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File on  
SF file



Minister - for info -  
on

To PS/Minister

cc Secretary  
Mr Gibson  
Mr Gamble  
Mr Briant

From Jim Hanna

cc Glette  
MC

4 August 1995

**Meeting with Sinn Fein**

- 1 At a meeting of senior DED officials and a Sinn Fein delegation on Thursday 3 August the Secretary confirmed to Mr McLaughlin that the Minister would be willing to meet with a Sinn Fein delegation, if her diary permitted, before she went on holiday, otherwise, sometime in September.
- 2 Under the current Central Secretariat guidelines we are required to consult with Central Secretariat before a case goes back to Private Office recommending a Ministerial meeting. As you are aware there has already been some correspondence on the matter.
- 3 However the Secretary has advised that he consulted Sir David Fell about his own meeting with the Sinn Fein delegation and his predisposition at that meeting to accede to Sinn Fein's request for a meeting with the Minister; and that Sir David was content on both scores. It is not therefore considered necessary to consult further with Central Secretariat on the Minister's meeting with Sinn Fein and arrangements for same should proceed.

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NOTE OF A MEETING OF SENIOR DED OFFICIALS AND A DELEGATION OF  
SINN FEIN COUNCILLORS  
ON  
THURSDAY 3 AUGUST 1995, NETHERLEIGH

Present: DED

Sinn Fein

Mr Loughran (Chairman)  
Mr Robinson  
Mr Gibson  
Mr Walters  
Mr Hamilton  
Mr Jackson  
Mr Hanna

Cllr. Mitchell McLaughlin  
Cllr. Gearoid O hEara  
Cllr. Una Gillespie  
Cllr. Mairtin O Muilleoir  
Cllr. Alex Maskey

## 1 Opening Remarks

Mr Loughran welcomed the SF delegation and introduced the DED officials. He was grateful for the agenda items previously submitted by Cllr. O Muilleoir and proposed dealing with them, and issues that arose, in that order.

## 2 Function and Structure of DED

Using a slide presentation Mr Loughran outlined the role and function of DED and its Agencies, the staff and resources employed and the key aspects of the Agencies' functions. He then described the recent performance of the NI economy and how those performance indicators helped shape the recently launched DED strategy 'Growing Competitively'.

In response to Cllr. O Muilleoir's question on whether the strategy took account of the new peaceful situation and whether DED agencies would be more proactive in promoting employment growth in areas regarded as less attractive to inward investment, Mr Loughran confirmed that economic development in a peaceful scenario had indeed been addressed in the new strategy and that TSN, which was a prominent and integral part of that strategy, was similarly embedded in each of the Agencies' Corporate Plans.

Mr Gibson outlined the historical context of Growing Competitively and how the review of 'Competing in the 90s' had served to reinforce the



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emphasis on a policy which promoted competitiveness. The current strategy had, however, additional and important dimensions viz. organisational restructuring to facilitate more efficient multi-Agency contact with business; a greater emphasis on TSN and the adoption of the recommendation in the C&L report that Agencies develop and implement TSN action plans; and economic challenges which had been set in conjunction with the business community.

On inward investment Mr Robinson reported that since the ceasefires there had been a significant increase in the demand for information about NI by US companies, particularly the larger ones; an increase in the number of visitors coming to assess NI as a possible inward investment location; and, as a result, a greater confidence on the part of IDB that some of this interest could be converted into real investment. On the trade side there was also an increase in the number of buyers coming to NI to assess local manufacturers as possible sources of supply.

Mr Loughran emphasised that, whilst these were heartening dividends from peaceful conditions, they were, in effect, only getting us on to a level playing field with the other 200 odd development agencies with which we were competing across the world. The endemic problems of being on the periphery of Europe, our smallness and the lack of natural resources were still very real constraints; it was all the more commendable, therefore, that NI, with a population approximately 2.5% of the whole of that for the islands of GB and Ireland, managed to secure 5-6% of the overall inward investment.

