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cc: PS/Baroness Denton (DED&L)
Mr Carvill
Mr Higgins
Mr Maccabe
Mrs Sear
Mr Lamont, RID
Ms McAllister, T&EA
Mr Murphy, MBW
Mr Corbett
Mr Godfrey S. 28 / S.

From: J A Canavan
CCRU

12 August 1996

To: PS/Michael Ancram (DENI,B&L)

E954/96 - COUNCILLOR MAIRTIN O MUILLEOIR - IRISH LANGUAGE TELEVISION

1. Councillor O Muilleoir (Belfast, Sinn Fein) has followed up his earlier correspondence on Government support for Irish language television (PS/Minister's letter of 8 July attached) with a query on whether there are plans to assist financially those making Irish language television programmes. He also asks about the reception of the Teilifis na Gaeilge signal in Northern Ireland. As with his previous letter, the Councillor has written in Irish and, in line with guidance on the handling of Irish language correspondence, the letter has been translated and a reply in English should issue from PS/Michael Ancram.
2. The earlier reply referred to officials identifying, within the context of existing policies and programmes, opportunities which Teilifis na Gaeilge creates for developing Irish language cultural activities. The existing programmes which would be relevant are the Arts Council of Northern Ireland's assistance for film television and video; the Training and Employment Agency's training programmes, and MBW's assistance for economic development in West Belfast. The attached draft reply refers to these programmes.

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3. Councillor O Muilleoir also asked about the reception of Teilifis na Gaeilge. The Department of National Heritage is responsible for broadcasting issues. They have informed NIO London that the Government is content to facilitate the reception of services from the ROI, provided that the reception of UK channels for viewers in Northern Ireland is not adversely affected. For some time, UK broadcasters and RTE have been considering a means of improving RTE reception in Northern Ireland, through the development of the signal from the Claremont Carn transmitter. These contacts have been referred to in IGC communiqués. Although further work is still required on this, officials are working closely with the broadcasters to make progress on the issue. DNH has also been informed by Cabletel Northern Ireland Limited, who have been awarded the NI cable franchise, that they have plans to carry RTE and Teilifis na Gaeilge when it commences broadcasting.

4. A draft reply to Councillor O Muilleoir for signature by PS/Michael Ancram is attached.

[Signed: JAC]

J A CANAVAN

DRAFT

**Councillor Mairtin O Muilleoir
City Hall
BELFAST
BT1 5GS**

Thank you for your letter of 24 July to the Minister, which followed earlier correspondence from this office on 8 July.

The earlier letter had mentioned that officials would seek to identify, within the context of existing policies and programmes, opportunities offered by the introduction of Teilifis na Gaeilge to develop Irish language cultural activities in Northern Ireland. Examples of such existing programmes are the Training and Employment Agency's and Making Belfast Work's initiatives in West Belfast.

The T&EA supports training programmes delivered through Irish at the new Springvale training facility. It is hoped that some of the people who successfully complete the media training course will find work with independent producers who may be commissioned by broadcasters, including Teilifis na Gaeilge, to make TV programmes in Irish. Through its Priority Skills Initiative, the T&EA is also providing active support to the Northern Ireland Film Council, targeted at the provision of a structured training programme to enhance the creative, technical and business skills of both the freelance and independent sectors in Northern Ireland.

In respect of financial assistance for making Irish language television programmes, funding is available from the Arts Council of Northern Ireland, through the National Lottery Arts Fund, for the production of film, television and video. No applications have as yet been received for the funding of projects in the Irish language, but any application would be considered on its merits.

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When Teilifis na Gaeilge begins transmission, it should be received in Northern Ireland in those areas reached by the existing RTE signal. The Government is content to facilitate the improved reception of services from the Republic of Ireland in Northern Ireland, provided that reception of the UK channels is not adversely affected. For some time, UK broadcasters and RTE have been considering a means of improving RTE reception in Northern Ireland, through the development of the signal from the Claremont Carn transmitter. Officials are working closely with the broadcasters to make progress on this issue, although further work is required. The Department of National Heritage has been informed by Cabletel Northern Ireland Ltd, the company which has been awarded the Northern Ireland cable franchise, that Teilifis na Gaeilge will be included in the services available to subscribers.

PS/MICHAEL ANCRAM