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RBS/4/160

FROM: R B SPENCE  
US CEN SEC  
DATE: 10 APRIL 1990



cc PS/PUS - B  
PS/Sir Kenneth Bloomfield  
Mr Burns - B  
Mr Ledlie - B  
Mr Thomas - B  
Mr Alston - B  
Mr Blackwell - B  
Mr Dodds - B  
Mr Hill - B  
Mr R Wilson - B  
Principal Secretariat - B

MR HALLETT - B

IC(90)2 - INTERGOVERNMENTAL CONFERENCE BRIEFING

I attach briefing on:-

1. Cross-border Social and Economic Co-operation
2. The Transfrontier Programme
3. Irish Paper on Implications of 1992
3. Public Appointments
4. Irish Language

Briefing on the North West Study and the Eglinton/Letterkenny airports will follow.

(SIGNED)

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## CROSS-BORDER SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION

Line to Take

I suggest that the first two topics which we should explore at Conference level should be tourism and transport.

We should now commission for each subject a paper describing the existing level of cross-border co-operation and indicating the possible scope for further co-operation.

These papers would be tabled at a subsequent Conference meeting and the responsible Ministers would be invited to attend that part of the Conference.

Background

Annex A contains the paper dated 29 June 1990 from the Secretariat which was agreed at the last meeting of the Conference.

The Irish side are keen to take agriculture as one of the first items. We believe that it is better to start with issues which should be easier to handle. Agriculture would be too wide a topic and the Irish are inclined to press the unrealistic line that NI farmers would do much better if Dublin could handle their case in Brussels.

It is important that Conference discussion on these social and economic issues is based as far as possible on an analysis agreed initially at official level of the present arrangements and a realistic assessment of the scope for further co-operation.

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## SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION: PROGRAMME OF FUTURE WORK

In the Review of the Working of the Intergovernmental Conference, the two Governments affirmed their conviction that cross-border economic and social co-operation is of obvious benefit to all.

It was agreed that future Conference meetings would include a systematic programme of assessment of all the main sectors to determine where the process of co-operation can most fruitfully be expanded. It was also agreed that, where appropriate, the responsible Ministers North and South would participate in the work of the Conference.

Preliminary work carried out by officials during and since the Review has suggested that the areas which may offer most scope for further co-operation include:

- agriculture
- energy
- environmental issues
- fisheries
- health
- human resource development
- tourism
- transport

It is, therefore, proposed to concentrate initially on those areas and to identify in each area the opportunities to expand co-operation on a mutually beneficial basis.

In a number of areas, a considerable degree of co-operation already exists and there are ongoing contacts at official and Ministerial level. In such areas, it may be desirable to invite the appropriate Ministers to report progress at an early meeting of the Conference.

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In other sectors, further detailed exploratory work is required and this will now be taken forward, initially by the officials of the Departments directly involved, leading to meetings between the responsible Departmental Ministers. The results of each Ministerial meeting would be reported to the Conference and where the issues merited, there might be a discussion at Conference meeting with the responsible Ministers in attendance.

A small group of officials should retain general oversight of overall progress in expanding cross-border co-operation.

## Background

Secretariat

29 January 1990

1. The Community Initiative for frontier regions (now known as Inter Reg) is aimed at accelerating the integration of frontier areas into the single internal market. It requires co-ordinated action across borders and envisages joint planning and management of programmes.
2. The Commission has produced guidelines (and an exploratory memorandum) which should be formally approved by July and a formal submission from NI/ROI is required by the early autumn. The Commission will insist on prior consultation with local interests.
3. The Commission has clarified that the initiative would apply to the whole of NI excluding Belfast and to the border counties in ROI. It has also explained that it will only support proposals which are for the direct benefit of the border areas. (This would exclude some of the all-Ireland proposals in our earlier submission but include most of the other tentative ideas.) The amount of money available will reflect the quality of the programme submitted and the population and level of development of the border areas. We suspect that 75 to 100 million ECU may be available for an Irish programme.

