

PC 169/4

*1/15 in Enrol Self  
Taser, 23/4 X  
27/11 Example*

MR Carvill

328/4

CONFIDENTIAL 7639 Reference  
12 APR 1984  
FILE

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Mr Tatham

cc: RID, FCO  
NIO(B)

HEAD OF THE N.I.  
18 APR 1984  
CIVIL SERVICE

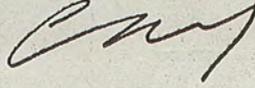
THE FORUM

*Secretariat  
achy 28/4 28/4*

1. I had a chat with Mr Hugh Finlay (New Ireland Forum Secretariat) last night and he brought me up-to-date on a few aspects of the Forum.
2. Now that the preparation of the report is in its final stages, it appears that the cold reality of what they are to do with it is assuming an ever greater importance. There had seemed to be a belief, on Dr FitzGerald's part at least, that provided the report adopted a sensible line which would appeal to any reasonable and unbiased observer, the British Government would be bound to be as helpful as it could. Now that this sort of report seemed to be taking shape, it seems that they are not so confident of the British response, and would consider marginal ways in which it could be improved without putting British backs up and yet without altering the thrust of the report.
3. Apart from publicised difficulties with Fianna Fail, the progress of the report had recently been delayed as much by the inability of Dr FitzGerald and Mr Hume to devote so much time for it as was necessary. Dr FitzGerald had many other concerns to which he was devoting his attention and Mr Hume was always flying here, there and everywhere. As it approached the final stages, the necessity for the personal involvement of the party leaders became ever greater. Nevertheless, even on days when they could all be present, there was still no great sense of urgency. Mr Haughey was also guilty and had recently arrived late at a meeting which meant they had all to go through again a number of paragraphs which the others had agreed. Yesterday's meeting had been much the same and the interruptions had been almost longer than the meeting. Eventually Mr Finlay had felt free at 6.30 pm simply to leave them at it and go home.
4. On the report itself, Mr Finlay said it was going Dr FitzGerald's and Mr Hume's way. Fianna Fail were more or less behaving themselves. Mr Tunney was occasionally irritating, but confined himself mainly to altering the punctuation. Mr MacSharry was quite at variance with his public persona and was most helpful. Whatever his heart might say, he was ultimately realistic and his public pronouncements had to be seen in the light of his forthcoming electoral tussle with Mr Blaney. The result so far was a unitary report with proposals aiming effectively at a Mark II Sunningdale. Sovereignty was not specifically dealt with, but pronouncements on joint authority might be thought to amount to much the same. The report would contain some ritual Republican posturing but this should not necessarily be taken too seriously. A certain amount of the message was carried between the lines.

X

5. Mr Finlay is fairly enthusiastically involved in the whole process of the Forum and it is sometimes difficult to disentangle his own ideas from those of the Forum itself. I think however that the above accurately reflects what he believes is going on.



11 April 1984

pp V J W Auster