

NATIONAL ARCHIVES**IRELAND**

Reference Code: 2003/17/269

Title: Letter from the Secretary of Inter-Departmental Unit on the North of Ireland to the Secretary of the Department of the Taoiseach, NS Ó Nualláin, enclosing briefing material preparatory to a meeting of the Taoiseach, Jack Lynch, and other members of the Irish Government, with representatives of the Stormont Opposition group, on 23 August 1971.

The briefing material relates to the issues of civil rights for the minority community in Northern Ireland, the use of peaceful protest, cases of actual killings, proposed financial relief and assistance from the Irish Government to victims of deprivation of civil and human rights in Northern Ireland, and a draft press release relating to the meeting.

Creation Date(s): 23 August, 1971

Level of description: Item

Extent and medium: 8 pages
Creator(s): Department of Foreign Affairs
Access Conditions: Open
Copyright: National Archives, Ireland. May only be reproduced with the written permission of the Director of the National Archives.



ROINN GNÓTHAÍ EACHTRACHA
DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
 Aonad Idir-Rannach um an Tuaisceart
 Inter-Departmental Unit on the North of Ireland
 BAILE ATHA CLIATH 2
 DUBLIN 2

IMMEDIATE AND SECRET

23 August, 1971

An Rúnaí Príobháideach don Taoiseach
 Roinn an Taoisigh.

With reference to the proposed visit to Dublin this afternoon of representatives of the Stormont Parliamentary Opposition group for discussions with the Taoiseach and other members of the Government I am to enclose herewith for the information of your Minister the following briefing material prepared by the Unit:

1. Draft agenda
2. Note on objective to be agreed
3. Note on method of achieving objective to be agreed
4. Note on "other business"
5. Note on financial provisions
6. Draft press release.

The draft agenda (paper No.1 above) is intended to be circulated also to the Northern participants in the discussion. It is understood that the Taoiseach will discuss the contents of this material with the participating Ministers before the meeting with the Northern group commences.

There are attached also a General Note and a detailed Note on Item 5 - Financial Provisions - which *are* being circulated only to the Taoiseach *by Min. for Finance* and the Minister for Finance.

Rúnaí
Aonad Idir-Rannach um an Tuaisceart

Item I - objective to be agreed

The following wording is suggested:

to obtain equality of treatment for everyone in Northern Ireland irrespective of political views or religion and without prejudice to the aspiration of the great majority of Irish people to the reunification of Ireland.

The above follows the wording of the Downing Street Declaration. This wording was also followed in Mr. Heath's telegram to the Taoiseach on 19th August. It is not possible, therefore, for the British Government to object to our adopting their own policy.

The wording of the second part of the objective is something for which we do not have to apologise to anyone.

Various other expressions could be used instead but the view agreed by the Inter-Departmental Unit is that we should avoid any phraseology such as, for example, "support of a policy of passive resistance" (even though that is the obvious intention) as such phraseology could be found objectionable not only by the British Government but by other Governments as well. The Unit considers that there is no need to risk any difficulty on this score.

Item II - method of achieving objective to be agreed

The following formula is recommended:

This objective is to be pursued by non-violent political means.

The Unit agreed to recommend this formula. It is not objectionable in principle and is completely in line with the Government's general policy. It is also completely in line with the general policy of the Stormont Parliamentary group. It specifically eliminates violence and, by doing so indicates that groups committed to violent activity will not form any part of the organisation and methods of the Stormont Parliamentary Group.

Item III - Other business

This leaves room for the Northern delegates to raise any matters they wish. The Inter-Departmental Unit have in mind however that the Taoiseach may wish to ask them for full cooperation in such matters as providing us with evidence in brutality cases including cases of actual killings. We may wish to process such evidence with a view to activity at Strasbourg or elsewhere.

Item IV - Financial provisions

It is suggested by the Unit that a fund be created "to provide relief and assistance for the victims of deprivation of civil and human rights in Northern Ireland." This is not a unanimous recommendation as will be explained below.

The Department of Finance member of the Unit, Mr. ~~MacInerney~~ *MacInerney*, informed the Unit as follows:

- (i) financial procedures require that payments from public funds should have prior Dáil approval; otherwise the Accounting Officer should receive a direction from his Minister a copy of which should be sent to the Comptroller-General;
- (ii) in his opinion the concurrence of the Opposition parties should be sought. (This view is ~~unanimously~~ shared by ^{the other} members of the Unit);
- (iii) grants-in-aid are not payable to persons outside the jurisdiction and, therefore, outside the control of the State. For this reason he suggested the appointment of trustees to receive payments from the Exchequer and make transfers to the Northern group on causes shown and for purposes indicated. This is necessary also to ensure that the State is able to demonstrate externally that, so far as can be provided, the fund will not be used for any purpose other than that clearly intended;
- (iv) auditors should be appointed.

