with the European Community policy of "harmonisation". It was also noted that the common legislative and administrative background of the UK and the Republic might make Anglo-Irish harmonisation easier to achieve than Community harmonisation (and that to achieve the former would strengthen the UK's position in any negotiations on the latter).
- 4. It was agreed that the first step should be to find out how the Irish wanted to develop "new and closer political co-operation". It might be that they were only seeking a somewhat ethereal arrangement, and if they did appear interested in practical co-operation in specific areas it would be necessary to discover which areas they had in mind. Mr Newington said he would arrange

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an exploratory meeting with Irish officials for a mixed FCO/NIO team which should include a representative from the Central Secretariat.

5. In preparation for these discussions, the meeting went on to consider (in a fairly cursory manner) some of the areas where there was some potential for political co-operation and to examine possible structures which might be set up to implement this. It was not thought necessary at this stage to mount a massive exercise within Whitehall to examine the implications of these proposals, though this might be necessary in due course. It would, however, be useful to have NICS comments at an early stage; it was noted that the proposals were in line with the general theme of Mr Bell's memorandum of 9 May.

## Areas of Potential Co-operation

6. A list of the areas of potential co-operation which were discussed is attached, together with a brief summary of the comments made on them. Many are unlikely to lead, via legislative or administrative changes to complete convergence of practice but there is plenty of scope for consultation, co-operation and general statements of intent to co-operate.

### Structures

7. The Irish may be more concerned with the presentation than with the substance of Anglo-Irish co-operation so there may be a need to consider new structures of co-operation. The AIEC machinery is available and has not aroused controversy. It already has the contacts within Whitehall, at Stormont and in Dublin to study the potential areas of co-operation which might be identified and to prepare reports and recommendations. It would be possible to raise its profile through increased publicity or through the establishment of a permanent joint secretariat or by the sponsoring of Ministerial meetings under its aegis. These might be formalised as a Council of Anglo-Irish Ministers on the model of the European Council of Ministers. Alternatively, it might be possible to arrange regular bi-lateral meetings between the Prime Ministers, supported by appropriate Ministers, on the model of the regular Anglo-French and Anglo-German political meetings.

Downed Hill

D J R HILL Security and International Division, London

9 June 1980

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AREAS OF POTENTIAL HARMONISATION AND POLITICAL CO-OPERATION BETWEEN THE UK AND THE REPUBLIC OF IRELAND.

# Right for UK citizens to vote in Irish elections

This might in due course lead to pressure on the UK to amend the regulations which prevent all but long-term residents of Northern Ireland from voting in local and Assembly elections. But for the moment the onus was on the Irish to do something. Haughey has publicly promised to consider the matter.

## Postal/telephone charges

## Drover and vehicle licensing

## Taxes and excise duties

It was recognised that this was a very sensitive area indeed and that probably neither country could subordinate its monetary or fiscal policies to the need to keep in step with the other. Nevertheless there might be scope for consultation and some co-operation.

# Debt collection/enforcement of maintenance payments

## Harmonisation of law

Subject to advice, it was felt that this area might give rise to a lot of useful co-operation, particularly as the two countries shared the same basic Common Law. The Law Commission might be encouraged to bear Irish law in mind and to speak to the Irish Law Commission. There may be scope for more formalised mutual consultation on changes in domestic law.

### Homosexual Law Reform

A specific, though thorny, example of harmonising laws. Both NI and the Republic face legal challenges to the present law in this area.

#### Repatriation of prisoners

This might be a sensitive issue but the Government has already agreed on the general desirability of bi-lateral arrangements in this field.

#### Investment incentives

It is often damaging to both NI and the Republic to bid against each other for the same investment, thus driving the cost upwards.

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# Regulations and standards

eg food additives, noise levels, building standards, health and safety, patents, trade-marks and pharmaceuticals.

## Transport and Communications

Air routes, roads, ferries, ports, STD throughout the British Isles. Much co-operation is already taking place in these areas.

## Continental Shelf

The Taoiseach's suggestion of a joint administration for the disputed areas, is a non-starter but it may mean that he will be receptive to our suggestions for ending the Carlingford Lough dispute.

# Bloodstock registers, animal health and breeding regulations

The two parts of Ireland both have higher standards than GB standy and there appears to be close co-operation and consultation already.

## Common Registers of Companies, Land, Directors etc

Reciprocal access to existing lists. Not much scope for co-operation.

## Company Law

Differences are already slight because companies would otherwise move to the most favourable area.

# Recognition of examination standards, vocational qualifications

It is doubtful whether any problem exists.

## Direct Broadcasting by Satellite

A single satellite to cover the whole of the UK is already being considered. Perhaps it could be a British Isles satellite.

#### Tourism

Joint promotions may be possible but there is already a lot of co-operation and probably little room for development.

#### Welfare benefits/social services

It is unlikely that the Republic will wish or be able to raise its rates sufficiently.

# Services in Border areas

There should be scope for co-operation in the provision of all sorts of services in border areas, eg hospital, educational and library facilities. As a minimum it should be possible to develop reciprocal arrangements.

# Community and International Political Matters

The Republic is rapidly emerging as a confident and prosperous member of the European Community. There could be a great deal to be gained from presenting a united 'anglophone' front within the EC. Internationally, the Republic has great influence with Third World and non-Aligned countries which could be used to further any Anglo-Irish initiatives in international matters. Co-operation might be directed through regular summits on the model of the regular Anglo-French and Anglo-German political meetings.