Mr Walters outlined the role of T&EA in supporting inward investment and the initiatives they were taking with the Tourism industry in response to the increased volume of tourism in NI; not only were they setting about improving the existing skills base but they were also trying to satisfy growing skills shortages. Mr Walters also referred to the recent launches of Jobskills and the pilot CWP and the key aspects of each. He also described the various management development schemes with which it was hoped to improve that particular skill base in NI.

### 3 General Questions

At this point Mr Loughran invited SF delegates to put points or questions to the meeting.

Cllr. O hEara felt that DED could become more involved with the



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community and the ethnic Irish culture by promoting cultural tourism. Mr Loughran replied that it was a good time to raise such an issue and that DED and NITB were open to such proposals.

Cllr. Gillespie asked if there was a specific strategy for training women, since it seemed that the CWP criteria could marginalise women who were not registered as unemployed. Mr Loughran stressed the uniqueness of CWP to NI because of the peaceful situation. He also emphasised that it was a pilot programme and as such invited SF to contribute to the inevitable evaluation process. Mr Walters pointed up T&EA's specific management development programmes for women and Mr Hamilton confirmed the inclusion of such an initiative in the EU Peace and Reconciliation Programme.

Cllr. Maskey wanted to know 'the powers that be' within DED in order to resolve day to day issues. Mr Loughran suggested that that was one reason for the meeting, and that through time SF would get to know the officials to contact. It was in DED's interest to help local representatives to resolve matters of mutual interest and, as a first step, he would send Cllr. O Muilleoir an organisation chart of DED showing the names and telephone numbers of senior officials and their respective designations.

Cllr. McLaughlin wanted to know how DED intended translating TSN policy into operational practice and how TSN would be coordinated on an inter-Departmental basis, citing DOE and the need for a better road to Strabane - a very disadvantaged area. Mr Loughran pointed out that infrastructural developments such as road building were very expensive options and had to be weighed carefully against other high priorities such as health. He also suggested, as something SF might want to consider in the context of promoting inward investment, that it was not always prudent, nor indeed IDB practice, to draw attention to perceived weaknesses when trying to attract inward investors, particularly to TSN areas.

Mr Gibson also outlined the TSN review and the commitment of DED to ensuring that the benefits would be spread more effectively. He described how each of the agencies would be contributing and the relative impact each could make, from T&EA, for obvious reasons, having the lion's share, through to IRTU having a relatively minor role.

In response to Cllr. McLaughlin's further query on the level of







North/South cooperation Mr Loughran stressed that there had been a great deal of contact with the respective agencies in the RoI and the level of contact had been getting better over the last few years. He cited, in particular, developments on electricity, gas, minerals, tourism and energy efficiency.

In winding up this section Mr Loughran invited SF to write up their proposals for economic development and send them to him.

#### **4 European Programme for Peace and Reconciliation**

Cllr. O Muilleoir queried the urgency with which DED was communicating the EUPR programme down to the agencies and the need for those agencies to get the message across at the community level. Mr Loughran stressed that there was no lack of urgency on DED's part and confirmed Mr Hamilton's point that it was largely due to the efforts of DED that the programme was in existence as quickly as it was. However there remained a great deal of operational detail with respect to sub-programme management which needed to be sorted out and it would therefore be unwise to make commitments which could not be fulfilled. As time was running out it was agreed that SF would meet separately with Mr Hamilton to discuss the EUPR programme.

#### **5 North and West Belfast Working Group**

X { Cllr. O Muilleoir claimed that the group was a 'product of an old agenda' which needed to be changed. He referred to the inadequate response from the Minister on the matter. He was also unhappy that the group would produce a draft strategy which would not take into account the views of the SF Councillors in the area. As such it would be dismissed by those Councillors. Mr Loughran noted the point.

#### **6 Local Partnerships**

Cllr. O Muilleoir said he was unhappy with the arrangements for local partnerships and advanced the SF line that M&W partnerships should be representative, accountable, transparent and adequately resourced. They were initially impressed by the CWP ideals. Again the points were noted.





