

162/95

CONFIDENTIAL

FROM: STEVEN McCOURT
APS/MICHAEL ANCRAM
2 FEBRUARY 1995

1872/95
RECEIVED - 6 FEB 1995

ASST mm 132/2
SEC - 6 FEB 1995
CENT SEC

ASST LO 100/2
SEC - 6 FEB 1995
CENT SEC

- cc: PS/Michael Ancram (L&B) - B
- PS/Baroness Denton (L, DED&DANI) - B/M
- PS/PUS (L&B) - B
- PS/Mr Fell - B
- Mr Thomas - B
- Mr Legge - B
- Mr Loughran (DED) - M
- Mr Bell - B
- Mr Watkins - B
- Mr F McCann, IDB - M
- Mr Stephens - B
- Mr Brooker - B
- Mr Maccabe - B
- Mr T Smyth - B
- HMA Dublin - B
- Mr Lamont, RID - B

C

UNDER/ SEC 74/2
1. Mrs [unclear] 3/2
2. Mr [unclear]

Mr Kenny
Mrs Denton J.C.
LD6/2

PS/SECRETARY OF STATE (L&B) - B

FORUM FOR PEACE AND RECONCILIATION: INVITATIONS TO NI OFFICIALS

Michael Ancram was grateful for sight of Mr Williams' minute of 1 February advising that the organisers of the Forum in Dublin would like to invite some officials from Northern Ireland to take part in the session of the Forum, on Friday 17 February, which is to deal with matters of trade and tourism.

2. Michael Ancram has commented as follows:

"At this delicate time I think acceptance by officials could be badly misconstrued as a thin end of the 'joint authority' wedge. We know this is ludicrous, but perceptions are important at this time. I suggest that polite refusals are given. If it really is felt necessary, it would be easier for Lord Rathcavan (Hugh O'Neill) than for the others."

SIGNED

STEVEN McCOURT
APS/Michael Ancram
OAB Ext 6488
2 February 1995

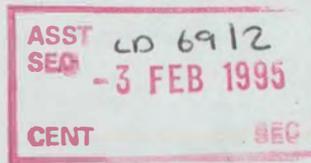
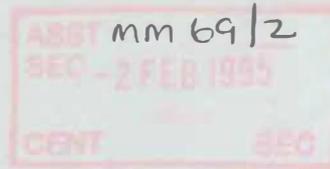
CONFIDENTIAL

ANCRAM/DEH/571

From: D E S Blatherwick
Date: 1 February 1995

To: PS/SofS (L&B)

cc: PS/Michael Ancram (L&B)
PS/Baroness Denton (L&B)
PS/PUS (L&B)
PS/Mr Fell
Mr Thomas
Mr Legge
Mr Loughran, DED
Mr Bell
Mr Watkins
Mr Williams
Mr McCann, IDB
Mr Stephens (L&B)
Mr Brooker
Mr Maccabe
Mr Smyth, AISec
Mr Lamont, RID



1. in the knowledge
2. has been

Mrs Kenny

Mrs Doyle LD 3/2

FORUM FOR PEACE & RECONCILIATION: INVITATIONS TO NI OFFICIALS

1. I agree with the recommendation in Mr Williams' submission of earlier today that NI officials should not accept the invitation to participate in (as opposed to observe) the Forum. To do so would signal that HMG accepted the usefulness of the Forum and its role in discussing issues internal to Northern Ireland. We may at some point wish to send such signals, but not yet, and certainly not during the present unstable situation over the Framework Document.

2. If the Secretary of state so decides, we could run over the arguments with the Forum Secretariat and the DFA here, to make sure they understand our position.

(Signed)

D E S Blatherwick
AMBASSADOR

CONFIDENTIAL

FROM: M J WILLIAMS
US(POL)

1 February 1995

ASST SEC - 3 FEB 1995
CENT SEC
LO 71/2.

