



**An Chartlann Náisiúnta**  
**National Archives**

**Reference Code:** 2021/96/22

**Creator(s):** Department of the Taoiseach

**Accession Conditions:** Open

**Copyright:** National Archives, Ireland.  
May only be reproduced with  
the written permission of the  
Director of the National  
Archives.

Confidential

Taoiseach

APRIL 27

cc PSF  
PSS; F. Finlay  
M. Macgarry  
F. Murray  
I. O'Neil  
J. O'Sullivan  
A. L. L. L.  
Councillors A1

(25)

You may wish to see

94 messages mentioned *h8*  
*4*

A meeting with Eddie McGrady

I met Eddie McGrady in Downpatrick on 22 April.

The following points of interest arose:

SEEN BY  
3- MAY 1994  
TAOISEACH

Select Committee (Westminster)

- Based on his experience of the two meetings which have taken place to date (14 and 20 April), the Select Committee is "a shambles" in organizational terms and unlikely to be of particular service to Unionist interests at Westminster;
- This preliminary judgment is based on a number of factors. First, Jim Kilfedder's manifest lack of chairmanship skills. His failure to impose his authority from the outset, combined with the relative unfamiliarity of many of the Committee's members with Northern Ireland affairs, has meant that both meetings so far have suffered from a lack of direction and general aimlessness.
- Second, Kilfedder's uneasy relations with the Unionist members and consequent heavy reliance for advice on McGrady (with whom he is on good terms and who is the Committee's only other Northern Ireland member) will give McGrady a tactical advantage.
- One example of this was the decision taken on the Committee's programme of work. After receiving a dozen proposals for matters to be investigated (including a UUP

suggestion, "the working and accountability of the NIO", and a DUP suggestion, "the financing and operation of the Maryfield Secretariat"), Kilfedder accepted a McGrady proposal that the Committee should first look at employment creation. This would involve a succession of officials and academic experts being summoned to appear before the Committee (though none of the modalities in this regard have been decided as yet). McGrady calculated that the Committee's deliberations on this comprehensive subject could be prolonged for up to six months.

- McGrady is pleased at this early victory, not just because it has thwarted the Unionists' preferred agenda but also because it will enable him to highlight on a continuing basis the shortcomings of British Government and IDB job creation policies (not least in his own constituency).
  
- A further curious phenomenon has been the relatively low profile of the Unionist members on the Committee. Taylor and Maginnis were both absent on 20 April and Robinson, though present, has said very little at both meetings. The Labour members, Clive Soley and Jim Marshall, have also said little. (Soley's main interest so far has been to get the problems of European peripherality onto the agenda).
  
- Many of the Conservative members, furthermore, are entirely new to Northern Ireland affairs - a point illustrated by the NIO's thoughtful gesture in furnishing all members with maps showing them how to get to Northern Ireland, tourist literature, etc.
  
- The level of their interest in the subject is also debatable. While the agreement as of now is that the

Committee will meet at 4 pm every Wednesday, McGrady's impression is that many Conservative members had in mind longer intervals between meetings and will not be regular attenders.

- Andrew Hunter appears to have appointed himself leader of the Conservative group on the Committee. Noticing that Hunter had circulated a document to the Unionist members in addition to his own colleagues, McGrady objected sharply to this selective distribution and demanded that documents be automatically circulated to all Committee members.
- On the DUP proposal for an inquiry into the financing and operation of the Anglo-Irish Secretariat, McGrady commented that he would relish the opportunity to demand that Irish Government representatives should assist the Committee in its investigation of this matter. The prospect of the Unionists being confronted with two Governments telling them how part of the UK was run was an appealing one.
- He did not, however, detect much interest on the part of other Committee members in the DUP proposal and considers that the likely outcome will be an inquiry into the NIO which touches tangentially on the work and financing of the Secretariat.
- Noting Kilfedder's instant acceptance of his own argument that the Committee should steer clear of proposals which took it into politically divisive areas, McGrady plans to deploy this argument again on future occasions should the need arise.
- As previously reported by the Embassy London (Mr Hayes' report of 21 April), the Committee plan a visit to

Northern Ireland on 11 May. They will fly in in the morning, have a meeting hopefully with the Secretary of State (otherwise the duty Minister at Stormont) and fly out again in the afternoon. Kilfedder had proposed a wider trip taking in the constituencies of several Committee members but McGrady, understandably reluctant to be visited in Downpatrick by his confrères, demurred privately (invoking security risks to the visitors) and the idea was dropped.

