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FROM: JONATHAN STEPHENS  
SIL/TPU  
8 NOVEMBER 1994

Mr Bell - B

cc: PS/PUS (L&B)	- B
PS/Mr Fell	- B
NI Perm Secs	
Mr Legge	- B
Mr Thomas	- B
Mr Blackwell	- B
Mr Brooke	- B
Mr Daniell	- B
Mr Steele	- B
Mr Shannon	- B
Mr Watkins	- B
Mr Williams	- B
Director, TFU	- B
Mr Wood (L&B)	- B
Mr Brooker	- B
Mrs Brown	- B
Mrs Collins	- B
Mr Dodds	- B
Mr Maccabe	- B
Mr Marsh	- B
Mr Maxwell	- B
Mr Perry	- B
Dr Power	- B
Mr T Smyth	- B
Mr White	- B
Mr Bramley	
Mr Beeton	
Mr Margetts	

*Mae  
I think we will need  
a new file for NIQO  
D 7/11*

*Mr Hetherington  
Mr Hetherington  
Mr Hetherington  
Cmex 11/11  
14/11  
15/11*

*To notes - open new file.  
slb  
15/11*

ENTERED 14 NOV 1994

OFFICIAL COMMITTEE ON NORTHERN IRELAND QUESTIONS (NIQO)

Following the Prime Minister's minute to the Secretary of State, the Cabinet Office are establishing the new official level coordination machinery to shadow NI Committee which the Prime Minister has requested. This is to take the form of NIQO, whose first meeting is likely to be later this week. This note sets out for the benefit of colleagues how the new committee will operate and what subjects it is likely to take and in what order.

Membership

2. NIQO will be chaired by Paul Lever from the Cabinet Office and Kate Collins and myself will be its Joint Secretaries. You

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and I will therefore be the standing NIO representatives, although there will be a need for fairly regular representation from both the security and economic sides in Belfast - generally at Grade 3 level. Other Departments who will be represented include FCO, Home Office, MOD, Treasury, Law Officers' Department, Scottish Office, Welsh Office, DTI and the Security Service. Others can be invited as necessary.

Terms of Reference

3. The official terms of reference mirror those of the Ministerial Committee, NI:

"To consider questions relating to the Government's policy on Northern Ireland issues and relations with the Republic of Ireland on these matters; and to report to the Ministerial Committee on Northern Ireland (NI)."

But in the letter establishing the Committee (which I am not copying around because it is not on BLIS), Paul Lever has said he sees the functions of NIQO in practice as being:

- to ensure that where policy issues in relation to Northern Ireland are of interest to other departments, their implications are identified and are the subject of the necessary interdepartmental consultation;
- to spot any potentially awkward timing of events or announcements which may have a read across from Northern Ireland business into other departments' business or vice versa;
- where appropriate, to prepare the ground on matters which need collective Ministerial agreement in NI.

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4. Given that the Cabinet Office have a very clear Prime Ministerial remit to treat Northern Ireland as an issue of the highest priority, the Committee may therefore be a very useful means of advancing inter-Departmental issues which have become stuck at a bilateral level.

Initial meeting and agenda

5. The first meeting is likely to be at 2.30 pm on Thursday. Cabinet Office are thinking of the following items for the agenda:

- general stocktake (a chance for each Department to register items which may require inter-Departmental consideration at some time);
- Joint Framework Document and the EU;
- Joint Framework Document and human rights;
- economic matters (eg investment conference and aid packages).

6. The only additional paper we are likely to be asked to produce for Thursday's meeting is on the fourth item, where Cabinet Office would like a general roundup of where we are. I should be grateful if Mr Maxwell would coordinate the production of this, so that we can send it to Cabinet Office in the course of Wednesday. Mr Watkins might like to consider whether he would wish to attend NIQO on Thursday for this item. If the Framework Document and the EU stays on the agenda, then Mr Williams might like to consider attending also.

Future agenda items

7. Items which Kate Collins and I have already identified for possible future discussion include:

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- general approach to exploratory dialogue;
- decommissioning of arms;
- review of emergency legislation;
- preparations for the December Summit, including the final texts of both the Joint Framework Document and the Strand 1 paper;
- force levels.

8. It also occurs to me that prisons issues will need to be considered at some stage (including the unresolved issue of home leave for transferred prisoners). Another possibility is our approach to presentation of Northern Ireland in the US.

9. There is likely to be a second meeting of NIQO before the end of the month, which is likely to focus on exploratory dialogue and preparations for the December Summit. That will also prepare the way for a full meeting of NI Committee to take the same issues around the turn of the month.

10. It would obviously be helpful if I or you could be kept in touch by colleagues with forthcoming issues which are likely to require consideration in NIQO at some stage. In particular, if colleagues are aware of any other forthcoming issues which may need consideration in NIQO, or which we should give warning of to other departments, it would be useful to know of them by close of play on Wednesday, so that we can consider reporting them orally during the general stocktake at the first meeting.

11. Where we can, we should aim to continue to deal with as many issues as possible bilaterally with other Departments, but where issues prove hard to resolve bilaterally or are likely to be of wider significance we must anticipate a discussion in NIQO.

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Keeping Cabinet Office in touch

12. It will be generally helpful to keep Cabinet Office (Kate Collins) up to speed with issues by copying her in on policy submissions going to Ministers - particularly those on issues likely to come to NIQO in due course. This used to be our practice a little time ago but it fell into disuse as Cabinet Office lost interest and were left out of the loop by No 10. We should now make an effort to include them in again. As a general rule, if we are copying papers to RID in the FCO, then I see no objection to copying them to Miss Collins as well if they are likely to be helpful to her. Papers can be faxed to her on 270 0416 (unclassified) or 270 0438 (secure).

13. We are also arranging for Miss Collins to have a seat on the full COG as a means of keeping in touch. So she should be included on the circulation list of all COG papers.

14. I should be very happy to answer any questions about the new Committee and whether issues are likely to be relevant to it.

SIGNED

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