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Chun an Aire Gnothaf Eachtracha: To the Minister for Foreign
Affairs

To ask the Minister for Foreign Affairs when the border road
from Lettercran to Pettigo, County Donegal will be reopened.

- James White

For answer Tuesday, 13th May, 1980

DRAFT REPLY

I am aware of the difficulties caused to local residents in border areas as a result of road closures. The decision to close the Lettercran-Pettigo road was taken by the British authorities on the basis of security considerations as they saw them and the road can only be reopened with the agreement of the British authorities. The roads in the Pettigo area have been raised with the British authorities, most recently at my meeting on 15 April 1980 with the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Mr. Atkins, as examples of where early reopenings would be particularly welcome but the British position at the present time is that these roads will remain closed.

While the decision whether or not to reopen the roads is ultimately a matter for the British authorities I will keep the matter under review and will impress upon them the need to have the roads reopened as soon as security considerations allow.

Note for Minister

1. The Lettercran-Pettigo road is closed at border crossing L82C Lurganboy bridge and blocked by concrete slabs just on the northern side. (see map attached)
2. It is estimated that some 50% of all cross border roads, mainly minor roads serving local needs are now closed. The last major programme of cross border road closures, carried out by the British authorities in the period September-November 1975 provoked vigorous local reaction, leading to confrontation with the British Army in some cases.
3. Our attitude to the closure of cross border roads by the British authorities has been one of opposition, on the basis that such closures were counter productive, and frequently appear to be ineffective.
4. On 15 April 1980 the Minister at his meeting with Mr. Atkins, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland referring in particular to the areas of Kiltyclogher, Co. Leitrim and Pettigo, Co. Donegal reaffirmed our desire to see border crossings reopened as soon as security considerations allow.
5. The more important of the cross border roads which remain closed are those in the Pettigo area of Co. Donegal and the Kiltyclogher area of Co. Leitrim. Representations are made frequently to the Minister asking that something be done to reopen cross border roads in these areas.
6. The decision to close cross border roads was taken by the British and Northern security forces on the basis of security considerations as they saw them and they can only be reopened with the agreement of the British authorities. The situation is reviewed regularly by the Department and the British authorities are fully aware of our desire to see the roads reopened as soon as security considerations allow.