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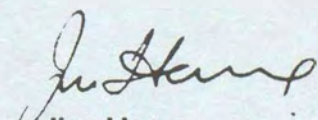


## 7 Ministerial Contact

Cllr. McLaughlin stated that the lack of Ministerial contact overshadowed the work on economic development, diverted everyone unnecessarily from economic issues and the policy should therefore be changed. Mr Loughran confirmed that the Minister, Baroness Denton, would be willing to meet with a SF delegation and, if possible, he would try to arrange it before she went on holiday.

## 8 Concluding Remarks

Cllr. McLaughlin thought the meeting had been very useful and thanked DED for the very constructive way in which it had been conducted. He stressed the SF responsibility to the economic development of communities they represented by ensuring the inclusion of those communities in all ED programmes. He was also concerned that the SF mandate should be treated on the same basis as other parties. Cllr. McLaughlin then asked if DED would have a problem with the meeting being made public. Mr Loughran confirmed that he saw no problem for DED provided there were no references to specific details or comments. In this regard Cllr. McLaughlin agreed to send a draft press release to DED for approval - copy attached.

  
Jim Hanna



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# agency heads

A Sinn Féin delegation met with Mr Gerry Loughran, Permanent Secretary at the Department of the Economic Development, and with the heads of the Training and Employment Agency and IDB at the DED headquarters in Netherleigh this morning (Thursday).

On the Sinn Féin delegation were national chairperson Mitchell McLaughlin, Northern chairperson Gearóid Ó hEara, and Belfast councillors Una Gillespie, Alex Maskey and Máirtín Ó Muilleoir.

Mitchell McLaughlin said: "This was a constructive and positive meeting. It formalised contact between our party and the heads of the major economic agencies in the North and enabled us to discuss the needs of our constituents who live in areas which have suffered horrendous deprivation for many years.

"The meeting gave us the opportunity to look at how the economic agencies can implement their Targeting Social Need policies to create more jobs and investment in the areas of greatest disadvantage. We also suggested ways in which Sinn Féin representatives could be involved in the delivery of new resources and new opportunities to the areas of greatest need, not least through new area partnerships."

**ENDS More information 230261**

*PRESS RELEASE*

*RE MEETING 3/8/95*



## ACCESS TO GOVERNMENT

### GOVERNMENT CONTACTS WITH SINN FEIN (SF), THE PROGRESSIVE UNIONIST PARTY(PUP) AND ULSTER DEMOCRATIC PARTY (UDP)

- 1 This briefing is drawn from Central Secretariat guidance CPL-MAIN/1789 .
- 2 The essential elements of the new policy are :-
  - Ministers advised SF on 10 May and PUP and UDP on 16 May that so long as exploratory dialogue continues they would be ready to consider requests from representatives of those parties to meet Ministers on their merits ;
  - requests from these three parties would be dealt with on the same basis as requests from other parties but no more favourably;
  - the three parties could not expect automatic access to Ministers and, as with other parties, it might be more appropriate for meetings to take place with officials - the guiding principle being how a similar request from one of the other parties would be handled;
  - matters raised might be better dealt with in exploratory dialogue rather than in a separate meeting with Ministers or officials;
  - the policy applies to representatives of the three parties  
- not just elected representatives;
- 3 Guidance for officials on the handling of requests :-
  - the three parties are not to be treated more favourably than other parties either as to the granting of meetings or the level of representation;
  - written replies to the three parties should be in a similar style to that applied to other parties and should bring out the point that their request was being dealt with on the same basis as other parties;



- subject to CPL consultation it would be appropriate to invite elected representatives of the three parties to specific events in the interests of securing cross-party involvement;
- the three parties should now be sent copies of published official documents on the same basis as other parties;
- Ministers wish to continue the policy whereby the three parties would not normally be considered for public office, save where as now, for example, legislation leaves no discretion with Ministers or Departments in accepting a DC nomination.

4 Line to take

As previously advised by Ministers, so long as exploratory dialogue continues, requests from representatives of SF, PUP and UDP (not just elected representatives) would be considered on their merits and on the same basis as requests from other parties. But the three parties could not expect to be treated more favourably than the other parties.