The Department of the Taoiseach's member of the Unit, Mr. D. Ó Súilleabháin, generally supported by the Chairman, Mr. S.G. Ronan, Department of Foreign Affairs and by Mr. E. Gallagher, Department of Foreign Affairs, suggested that the procedure be kept as simple as possible. It was pointed out that the likely treasurers for the fund, Mr. John Hume M.P. and Mr. Roderick O'Connor M.P. are both Irish citizens and that the rule about trusteeship within the jurisdiction should be waived in these particular circumstances. Furthermore it could be insisted that the fund be established in Dublin and, no doubt, the treasurers would agree to this. It was also suggested that the fund should be open to public subscription and that the Taoiseach should consider publicly supporting an appeal for subscriptions to the fund from the public. Consequently insistence on auditing the entire fund, in which the Government's possible contributions would be unidentifiable, would impose an unnecessary burden. Instead the treasurers could be asked to satisfy themselves by audit that the total use of the fund is within its terms of reference. Subject to legal opinion this audit ~~need~~ not be published but could be made available both to the Government and in due course to the Public Accounts Committee for their private information.

Mr. MacInerney included a strong reservation about the formula set out above in relation to the nature of the fund. He considered that the items listed in the attached sheet which estimates the potential Government contribution - particularly Items A, B and D, did not properly fall within the terms of reference of the suggested fund. They clearly outbalanced the remaining Item C and, in this sense, the distribution of the proposed fund seemed to him inappropriate.

Mr. Ó Súilleabháin felt that such expenses are legitimate in any fund of that kind in that the compensation for Stormont M.P.s and Senators and members of public bodies who gave up their Stormont salaries and allowances and worked instead for the aims of the fund,

-2-

are a proper expense, together with general expenses, of such a fund. He also pointed out that the imbalance would in all likelihood be considerably removed by the extent of contributions from the public. He instanced OXFAM which has paid organisers, carries out propoganda work, including advertisements and obviously had considerable general expenses as a suitable precedent.

Mr. Gallagher argued very strongly for a description of the fund to which the British Government could not successfully object in an international forum or otherwise. The description is roughly in line with the aims of the United Nations Trust Fund for South Africa (Vote 46 C8). The description of that fund runs "the fund provides relief and assistance for the victims of the policy of apartheid". Mr. Gallagher argued that it is open to any Government to provide relief and assistance for the victims of deprivation of civil and human rights anywhere and the British Government could not, therefore, easily protest about our doing so in relation to Northern Ireland. He observed that, in such matters, debate usually ends up on the subject of the actual wording used rather than on the real intent that might lie behind the Government's contributions. He regarded it as necessary to maintain the strongest obtainable position in relation to the fund against potential future complaints or pressures.

This also applied, with especial force, to the possible reactions of the British Labour Party. They are being weaned away from the bipartisan policy but might be forced back to it if anything done here could be made to appear to be coat-trailing.

The Unit decided that all the above views should be placed before Ministers. The majority of the Unit is in favour of the description of the fund set out in the head of this note. Mr. MacInerney strongly reserves his position on that description.

Item V - Press Release

23 August, 1971

The following draft press release is submitted.

The following statement has been issued today by the Government Information Bureau on behalf of the Taoiseach:

The Taoiseach received this afternoon the representatives of the Stormont ^{Parliamentary} Opposition Group whom he had invited to meet him to discuss the present situation in Northern Ireland. The deputation consisted of

The Taoiseach was accompanied at the meeting by

It was agreed that all should work towards the objective of obtaining equality of treatment for everyone in Northern Ireland irrespective of political views or religion and without prejudice to the aspiration of the great majority of Irish people to the unification of Ireland.

It was also agreed that this objective should be pursued by non-violent political means.

The Northern group informed the Taoiseach and ^{the Ministers} ~~members~~ of the ~~Government~~ of their intention to ^{establish} ~~set up~~ in Dublin a fund to provide relief and assistance for the victims of deprivation of civil and human rights in Northern Ireland. The treasurers of the fund ~~are~~ ^{will} intended to be Mr. John Hume M.P. and Mr. Roderick O'Connor M.P.

The fund will be open to public subscription and further details of this will be announced as soon as possible.

^{The Taoiseach and the Ministers went} ~~The Taoiseach and members of the Government~~ join with the Stormont ^{Parliamentary} Opposition Group in their appeal to the public ^{generously} to contribute to this fund now and on a continuing basis until its ^{purposes} ~~intentions~~ have been achieved.

The Taoiseach informed the Stormont Opposition Group that, subject to the approval of the Government and in anticipation of early ^{from} approval by Dáil Éireann, a regular contribution would be made ~~by~~ the Exchequer to the fund.

-2-

The Taoiseach also indicated that the Government acknowledged the role of the ^{Spokesman} Parliamentary Opposition ~~Group~~ as the principal spokesman for the non-unionist community, ~~as they were the elected representatives of that community.~~