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**TRANSFRONTIER PROGRAMME****Line to Take**

We need to agree a reasonable timetable for taking forward the joint discussions with the Commission on the broad content of a programme, on the necessary consultation with local interests and the eventual preparation of detailed proposals.

**Background**

1. The Community initiative for frontier regions (now known as Inter-Reg) is aimed at accelerating the integration of border areas into the single internal market. It requires co-ordinated action across borders and envisages joint planning and management of programmes.
2. The Commission has produced guidelines (and an exploratory memorandum) which should be formally approved by July and a formal submission from NI/ROI is required by the early autumn. The Commission will insist on prior consultation with local interests.
3. The Commission has clarified that the initiative would apply to the whole of NI excluding Belfast and to the border counties in ROI. It has also explained that it will only support proposals which are for the direct benefit of the border areas. (This would exclude some of the all-Ireland proposals in our earlier submission but include most of the other tentative ideas.) The amount of money available will reflect the quality of the programme submitted and the population and level of development of the border areas; we suspect that 75 to 100 million ECU may be available for an Irish programme.

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4. The Irish side (and the SDLP) has consistently emphasised the importance of mounting a strong case for EC support for a cross-border programme. However, there have in practice been many difficulties. It took a long time to get agreement on a joint paper designed to open up discussion with the Commission (exchanges started in early October and an agreed paper was only handed over in mid-February). At the exploratory meeting with the Commission on 6 April, the Irish representatives' approach was obstructive and they appeared to be playing for time in order to ensure that the ROI maximised its income from all Community initiatives (even if this meant sacrificing income from the transfrontier programme in order to earn more for ROI under other initiatives).
5. Our interests lie in pressing ahead at a reasonable speed and working as closely as possible with the Commission. Particularly in view of the perception that NI did badly in the main allocations under the enhanced structural funds, we need to be seen to be pressing for a better result under the Community initiatives. We must also, of course, be careful to avoid building up unrealistic expectations or to create difficult public expenditure problems for ourselves by promoting proposals for which there is no existing PE provision.
6. The next step should be the preparation of a short NI/ROI paper which would set out, still in broad terms, the main elements of a possible programme based on our original paper and taking account of the Commission's initial reactions. This paper should be prepared by mid-May and then discussed in late May/early June with the Commission. The paper might then be used as a basis for consultation with local interests, before we got down to preparing a detailed programme of proposals.

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7. We need, therefore, to press the Irish side to agree to a reasonable timetable for this work and to prevent them determining the pace of developments to suit their own ends.

Line to Take

I look forward to seeing, in advance of publication, a draft of the paper which has been commissioned on the possible implications of 1992 for the whole island of Ireland.

Background

1. Following a commitment given last November to the Dail by Mr Haughey, the DFA has been preparing a publication on the impact of 1992 on the whole of Ireland.
2. It is understood that the document will consist of an overview written by the Department of Finance and a number of papers by consultants and academics commissioned by DFA covering topics like transport, tourism, energy, agriculture, the environment and the economy. The paper was due to be published before Easter but this seems to have slipped for practical reasons.
3. The Irish side appear to be unconcerned about the sensitivities of preparing such a paper affecting part of the UK, or about ignoring the commitment in the May 1989 Review that the Conference should provide "a valuable forum for both sides to consider and assess the cross-border implications of the Single European Market". They regard the paper as a constructive contribution to the debate on the impact of 1992.
4. The Irish side has now agreed to let us see a draft of the paper prior to publication. What action we take depends upon what the paper says. The options could include:-

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## IRISH PAPER ON IMPLICATIONS OF 1992

Line to Take

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Background

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4. The Irish side has now agreed to let us see a draft of the paper prior to publication. What action we take depends upon what the paper says. The options could include:-

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- 4.1 not objecting to its publication but generally playing down in public the paper's significance;
- 4.2 pressing the Irish to make corrections, amendments etc to meet any concerns we have before publication; or
- 4.3 urging the Irish not to publish the paper at all, but to use it as a basis for further discussion through the Conference.

