

4425

NOTE FOR THE RECORD

24/4

cc the future  
2. Mr Godfrey  
Not a very good use  
of the meeting.

14/14  
4 APR 1998

cc: Secretary 24.4  
J A Canavan  
Mr Fitzsimons  
Mrs Johnston  
Mr Smith (PO)  
Mrs Armstrong (PO)

with the  
Minister's Sec.

Tony Worthington, Tony Canavan and Bruce Fitzsimons met with Dr Ian Paisley, Lee Reynolds, John McIntyre, John Erskine and Liz Nevin at Rathgael House on Tuesday 7 April 1998 to discuss Ulster-Scots issues.

John

Following the introductions Dr Paisley said that he was concerned that Government appeared reticent to make a commitment towards recognition of Ulster Scots as a language. He said he had met with Michael Ancram to discuss the creation of a language centre. There was growing interest in the project but basically more support was needed to move the project forwards. Support was required from the Department of Education and those present would like to develop a working group to include representatives from the Department.

Lee Reynolds said that they were aware of the obvious dimensions in terms of cultural identity but stressed that, unlike the Irish medium lobby they were not looking to set up a separate educational system they only wanted to raise awareness, there was a need for a full-time base, resources, teachers, etc.

Dr Paisley said that ideally a working group should be formed between the Society and the Department. They need to come together to establish the best way forward and report back to the Minister in due course.

The Minister advised that CCEA were revisiting the issues surrounding the curriculum and the views of people such as those present would be welcome.

John McIntyre advised that certain work had to be done before the society reached that stage. Ulster Scots needed to be recognised in schools, materials needed to be developed, awareness needed to be raised before the Society sought to add to the curriculum.

The Minister said that in Scotland that type of process was done in association with the Universities and Colleges and enquired if that approach had been made.

Liz Nevin detailed what had happened in Scotland and Mr Fitzsimons asked if there were any pilots operating in Northern Ireland. He was advised that the integrated sector was experiencing a problem.

that they can teach Irish but they cannot teach Ulster Scots but that one school, Slemish in Ballymena, was teaching both Irish and Ulster Scots with the support of the Society.

Mr Fitzsimons said that this was where to start. This would lead to the need for materials and the next step would be the creation of a GCSE curriculum subject. A solid base of interest was needed this, would lead to a demand for materials for use in the curriculum.

John McIntyre suggested that there was an interest but that people were waiting for something constructive to happen. He could see the subject gaining popularity if adult education classes were available.

A discussion followed on the central issue of Government not recognising Ulster Scots as a language. The Minister said that the issue needed to be considered.

X At this point Lee Reynolds enquired if he had detected a change in policy. He claimed that Michael Ancram had made a statement in March 1996 recognised Ulster Scots as a language. As far as the Society was concerned the debate had happened, it was now time to move on.

Dr Paisley said that it seemed to him that the debate had been reopened and questioned the delegations' right to be round the table.

The Minister responded saying that he felt it reasonable for him to ask the delegation to make their case. While what was happening in Scotland was interesting it may not be appropriate in Northern Ireland.

X Dr Paisley said that as the previous Government had made a statement recognising Ulster Scots as a language he thought that now, the delegation could follow on from that by seeking the establishment of a language centre.

X The Minister asked for a paper on the matter and suggested that the delegation requested a further meeting with him.

*J. Loughrey*

J LOUGHREY

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### ULSTER SCOTS

#### BACKGROUND NOTE

1. Because of their proximity, there have been long established cultural links between Ulster and Scotland, which predate the Plantation. Many, though not all, of the 17th Century Protestants who came to Ulster were of Scottish Presbyterian origin. Their influence on the North and East of Northern Ireland has been immense and is most obvious in the accents of County Antrim. Hence, a major strand in Northern Ireland's cultural heritage could be described as "Ulster-Scottish". In the 1960s, the Unionist administration made much of the Ulster-Scots or "Scotch-Irish" tradition, but it was interpreted in a way which seemed to embrace the entirety of the Protestant population.
2. In more recent years, the Scots (or Lallans) linguistic and literary tradition has been revived in Scotland. The Ulster-Scots language movement has derived from this, claiming that a regional variant of Scots (sometimes referred to as "Ullans") extended to Ulster and has survived as the common speech of several tens of thousands of people. The main proponents of this movement have been Dr Ian Adamson of Belfast City Council and Dr Philip Robinson of the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum. Organisation within the movement has been comparatively recent. In 1992 the Ulster-Scots Language Society was founded. It has a confusing number of affiliated groups, such as the Ulster-Scots Academie and the Ulster-Scots Press. The other major organisation in the field was the Ulster-Scots Heritage Council, founded in 1995 to bring together the language movement and other cultural interests (eg Scottish dancing, pipe bands and Presbyterian history groups). The leading light in the USHC is Nelson McCausland, a semi-detached Ulster Unionist Belfast City Councillor.
3. The main objectives of the movement have been to secure official recognition as a language and to secure funding on a comparable basis to that for Irish. On the first point, most academic opinion would regard Ulster-Scots speech as a variant of English, rather than a separate language. In response, the Ulster-Scots movement will cite the thinking of Professor Gregg of Vancouver University to the contrary. The European Bureau for Lesser Used Languages (a group which tends to be sympathetic

