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Reference Code: 98/6/429

Title: Memo from Erskine Childers, Minister for Transport and Power, to Seán Lemass, Taoiseach, regarding possible co-operation with Northern Ireland in the field of tourism.

Creation Date(s): 27 January, 1965

Level of description: Item

Extent and medium: 5 pages

Creator(s): Department of the Taoiseach

Access Conditions: Open

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OIFIG AN AIRE IOMPAIR AGUS CUMHACHTA

(OFFICE OF THE MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT AND POWER)

BAILE ÁTHA CLIATH, 2.

(DUBLIN)

27 January, 1965.

Dear Taoiseach,

I wrote to you on 13th April last in relation to the subject of possible co-operation with the North in the field of tourism and I set out therein a list of practical matters in which Bord Fáilte thought that there might usefully be co-operation. There is no reason to change the list but in view of developments I have thought it desirable to set out for you in greater detail the current background and the political and other problems which may arise in connection with the various measures of co-operation mentioned.

Tourism in the North is promoted by the Northern Ireland Tourist Board. Both in scale of operation and system of work, this Board is more akin to one of the regional councils here than to Bord Fáilte. Its total income for promotion purposes is only £150,000 per year, though hotel construction grants are given by the Northern Ireland Ministry on the recommendation of the Board. Some, if not all of the Directors of the Board are full-time officers corresponding rather to Managers in Bord Fáilte. The N.I.T.B. has minor representation of its own in Britain but its promotion outside Britain is handled entirely by the British Travel Association, e.g. the British equivalent of Bord Fáilte.

Bord Fáilte consider that co-operation with the N.I.T.B. would be almost entirely to the latter's benefit because of the much greater scale of Bord Fáilte promotional activity. Any benefit to Bord Fáilte would probably result from the co-operation of the British Travel Association (B.T.A.). The English, Welsh, Scotch and Northern Ireland Tourist Bodies are constituent

/members

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members of the B.T.A. but the N.I.T.B. has maintained a veto on co-operation with Bord Fáilte though the three other members were agreeable. This co-operation would be directed towards the promotion of the whole of Ireland as such and of Britain and Ireland as a combined tourist area. In view of their failure to secure any measure of co-operation with the N.I.T.B., or the withdrawal of their veto, Bord Fáilte have in recent years been rather less active in pursuing co-operative efforts with the N.I.T.B. on such a unilateral basis; they had, for instance, advised them in connection with the hotel grant scheme in the North and other matters.

The first question which arises in relation to collaboration in the tourism field is whether this should be on an ad hoc basis or whether some kind of formal machinery should be established. Bord Fáilte consider that from the practical point of view there would not be a case for formal machinery but they recognise that from the political point of view it may be desirable. Perhaps the best solution would be to establish some kind of consultative machinery under which meetings to discuss specific subjects could be sought by either body at any time but under which there would be little or no provision for regular meetings. This is a point in any case on which I shall have to sound out Mr. Faulkner before we can come to final conclusions. Another aspect which will require exploration is the level of consultation: should there be direct contact on practical matters between the Directors or staff of the N.I.T.B. and Bord Fáilte management or even directors of regional tourist companies or should there be formal contact at the top levels. There have already been informal discussions about the Ballinamore Canal (which links the Shannon and the Erne) between the appropriate regional companies and local authorities on one side and the N.I.T.B. and Fermanagh County Council, and other matters including St. Angelo Airport (near Enniskillen) have also been discussed.

/Bord

Bord Fáilte envisage effective co-operation on promotional work at three levels and probably at three successive stages. Firstly, the handling and distribution of N.I.T.B. literature by Bord Fáilte and the handling of Bord Fáilte literature by the British Travel Association (B.T.A.) abroad; secondly, the selling of the whole of Ireland as a single unit using a single brochure covering the whole of Ireland for distribution by all three bodies; thirdly, the selling of Great Britain and Ireland as a combined tourist area.