ASST mm 68/2
SEC - 2 FEB 1995
CENT SEC

162/95-

- cc PS/Michael Ancram (L&B) - B
- PS/Baroness Denton (L&B) - B
- PS/PUS (L&B) - B
- PS/Mr Fell - B
- Mr Thomas -(L&B) - B
- Mr Legge - B
- Mr Loughran, DED
- Mr Bell - B
- Mr ~~Watkins~~ - B
- Mr Frank McCann, IDB
- Mr Stephens (L&B) - B
- Mr Brooker - B
- Mr Maccabe - B
- Mr Smyth - B
- HMA Dublin - B
- Mr Lamont RID FCO - B

35/2

C

1. cc to ~~Mr~~ *Mr Kenny*

2. *Mr* ~~Mr~~ *Mr*

Mr ~~Mr~~ *Mr* 162/3/2

PS/Secretary of State (L&B) - B

FORUM FOR PEACE AND RECONCILIATION: INVITATIONS TO NI OFFICIALS

Mr O'Donovan has told me that the organisers of the Forum in Dublin would like to invite some officials from Northern Ireland to take part in a session of the Forum, on Friday 17 February, which is to deal with matters of trade and tourism. The people they mention are Mr Loughran, DED, Mr McVeigh, IDB, and Hugh O'Neill of the NITB. Mr O'Donovan has clarified that the participants would be expected to speak, not simply to be members of the audience, although it is far from clear whether they would be expected to do so by giving a short presentation, being members of a panel, or being invited to ask or to answer questions. This suggestion therefore goes beyond what NI Officials have done previously, eg when Mr Daniell attended a recent session of Forum as a member of the audience.

2. I have spoken to Mr Loughran, who is ready to do whatever is required, whether that means attending and speaking, attending and not speaking, or not attending. He envisages that the same principles would apply regarding Mr McCann, as head of the IDB; but not necessarily to Mr O'Neill, as Chairman of NITB. Mr Loughran suggested that another possibility was that, instead of Mr McCann, Mr John McGuckian might be suggested to attend as Chairman of IDB,

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instead of Mr McCann, together with Mr O'Neill and Mr Loughran.

3. There are arguments both for and against their participation.

In favour:

- The Forum has lost some of the high political profile of its initial opening, and has now settled down to an agenda of more practical issues on which it is working methodically.
- Issues and trade and tourism are of genuine common interest in both parts of Ireland.
- An intervention by Mr Loughran etc would serve to remind the Forum that there is a separate Northern Ireland outlook on the issues concerned, and would enable that outlook to be presented fairly; whereas if they did not take part this would lose the Northern Ireland point of view (except where it was presented by private individuals, or others who attempt to act as surrogates for Northern Ireland).
- A decision not to take part would also be construed as an official rebuff, which could in itself attract critical publicity in Dublin.

5. Arguments against taking part:

- The original purpose of the Forum has always been to assist the assimilation of Sinn Fein into democratic politics, and while this is perfectly acceptable as a device for Dublin to adopt, in Northern Ireland their assimilation must depend on progress in XD.
- The atmosphere in the Forum still seems to be strongly Republican/nationalist when occasion offers, as experienced by HMA and Mr Daniell on their recent attendance at a Forum session two weeks ago.

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- The Forum is seen by many in Northern Ireland as yet another initiative by Dublin to create an all-Ireland approach, with a particularly nationalist slant; therefore any attendance by Northern Ireland officials would be highly controversial, especially in the atmosphere following the leak in today's Times.

- There is no particular reason why we need to show favour towards the Forum by active participation; the Forum is not intended to produce any substantive result which would adversely affect Northern Ireland interests if we did not participate, and the present Irish Government has no particularly strong political attachment to the Forum as an institution, since it was set up very much as an initiative by Albert Reynolds. Indeed the fact that we have been sounded out informally in advance seems to suggest that the Forum organisers recognise that an invitation might not be acceptable and wish to avoid a refusal causing embarrassment to them or us.

6. There are different considerations regarding the participation of officials and that of Heads of Boards. An official could only set out official Government policy, while the Head of a Board could speak relatively more freely. On the other side of the coin, an official can be instructed by Ministers whether or not to attend, whereas a Head of Board can only be offered guidance, although he would probably think hard before ignoring such advice.

7. Overall, the arguments in favour of officials participating do not seem to be very strong, while the political arguments against seem significant. If Ministers decide that officials should not participate, we should perhaps make clear to Mr McGuckian and Mr O'Neill that, while the decision whether or not they wish to participate in the Forum would be for them, they should know that Ministers have decided against officials participating.

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I should be grateful to learn the Secretary of State's decision on:

- whether or not Mr Loughran and other NI officials should accept invitations to participate in the Forum;
- if the decision is against participation, whether we should inform Heads of Boards whom we know are likely to be invited about the decision regarding officials' participation, while making clear that their own decision was for them;
- whether I should now inform the Irish side of the Secretariat about Ministers' decisions regarding possible participation of officials and Heads of Boards.

[signed MJW]

M J WILLIAMS
Ext 27083

MJW/657/45926/SH