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to any claims for minority language status) has recognised Scots as a minority language, and the Ulster-Scots movement would claim that, by extension, they share the same degree of official European recognition. Under the last administration, the previous Minister had referred to Ulster-Scots as a language and suggested to the movement that they could expect the same general treatment as that afforded to Scots in Scotland.

4. On the funding issue, the Government has consistently denied that funding for one minority language should be used as a benchmark for others - this relates as much to comparisons between funding for Welsh and Irish, as between Ulster-Scots and Irish. Projects with an Irish language dimension currently receive over £3m per annum in funding. It would simply not be possible to earmark an equivalent amount for Ulster-Scots, even if the movement was organisationally sufficiently developed to absorb that amount of funding.
5. Irish and Ulster-Scots are not starting from the same linguistic baseline. Irish has an agreed grammar, written form, dictionaries etc. Ulster-Scots is deficient in all of these, but thinks that Government funding should be made available to remedy the deficiency.
6. Though the intrinsic case put forward by the movement is weak, it has a wider political significance. A number of Unionist politicians (Paisley, McCartney, Taylor) have voiced support for it and tabled PQs on Government policy and funding. Not all Unionist politicians share their enthusiasm for the movement, but it is undoubtedly attractive to some as a cultural counterweight to the Irish language. Claiming discrimination against Ulster-Scots (on the grounds that it does not receive parity of funding) is also a useful political posture for Unionists. The same theme is often repeated in letters to local newspapers.

Funding

7. CCRU's policy has been to encourage the broader cultural aspect of the Ulster-Scots movement rather than the narrower linguistic side. The founding of the Ulster-Scots Heritage Council was a welcome development and it has been the main vehicle for

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11. The Arts Council has also funded Ulster-Scots cultural projects. In 1996-97 it provided a total of £5,000 to the publication costs of the Ulster-Scots Language Society's journal and towards a youth cultural project.

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**LINES TO TAKE**

- Look forward to hearing the delegation's views and will give them careful consideration.
- The Government aims to increase appreciation of and respect for all major strands in the complex cultural heritage of Northern Ireland, including the Ulster-Scots tradition. Well-founded applications for support will be assessed on their merits. (NB. Considerable level of support for Ulster-Scots Heritage Centre).
- Cannot accept that funding for Ulster-Scots should be on a par with that for Irish. One linguistic tradition should not be used as a benchmark for another. We say exactly the same to Irish language groups who ask for funding parity with Welsh or Gaelic.

**ONLY IF RAISED**

**Charter for Regional or Minority Languages**

- The Secretary of State for Wales is the lead Minister for this issue. I would expect that there will be an announcement on this matter soon.

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funding to Ulster-Scots traditions as a significant strand in Northern Ireland's complex cultural heritage

8. In 1996, the USHC applied for grant under the Community Relations measure of the EC's Physical and Social Environment Sub Programme (PSEP) towards the salaries of a Director, Office Manager and general running costs. The PSEP contains a range of measures assisted by the European Regional Development Fund and the European Social Fund. The Community Relations measure is administered by CCRU. Projects which contribute to the exploration and understanding of cultural heritage and respect for cultural diversity are eligible for support under this measure.
9. In February 1997 the USHC was offered grant support of over £159k to assist the development of the USHC's activities and to facilitate the growth and development of Ulster-Scots cultural groups throughout Northern Ireland. Funding under PSEP is for a 3 year period covering the salaries of a Director (Mr McCausland), Office Manager and running costs. In addition the Community Relations Council offered the USHC complementary but separate, 3 year core funding for a community outreach worker amounting to a total of over £86k in order to develop a community outreach programme. Other core funders, for the cultural enterprise officer post and related costs, include the IFI, Belfast European Partnership Board and Belfast City Council amounting to £113,050 over 2 years.
10. In 1997/98 CRC funded the following projects which have an Ulster Scots dimension:

£

John Braidwood Fellowship - preparation of the bibliography of Ulster Scots Kailyard fiction writers	4,000·
Ulster Scots: A Grammar of the Traditional Written and Spoken Language	up to 3,500
Ulster Scots Poetry Event at the Crescent Arts Centre	800·
The Yarnspinners - Boul Proota Diggers	800 ---- ?
Publication of Varities of Scottishness	5,000
South Belfast Cultural Society - debate and lecture series	600