

E.R.

*Mr. Keighly 3/6
Have we a suitable file?
L 3/6/85*

CONFIDENTIAL

22 MAY 1985

*E. R. Jackson
W. Jackson
W. Keighly
W. Keighly
W. Quinn
W. Cornish*

PC/5/20

W. Jackson:

Do we need to issue any guidance to GAs or BOVs?

R. J. M.

- cc. PS/Ministers (B&L)
- PS/PUS (B&L)
- PS/Mr Bloomfield (B&L)
- Mr Brennan
- Mr Stephens
- Mr Chesterton
- Mr Merifield
- Mr Palmer
- Miss Elliott
- Mr Lyon
- Mr Pearson
- Mr Reeve
- Mr Sullivan
- Mr Bickham

R. J. M.

*Mr. Howell 3/6
Can we have this filed?
3/6/85
Mr Thompson
Mr Walker (OB)*

*Tosa. Dambit
Whether we will ever have any approach of SF.
NI Permanent Secretaries 22.5.85*

1. I have distributed under cover of a separate note of today's date a revised circular of guidance to Private Office staff on contacts with Sinn Fein following the recent review of present policy by the Secretary of State and Ministers.
2. There is no change in the principle that Ministers will have no personal dealings with Sinn Fein, unless and until Sinn Fein renounce support for the use of violence. The revised circular gives guidance on how this basic policy should be implemented in the changed circumstances created by the increase in the number of Sinn Fein councillors after the district council elections.
3. My minute of 18 January (copy attached) asked you to consider how best to give guidance on this subject to staff at various levels in your Department and in your associated public bodies, and you will wish to consider repeating and amplifying that advice, taking account of the further refinements set out in the revised circular which has been issued to Private Offices.

CONTACTS WITH OFFICIALS

4. As the Private Office circular indicates, approaches from Sinn Fein members to local offices etc raising purely constituency matters which do not appear to raise wider question of policy can continue to be dealt with at local level. Locally-based officials may also continue as at present to undertake any

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necessary liaison with district councils and individual councillors on matters within the Council's responsibility or on any constituency matters which councillors may raise. This applies irrespective of the political complexion of the Council or Councillor concerned.

5. Senior headquarter officials (Assistant Secretary and above) should avoid head-to-head discussions with Sinn Fein representatives whenever possible. They should not receive deputations which include Sinn Fein councillors, save in exceptional circumstances where such contact is essential for fair administration. Nor should such officials pay site visits to councils where it is known that a Sinn Fein councillor would be the main spokesman (eg as chairman of a recreation committee) unless:

- (1) the subject matter is within the specific responsibilities of the council or council committee concerned, and
- (2) the interests of fair government and of the equitable treatment of the council and the area as a whole requires personal contact rather than correspondence.

Ministerial authority must be sought for any proposed meetings of this sort, and the Secretary of State's office should also be informed. Care should be taken in the planning and conducting of any such meetings in order to avoid contacts or confrontations which might be embarrassing to government.

NORMAL COURTESIES

6. As at present Ministers will not extend to Sinn Fein the customary courtesies and hospitality given to other elected representatives. Sinn Fein representatives should not therefore be invited to receptions, presentations, seminars or similar events being held by government or public agencies, whether or not a Minister is to be present.

GENERAL

7. As always care should be taken to ensure that all genuine constituency matters raised by Sinn Fein receive fair and adequate attention and that there are no grounds for a complaint of maladministration to the Parliamentary Commissioner of Administration or a claim of discrimination on the grounds of

political affiliation under Section 19 of the Northern Ireland Constitution Act 1973.

APPOINTMENTS TO PUBLIC BODIES

8. In many cases government has little discretion over the appointment of district councillors to bodies such as area boards but where such discretion does exist it can be assumed that Ministers would be reluctant to appoint a Sinn Fein councillor to a public board.

GUIDANCE TO STAFF

9. As in the past it will be for Departments to bring this guidance to the attention of appropriate staff bearing in mind the sensitivity of the issue and the fact that the circular to Private Office staff is not intended for general distribution. Could I therefore ask you to consider what guidance is appropriate in the circumstances of your Department in relation to your own staff and to the fringe bodies for which your Department is responsible. The nature of the relationship with fringe bodies varies considerably, as does the scope for and nature of possible contacts with Sinn Fein and it is therefore difficult to draw up universally applicable advice. In general, however, fringe bodies should be aware of government policy and practice in this field and their own practice (subject to any particular statutory duties or practical operational requirements) should reflect the same principles as set out above, and you may wish to take an early opportunity to discuss this informally at senior level in the major fringe bodies with which you are concerned.
10. Any points of difficulty in applying these revised guidelines should be raised with Central Secretariat.



P CARVILL

Central Secretariat

20 May 1985

/JH