It would be helpful if officials had a preliminary meeting to prepare for discussion at Conference level.

## Background

1. The Irish side has recently tabled a paper on public appointments which calls for "specific affirmative measures" within a "specific time frame" to meet the commitment on the Review to "the principle that public bodies should be so constituted as to enjoy the widest possible respect and acceptance throughout the community".
2. The Irish paper is very critical of the present position and expresses deep disappointment at "the rate of success of our nominations from the nationalist community". It presses for consideration of a system of proportionality in the nominations to public bodies by District Councils. It argues that many of the Government's nominees to public bodies, whilst Catholics, are "not perceived as reflecting the nationalist position" and that there must be a "demonstrable balance in political terms" particularly on the most important public bodies. The paper criticises our reluctance to appoint politically active people to some public bodies. The Irish press their wish to nominate specific people for specific posts.
3. Many of the points in the Irish paper are unacceptable to us and it may, therefore, be difficult to agree, as the Irish

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## PUBLIC APPOINTMENTS

### Line to Take

We have a number of matters to discuss in relation to public appointments. I think that it would be helpful if officials had a preliminary meeting to prepare for discussion at Conference level.

### Background

1. The Irish side has recently tabled a paper on public appointments which calls for "specific affirmative measures" within a "specific time frame" to meet the commitment on the Review to "the principle that public bodies should be so constituted as to enjoy the widest possible respect and acceptance throughout the community".
2. The Irish paper is very critical of the present position and expresses deep disappointment at "the rate of success of our nominations from the nationalist community". It presses for consideration of a system of proportionality in the nominations to public bodies by District Councils. It argues that many of the Government's nominees to public bodies, whilst Catholics, are "not perceived as reflecting the nationalist position" and that there must be a "demonstrable balance in political terms" particularly on the most important public bodies. The paper criticises our reluctance to appoint politically active people to some public bodies. The Irish press their wish to nominate specific people for specific posts.
3. Many of the points in the Irish paper are unacceptable to us and it may, therefore, be difficult to agree, as the Irish

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propose, a joint paper for submission to the Conference. However, the next step should be a meeting through the Secretariat to discuss the Irish paper.

#### Issues to be discussed

There are a number of issues relating to the Irish language which we need to discuss. Officials should meet through the Secretariat to prepare the ground.

#### Background

1. The Irish side tabled in November a lengthy paper raising a number of questions about State support for Irish language education, to which we responded in March. We have raised formally through the Secretariat the ROI requirement for teachers to be competent in Irish which is a serious impediment to NI teachers seeking employment there.
2. There are also a number of Irish language issues discussed in the past which the Irish side are likely to revive, eg. the prohibition on the erection of street signs in Irish.
3. Other issues may emerge from the commitment in the May 1989 Review to recognise the importance of the Irish language in the general context of respecting the different cultural traditions in NI. The Irish side will be aware of Dr Mahon's announcement on 30 March to give substantial financial support for the Ulster Trust in 1990/91 and to contribute up to £5m to its Trust fund.
4. The recently received SACHS Report on discrimination and equality deals with some aspects of the position of the Irish language in NI. Consideration is currently being given to the handling of this Report, including the timing of publication. The Irish side will be interested in SACHS's ideas.

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## IRISH LANGUAGE

### Line to Take

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### Background

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3. Other issues may emerge from the commitment in the May 1989 Review to recognise the importance of the Irish language in the general context of respecting the different cultural traditions in NI. The Irish side will be aware of Dr Mawhinney's announcement on 30 March to give substantial financial support for the Ultach Trust in 1990/91 and to contribute up to £¼m to its Trust fund. - MR RICKARD
4. The recently received SACHR Report on discrimination and equality deals with some aspects of the position of the Irish language in NI. Consideration is currently being given to the handling of this Report, including the timing of publication. The Irish side will be interested in SACHR's ideas.

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