#### Boundary Commission recommendations

- I assured McGrady of the Government's continuing support for the SDLP in its efforts to resist the Boundary Commission recommendations.
- He expressed his appreciation and outlined where matters stood at present. An assessor had been appointed for South Down and the hearings were expected to get underway in mid-June (there was general agreement that this exercise should be postponed until after the EP election campaign). The assessor would then report to the Commission, who were required to forward their definitive recommendations to the Secretary of State by the end of the year.
- McGrady hopes that, should the proposal to abolish South Down stand, the Irish Government will put the Secretary of State under pressure to modify this recommendation under the powers available to him.
- The party has raised the Boundary Commission proposals at each of the bilateral meetings it has had recently with Michael Ancram. Ancram's response has tended to be one of broad sympathy mixed with rueful recollection of his vulnerability to boundary changes in his own career.

- McGrady wondered whether Maurice Hayes might have had any input to the recommendations made in relation to South Down and Newry and Armagh. He recalled Hayes predicting to him two years ago that a new Newry and Mourne seat would be created.
- McGrady's private view of his own prospects is pessimistic. He feels that, despite all the pressure brought to bear, the proposal to abolish South Down will stand.
- It has struck him that, if the SDLP were to emphasize more clearly the potential relevance of this issue to their own participation in a resumed talks process, the Secretary of State might opt to delay forwarding to the Speaker of the House of Commons recommendations to which the SDLP were clearly opposed. McGrady's hope would be that, if the delay were sufficiently protracted, a general election might intervene which would secure him in his seat for another four years.
- In more general terms, however, McGrady would not welcome a change of Prime Minister at the present time. He feels that John Major's survival in office is essential to political progress in relation to Northern Ireland. He remarked with a chuckle that he would be ready to sacrifice himself on the altar of political necessity if the downside of a general election was that Major might lose office.

#### Prospects for political talks

- McGrady is impatient to see a resumption of three-stranded talks. His personal view is that Sinn Fein

cannot deliver a permanent cessation of violence at this stage. He is worried that serious problems will arise for the SDLP and other constitutional parties if an impression develops that all political activity has ground to a halt while the Governments wait for a Sinn Fein response.

- I responded by highlighting the Government's active pursuit of an agreed framework for new talks which would build on the Declaration. I also briefed McGrady in general terms on the kind of new agreement which we would wish to see.
- He responded very positively and agreed fully with the direction being taken. He also expressed doubts (not for the first time) about his own party's Strand One proposals, arguing that it went against his deepest democratic instincts to keep power in the devolved institutions away from elected representatives.
- On the Ancram talks, he said that, at the most recent meeting, the SDLP (Hume, Mallon and himself) had agreed to take away the "notions paper" for consideration and to come back with detailed comments on it in about ten days' time from now. McGrady feels that this necessarily means writing a new SDLP paper for Strand One (or, at the very least, seriously revisiting the party's 1992 proposals).
- In response to a comment by Ancram that Strands One and Two were inextricably linked and that Strand Two was critical to overall success, McGrady made the point that the Irish Government should therefore be fully involved in the discussions and that it made no sense to continue with the Ancram process.

- On the proposed Forum, McGrady was anxious that it should be convened only if there was a declaration by the IRA (as distinct from Sinn Fein) that violence would cease permanently. Bearing in mind that Sinn Fein candidates for District Councils had been signing oaths of non-violence for years, the value of a Sinn Fein declaration was very limited in McGrady's eyes.

N/B

- He also hoped that the Forum would not be confined to nationalist parties (lest the Unionists react by convening a Forum of their own, which would reinforce, rather than overcome, the divisions among the Irish people).

*David Donoghue*

David Donoghue

27 April 1994