The first level of co-operation presents no real difficulties and raises no political issues. The idea of a single brochure for Ireland, however, has previously been explored but difficulties about nomenclature, etc. arose. Thus the North may be expected to insist that their separate identity be preserved in any common brochure, and that in any map the Border be seen, that Derry be shown as Londonderry, and possibly that any map of the whole of Ireland show the Six County Area in a separate colour and that our area be labelled the Republic of Ireland.

Bord Fáilte would anticipate less difficulty in dealing with the B.T.A. about common publicity for Britain and the whole of Ireland. They would insist on the retention of our separate identity in such literature and there would, for instance, be no question of the area being described as the British Isles. Bord Fáilte has, in fact, a much better organisation than B.T.A. and there is no danger that they would lose their identity in a joint operation.

Other possibilities for co-operation in promotional work which exist include extension of visits by travel agencies and publicists over the whole country, joint advertising and film making, joint enquiry servicing, common or combined hotel lists and, possibly, the use of joint offices in Britain with the N.I.T.B. or abroad with B.T.A. The use of joint offices could, possibly, give rise to difficulties (flag, etc.) but some scope for useful co-operation may exist.

/Apart

*Fishing permits
Open houses +
shooting seasons*

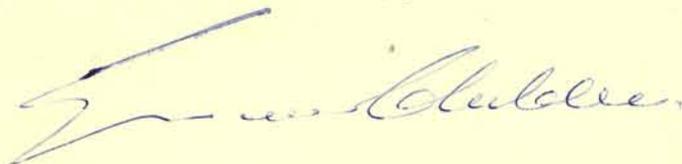
Apart from the promotional field in which the main practical interest of Bord Fáilte is to secure the full co-operation of the B.T.A. and the removal of the N.I.T.B. ban on such co-operation, there is also scope for co-operation in the development field. This would cover exchange of information and experience, statistical and other research and, perhaps, joint development of a tidy towns competition, fishing development and game development as appropriate. The approach in this field would be on a purely practical basis and no insurmountable political difficulties should present themselves as long as there is goodwill on both sides. Todd Andrews has ideas that the C.I.E. and U.T.A. hotels might be run as a unit or a chain and this is a matter which he may now be able to pursue with U.T.A. with greater prospect of success.

Apart from direct co-operation between Bord Fáilte and the Northern Ireland Tourist Board there is, of course, room for co-operation between the two areas in other matters which indirectly affect tourism. These include an increase in the number of approved roads, greater freedom of movement for tourists in the Border Area around the lakes, etc. freedom of movement across the Border for hired cars, joint planning and preservation of the countryside in the Border Area, Carlingford Lough, etc. and extension of National Trust activity. Bord Fáilte have also suggested the desirability of joint Customs Stations but this could well present grave difficulties. I will, in any case, bring the foregoing matters to the attention of the other Ministers concerned.

I think that tourism is a field of activity in which co-operation with the North could be pursued with useful prospects from both the practical and national point of view. In the new atmosphere engendered by your visit to Captain O'Neill we would hope to find a less rigid approach to the political difficulties on the part of the N.I.T.B. and we should presumably for our part take the most flexible view possible.

I hope to have an opportunity to discuss these matters with you but I felt it would help to set them down on paper.

Yours sincerely,



Seán F. Lemass, Esq., T.D.,
An Taoiseach.

P.S. I set out the hard core of political difficulties upon which we must have our own decisions ready. Copy of this on a separate page.

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- (1) Border marked on maps, this is already done. No precedent will be created.
- (2) Londonderry recognised. This, I think, is already done.
- (3) In a map or brochure the description of the two administrations - Northern Ireland now being used, Republic of Ireland or Ireland for our administration. We must have some views on this.
- (4) The B.T.A. link up.

We can be assured:

- (a) That the two countries will not be called the British Isles.
- (b) That there can be a separate brochure included in handout literature describing the whole of Ireland.
- (c) That in a combined effort in which England and Ireland appear there will be specific mention of Bord Fáilte and the N.T.B. being responsible for the Irish part of the publication.

But in this very vitally important publicity for us the points at 3 must be determined.