

C O N F I D E N T I A L

UNDER/ 375/10
SEC

18 OCT 1990

CONF SEC

RW/346/90

FROM: R WILSON
AS CENT SEC
DATE: 18 OCTOBER 1990

cc PS/PUS (B & L) - B
PS/Sir K Bloomfield - B
Mr Chilcot - B
Mr Ledlie - B
Mr Alston - B
Mr Hamilton - B
Mr A Wood - B
Mr Bell - B
Mr Petch - B

MR COLE

GLOR NA NGAEL (WEST BELFAST COMMITTEE)

1. I would be very grateful for any comments you might have on the attached draft texts:
 - i. reply to West Belfast Committee;
 - ii. Press Release;
 - iii. message to Mr Collins;
 - iv. line to take for forthcoming Conference (the background note has still to be written, but will not contain any surprises).
2. The texts at (i) and (ii) above incorporate the various points discussed earlier this week. Mr Alston and others may have comments on (iii) and (iv).
3. The usual urgency applies.

[Signed RW]

R WILSON
CENTRAL SECRETARIAT

RC/3301

C O N F I D E N T I A L

C O N F I D E N T I A L

DRAFT REPLY FOR SECRETARY OF STATE'S SIGNATURE

Ms Noirin Ui Cleirigh
Chairperson
Glor na nGael
West Belfast Committee
145 Falls Road
BELFAST

October 1990

Thank you for your letters of 17 and 18 September 1990, and your further letter of 5 October about the withdrawal of public funding from the West Belfast Committee of Glor na nGael. I am grateful for the further information contained in your letter of 18 September which I have now considered. I have also examined closely the points contained in your earlier letter and the other representations made on behalf of the West Belfast Committee.

As you are aware from earlier correspondence the decision to withdraw funding from the West Belfast Committee of Glor na nGael was taken in terms of the policy set out in the Parliamentary Statement of 27 June 1985 by Mr Hurd. The policy is designed not only to protect public funds against direct abuse but also to ensure that the standing and aims of paramilitary organisations are not enhanced or furthered either directly or indirectly as a result of Government support. In the light of the representations received I have reviewed the application of the policy to the West Belfast Committee of Glor na nGael but, after careful consideration of all the information currently available to me, I am satisfied that the circumstances are such that public funding should continue to be withheld from the West Belfast Committee.

Some people have misinterpreted the decision to withdraw funding from the West Belfast Committee as applying to Glor na nGael at large and as being directed as against the Irish language and culture. Any such allegations are demonstrably untrue and I reject them utterly.

C O N F I D E N T I A L

C O N F I D E N T I A L

Like many others I fully respect the aims and objectives of Glor na nGael as an organisation active throughout the island of Ireland. Likewise, the Government clearly recognises and respects the importance of the Irish language and culture to many who view it as an integral part of their tradition. This is reflected in the curricular structures announced for schools as part of the recent education reforms and the substantial public funding for the teaching of Irish through the statutory school system in Northern Ireland, including teaching through the medium of Irish where a sufficient demand exists. Alongside this the Government will continue to support efforts to enhance the awareness and appreciation of the Irish language within its Cultural Traditions Programme and additional resources have recently been made available for this purpose. These are initiatives to which I, and Dr Mawhinney as the Minister responsible, attach great importance. However Government is not prepared to support what are otherwise wholly desirable activities where the circumstances described in Mr Hurd's Statement prevail.

As you know the Training and Employment Agency has already made it clear that it is prepared to consider alternative arrangements to ensure that the ACE employees and the nursery activities previously supported through the ACE scheme managed by the West Belfast Committee are not disadvantaged by the decision to withdraw funding. This offer still stands but should it not be taken up the Government will take whatever action is necessary to ensure that the funds then available will not be lost to West Belfast.

I realise that this decision will be a disappointment to you. It is, of course, subject to review should circumstances change.

PB

C O N F I D E N T I A L

C O N F I D E N T I A L

DRAFT PRESS RELEASE

WITHDRAWAL OF FUNDING FROM WEST BELFAST COMMITTEE OF GLOR NA NGAEL

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, the Rt Hon Peter Brooke MP, today replied to the request by the West Belfast Committee of Glor na nGael for the restoration of Government funding which the Secretary of State had directed should be withheld in line with Government policy as reflected in the Parliamentary Statement of 27 June 1985 by the then Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Mr Douglas Hurd.

In a letter to the Chairperson of the West Belfast Committee Ms Noirin Ui Cleirigh, the Secretary of State confirmed that he had reviewed his original decision in the light of information supplied by the West Belfast Committee, and following other representations on the Committee's behalf. However after carefully considering all the information currently available to him he had concluded that funding should not be restored.

Mr Brooke indicated that the money previously allocated to the ACE scheme managed by the West Belfast Committee would not be lost to West Belfast.

The full text of Mr Brooke's reply to the West Belfast Committee of Glor na nGael is attached.

