

NATIONAL ARCHIVES**IRELAND**

Reference Code: 2002/8/416

Title: Minutes of a meeting of the Inter-departmental Unit on the North of Ireland, mainly reporting on North-South co-operation.

Creation Date(s): 7 October, 1971

Level of description: Item

Extent and medium: 4 pages

Creator(s): Department of the Taoiseach

Access Conditions: Open

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Aonad Idir-Rannach um an Tuaisceart
Inter-departmental Unit on the North
of Ireland

DraftConfidential

Minutes of twenty-sixth meeting held on 7th
October, 1971 at the Department of Foreign
Affairs

Present

Mr. S.G. Ronan, Chairman	Department of Foreign Affairs
Mr. D. Ó Súilleabháin	Department of the Taoiseach
Mr. M. Doyle	Department of Finance
Mr. E. Gallagher	Department of Foreign Affairs
Mr. J. Small, Secretary	Department of Foreign Affairs

Assembly of the Northern Irish People

The Chairman drew attention to the publication in the press on the previous day of the constitution of the Northern Ireland Alternative Assembly - The Assembly of the Northern Irish People. The rules of the Assembly's Executive Council and Membership Committee had also been published. He indicated that these documents coincided with the drafts prepared by the Unit except in some minor respects and circulated texts showing the revisions. He said that the Guildhall in Derry which was to be the meeting place for the launching of the Assembly on 5th October had been refused but Strabane town hall had been chosen as the new venue - on 26th October.

North/South Co-Operation

(a) Moy Bridge: The Chairman said that co-operation between Monaghan and Tyrone County Councils for the purpose of rebuilding the cross-border bridge at Moy had reached the stage of applying for tenders but the Northern Ireland Minister of Development, Mr. Bradford would not give the necessary sanction to proceed at this time, possibly because of security considerations. Mr. Gallagher said that a shortage of funds might be another reason - arising out of the massive malicious damages, compensation claims and the civil disobedience campaign.

(b) Proposed North/South Joint Study Group

The Chairman circulated copies of a letter dated 4th October from the Department of Industry and Commerce regarding a suggestion that a Standing Joint Study Group be set up to deal with areas of possible North/South cooperation. Senior officials of the Department of Industry and Commerce and the Ministry of Commerce in Belfast had met on two occasions, on 20th April and 27th July, as a follow-up to the Taoiseach's repeated offers last Spring of economic cooperation with the North. The Northern side had indicated at the second meeting that the idea emanating from the first meeting, of a joint working party to explore the possibilities of establishing industrial joint ventures, particularly in border areas, might be of doubtful value at this time because, due to the unrest, there was no new foreign investment in Northern Ireland. Instead, the Northern side had proposed the establishment of a Standing Joint Study Group comprising representatives of the two Departments mentioned above and a representative of the IDA. The Group would have the continuing role of a general consultative nature and could itself undertake studies of subjects within the direct responsibility of the two Departments. It could also initiate studies of topics which would require consideration on a wider basis, and, for that purpose it was envisaged that it would proceed by setting up Working Parties which would include officials of other Departments or work in consultation with other Departments as appropriate. The Department of Industry and Commerce had, said the Chairman, forwarded to him a draft of the proposals for the Standing Joint Study Group for advice.

Mr. Ó Súilleabháin said that, as regards principle, the proposal seemed to be in line with the Taoiseach's wishes that North/South cooperation should continue at official level. Mr. Doyle said he had reservations about the establishment of a Standing Joint Study Group solely on an Industry/Commerce base. He could see no objection to a Working Party involving the two Departments within their areas of competence but the proposed Standing Joint

Study Group was a wider concept. Mr. Gallagher said that he, too, had certain reservations. The new proposals were at variance with what was envisaged at the first meeting between the Departments in April; the idea of a Standing Joint Study Group might be an attempt by Mr. Brian Faulkner to avoid the creation of an Economic Council of Ireland. Mr. Gallagher said he would be opposed to the use of the term "Standing" in the title of the study group and instead of having the group report to the "Governments" they should report to their respective "Ministers". Furthermore, if it were desired to cover agricultural matters, for instance, in the study, then a separate Agricultural Working Party should be set up. Agreeing with these objections, Mr. Doyle said we would like to see the word "economic" dropped before cooperation as this would have the further effect of limiting the groups activities to matters coming within the terms of reference of the two Departments. He also felt that the reference to the implications for a joint venture of the respective social welfare codes need clarification. Mr. Gallagher said that in regard to the considerations listed for possible joint action in the setting up of new industries in border areas there was no reference to social desirability and he felt that that should be added because the use of strictly economic criteria might disqualify border towns like Strabane.

It was agreed that the reply to the letter from the Department of Industry and Commerce should list the aforementioned objections and that the terms of the letter should be cleared in advance with the members of the Unit.

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 (c) Cross-Border Archival Cooperation

Mr. Ó Súilleabháin referred back to the June meeting of the Unit when this matter was first discussed. On that occasion there was a brief discussion on the public offer of the Northern Ireland Public Record Office to assist its counterpart in Dublin in regard to departmental records. Mr. Ó Súilleabháin said he wished to report a development in the meantime which seemed to add to their

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~~suspicion of excessive zeal tending towards a take-over, almost,~~
 on the part of the Public Record Office in Belfast. He said that there is in existence a business records committee of archivists which is doing studies on a county basis. The Northern side had suggested that Monaghan be dealt with next and had offered to provide a full team for the studies there but our own Public Record Office had a strong preference for Meath because the County Librarian there was known to be more cooperative. The Taoiseach's Department had supported the Public Record Office in Dublin on this. Mr. Ó Súilleabháin said that he was inclined to regard the Northern ~~zeal as excessive cooperation.~~

Letter to the United from Mr. Eric Dunlop X

The Chairman ~~will have~~ circulated a further letter from Mr. Dunlop whose first letter to the Unit about the position of the minority in the South was brought to the Unit's attention at its April meeting.

North/South Economic Studies

Mr. Doyle informed the meeting that Mr. Clark had been nominated as the new representative of the Department of Finance on the Unit's Economic Sub-Committee. There was a brief discussion about the comparative sectoral studies prepared for the Unit by certain Departments. Dr. O'Donoghue had done a preliminary paper interpreting those studies and it was agreed that he should be contacted to see whether he had finalised his analysis or was in need of additional information from Departments. The question of a further circular might arise if the material supplied was not sufficient or required clarification.

Next meeting

The next meeting of the Unit was arranged for Thursday, 11th November, 1971 at 10 a.m.

Circulated to

The Taoiseach
 Minister for Foreign Affairs
 and Members of the Unit.