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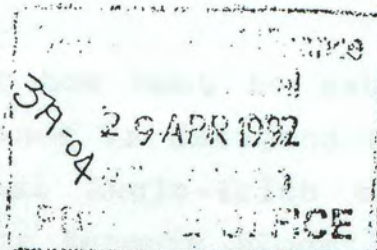
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cc HoBs  
45Mr Fitzmaurice 6.5  
A323/91  
28/4

Mr Dowdall

FROM: D FELL  
DATE: 28 APRIL 1992



cc PS/PUS (B&L) - B  
Mr Thomas (B&L) - B  
Mr Ledlie - B  
Mr Bell (B&L) - B  
Mr Watkins  
Mr Alston - B  
Mr Steele - B  
Mr Lyon - B  
Mr Wood (B&L) - B  
Mr D J R Hill (B&L) - B  
Mr Cooke - B  
Mr D A Hill - B  
Mr Maxwell - B  
Mr McConnell - B  
Mr McCusker  
Mr Dodds - B

NI PERMANENT SECRETARIES —

## ANGLO-IRISH CONTACTS: ARRANGEMENTS DURING POLITICAL TALKS

1. The purpose of this note is to advise colleagues of the principles and procedures which should apply throughout the duration of the political Talks, scheduled to resume on Wednesday 29 April, and to last until almost the end of July.
2. The agreement with the participants in the Talks is that the Inter-Governmental Conference will not meet during that period and so the Anglo-Irish Secretariat will not be required to service the Conference. As you are aware, however, there is a much wider range of Anglo-Irish business and North/South official contacts than simply preparing for and servicing meetings of the Conference. As a matter of principle, those activities should continue, but should be handled in as sensitive a manner as is possible. The following guidance is

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given to help colleagues consider how best to handle a variety of bilateral contacts. The guidance is designed to develop the existing instructions about normal Anglo-Irish contacts which were outlined most recently in Sir Kenneth Bloomfield's note of 11 February 1991 to Permanent Secretaries (relevant extracts attached as Annex A). It is difficult at this stage to identify all the possibilities which might occur during the Talks but David Watkins has continuing responsibility in Central Secretariat for Anglo-Irish co-ordination and will be available to discuss any particular issue raised by Departments.

#### MINISTERIAL CONTACTS

3. There would clearly be sensitivities surrounding proposed meetings between respective Ministers, either in Northern Ireland or in the Republic. Visits already confirmed and approved by the Secretary of State will proceed but no further meetings should be encouraged during the Talks. Should any such need arise, it will be necessary for a Minister to have minuted and obtained the prior approval of the Secretary of State at an early stage. Topics to be discussed should, as a general rule, be non-controversial; meetings should not be held at Maryfield and should, as far as possible, avoid contentious issues particularly if they have been discussed at recent Conference meetings. It would also be important to know, in advance, which ROI officials will be accompanying a Minister on a visit to Northern Ireland. If colleagues become aware that officials from the Irish side of the Secretariat propose to attend, there should be immediate consultation with Central Secretariat. In general, we would wish to discourage such attendance.

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RESPONDENCE

4. The normal procedures for information passing through the Secretariat will continue, with all papers being channelled through Central Secretariat. This will include, inter alia:-

- requests for nominations about public appointments;
- publication of legislation, prior advice on major projects, policy announcements etc;
- individual casework issues; and
- the forwarding of relevant Press Releases.

Should Departments have any such material it should be passed to Central Secretariat for onward transmission.

#### OFFICIAL CONTACTS

5. There continues to be a wide ranging series of contacts at official level between North and South. Many of these originated outside the formal terms of the Agreement. Irrespective of the timing or means whereby such contacts were initiated, they should continue in a practical though prudent way. Any meetings already arranged should continue; any regular meetings should continue; and any meetings which are required to discuss technical or administrative issues should be arranged. Decisions not to proceed with such meetings should be taken for normal Departmental reasons and not because of the current political Talks. If, however, any official is concerned about any meeting or contact which may be controversial, have a higher than usual public profile, or a wider than usual participation (outside official contacts), then it would be important to consult with Central Secretariat before any arrangements are confirmed. This would also apply to social contacts, particularly invitations to Maryfield.

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## POLICY DISCUSSIONS AND PRESENTATIONS

6. This is one of the more difficult and sensitive areas. If for reasons of timing, understanding of detail etc, it is felt essential to have policy meetings with officials from the Secretariat, please consult David Watkins. While it is important to continue with business already begun, where possible, presentations and discussions on policy issues should be held elsewhere rather than Maryfield during the period of the Talks. Such meetings will normally be arranged (through Central Secretariat) in Stormont House or Stormont Castle, although it may also be appropriate to have such meetings in London or Dublin. It would not be appropriate during this period for officials from the Irish side of the Secretariat to be invited to or attend meetings at Departmental Headquarters or other Departmental locations. Again Central Secretariat will be willing to offer advice and guidance, as required, on each individual case.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS OF NEW POLICIES AND PROJECTS

7. As a general rule, new policies can be announced, draft legislation published, projects and programmes announced and facilities opened formally during the period. It is largely "business as usual". There may however be subject areas which could be controversial in the context of the Talks. In such circumstances, Ministerial submissions to the Secretary of State seeking approval to such policy changes should also include reference to the methods and timing of the proposed public handling, if it is scheduled before the end of July. All such submissions should also include in the copy list the following:-

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PS/PUS (B&L)

PS/Mr Fell

Mr Thomas (B&L)

Mr Ledlie

Mr Bell

Mr Watkins

Mr Alston

Mr Cooke

Mr Wood

Mr Maxwell

#### ANY OTHER ISSUES

8. Any other issues not covered by this general guidance which could lead to difficulties and may be of interest to other Departments could be raised directly with me at the regular meetings with Permanent Secretaries which I plan to hold during the Talks process. In cases of doubt, colleagues should err on the side of seeking advice.

DAVID FELL

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ANNEX A

BILATERAL CONTACTS

1. There is no intention that consultations through the Conference or the Secretariat should supersede or replace the continuing network of bilateral contacts between Departments in Northern Ireland and the Republic. It is important however that Central Secretariat should be aware of significant bilateral contacts so that a comprehensive picture of such contacts may be maintained. It would be helpful if you could remind senior colleagues to advise Central Secretariat of such contacts. This would also apply to proposed Ministerial contacts.
2. There is no intention of Central Secretariat imposing itself unnecessarily in bilateral contacts between Departments or at briefings involving the Secretariat where officials from the British side of the Secretariat would be in attendance. There may however be occasions when a Central Secretariat presence would be necessary because of the wider involvement of relevant officials on the Irish side. Departments should, in the first instance, consult with Central Secretariat to ascertain if such a presence is necessary.

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