Note for Editors

1. A copy of Mr Hurd's Parliamentary Statement of 27 June 1985 is attached.
2. Funding for the Irish language comes from a number of sources:
 - i. the Department of Education and the Belfast and Western

C O N F I D E N T I A L

C O N F I D E N T I A L

Education and Library Boards meet both the capital and running costs of the Irish-medium primary school in Belfast and the Irish-medium stream at Steelstown Primary School in Londonderry. The total running costs for the school and the Irish stream in 1989/90 were approximately £370,000. In addition a further £30,000 has been made available to Bunscoil Phobal Feirste for the production of curriculum materials. The Department is also meeting the costs of a teacher seconded from the Bunscoil to develop materials for the new curriculum at a total cost of around £20,000. Capital grants of around £440,000 have also been made to the Bunscoil since it achieved maintained status in 1984 and planning for a new permanent school has commenced;

- ii. the Department of Education and the Education and Library Boards also support the teaching of Irish as a subject in many schools, particularly in the maintained sector but it is not possible to quantify the costs of this centrally since the teachers involved would usually also teach other subjects;
- iii. the Department of Education does not meet the costs of Irish-medium pre-school provision because it has a long waiting list of nursery projects in the controlled, maintained and integrated sectors as well as in Irish-medium education which it has not been possible to fund because of the need to concentrate resources on facilities for children of compulsory school age. As and when additional resources for nursery education become available, the Department will assess all the existing proposals on the same basis in order to determine priorities;
- iv. £50,000 has been provided by Government to the Ultach Trust to encourage small Irish language projects throughout Northern Ireland. Government has also given a commitment to provide £250,000 towards a capital trust on the basis of

C O N F I D E N T I A L

C O N F I D E N T I A L

£1 for every £3 raised by the Ultach Trust. The Arts Council for Northern Ireland also makes available around £18,000 per annum to support the Irish language in literature and the arts;

- v. the Government's Central Community Relations Unit provides funding for Irish language projects. In the present financial years grant aid of around £80,000 has either been paid or committed;
- vi. the Government has also been providing around £130,000 per annum towards a major 5-year study by Queen's University Belfast into the origins of Irish placenames. This will lead to significant publication which will encourage interest and appreciation of the Irish language and the contribution it has made to the cultural heritage of the whole community.

C O N F I D E N T I A L

C O N F I D E N T I A L

DRAFT TEXT OF MESSAGE FROM SOS TO MR COLLINS

At our last meeting on 14 September there was some discussion on my decision to withdraw funding from the West Belfast Committee of Glor na nGael. Others also wrote to me on the same matter, including the West Belfast Committee itself which asked me to reconsider the decision.

As you know the decision to withdraw funding was taken in accordance with the policy set out in Douglas Hurd's Parliamentary Statement of 27 June 1985. The policy is designed not only to protect public funds against direct abuse but also to ensure that the standing and the aims of paramilitary organisations are not enhanced or furthered either directly or indirectly as a result of Government support.

Having carefully considered all the representations received, and also some further information provided by the Committee, I have concluded, on the basis of all the information currently available to me, that public funding should continue to be withheld. I thought it important that the West Belfast Committee should be told of my decision as soon as possible and this is now being conveyed to them.

You will appreciate that I have not taken this decision lightly, not least because of your own representations. The decision, which remains subject to review if circumstances change, applies only to the West Belfast Committee of Glor na nGael and not the organisation at large, whose work I fully respect. There is no question either of this decision signalling any weakening in our respect and support for the Irish language and culture, which is an important part of the recent curricular reforms and the Cultural Traditions Programme supported by the Central Community Relations Unit. These are initiatives to which both I and Dr Mawhinney attach great importance.

As is customary in such matters we will be making every effort to ensure that the ACE workers and the nursery group activities affected by the decision do not suffer. The Training and Employment

C O N F I D E N T I A L

C O N F I D E N T I A L

Agency has been in touch with those concerned but the offer of discussion has not been taken up. Should this remain the case the Government will ensure that the money then available will not be lost to West Belfast.

PB

C O N F I D E N T I A L

C O N F I D E N T I A L

LINE TO TAKE

GLOR NA NGAEL (WEST BELFAST COMMITTEE)

1. The decision to withdraw funding

- was made by me on the basis of confidential information (and after careful consideration of representations received, and further information from the West Belfast Committee)
- was not taken lightly or without regard to the consequences
- is in line with long standing Government policy as reflected in Douglas Hurd's statement of June 1985 (see 1 on 1985 policy generally)
- can be changed if justified by new information (already happened in 4 cases)
- is not an attack on the Irish language; other Government support for the language is unaffected, as are other branches of Glor na nGael.

2. The police decision is a matter for the Chief Constable who must operate within the legislation governing street collections.

3. It is not possible to discuss details of individual cases.

ON THE 1985 POLICY GENERALLY

1. Government is not prepared to provide public funds to groups or organisations where to do so would give rise to a grave risk of improving the standing and furthering the aims of a paramilitary organisation, whether directly or indirectly. It is not simply

C O N F I D E N T I A L

C O N F I D E N T I A L

a matter of syphoning off funds: the standing and aims of a paramilitary organisation can be furthered in other covert ways.

2. Each case is decided on its merits. The policy is even handed and covers both Republican and Loyalist paramilitary interests. There is no political vetting.
3. In view of the security and confidential nature of the information involved it is not practical to have formal appeal arrangements. However cases are kept under review and decisions can be changed if there is a change in circumstances (as has happened in 4 cases to date).
4. It is not Government policy to discuss individual cases.

ON PRIOR CONSULTATION WITH THE IRISH

We do not accept that individual decisions of this nature are a matter for prior consultation under the Agreement, either as confidence issues or as particularly affecting the minority community. The policy itself has been in place since June 1985, before the Agreement was signed, and applies with equal force to both sections of the community in Northern Ireland.

IF RAISED

Previous briefing on Conway Mill was of a general, rather than a specific, nature. It is not possible to discuss details of individual cases.

C O N F I D E N T I A L