

CONFIDENTIAL

c.c. PS/Mr. Bloomfield
Mr. Spence
Mr. Chesterton -M
Mr. Elliott
Mr. Hewitt

2882/6

NOTE FOR THE RECORD

PUBLIC APPOINTMENTS

1. On Tuesday 27th May, Mr. Spence and Miss Owens met with members of the Secretariat to consider the methods used, to date, to implement article 6 of the Agreement and to consider how they might be improved. Mr. O'Ceallaigh and Mr. O'Criodain represented the Irish Side of the Secretariat. Mr. Hewitt and Miss Steele the British Side; Miss Doyle of the DFA was also present.
2. Mr. O'Ceallaigh said that a number of practical problems had arisen which the Irish Side were anxious to sort out and thus further our mutual objective of securing support for the institutions of the state in Northern Ireland from all sections of the community. In particular, Mr. O'Ceallaigh referred to the detailed information made available through the Secretariat on the five public bodies specified in Article 6, and inquired if the same information could be made available, if not in all cases when vacancies arise, then in certain targetted bodies. It would also be helpful to the Irish in bringing forward names if they were aware of the sort of person being considered for the vacancy and the qualities expected of the individual as well as some indication of the degree of committment involved. If this information could be provided, it would assist the Irish in producing names which were more likely to be successful in obtaining appointments; this in turn would alleviate some of the disappointment experienced by some of their earlier suggestions. Furthermore, it would also help, if, in the event of their suggested nominee being totally unsuitable, some indication could be given and they could then reconsider and produce a more suitable alternative.

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3. Mr. Spence responded by giving some indication of the relatively small number of appointments made by Ministers and Departments when all the statutory and political obligations were satisfied. The overriding objective was to obtain the right person while at the same time giving due weight to relevant experience, fair representation from interested groups, the balance of the membership as well as a sensible continuity, particularly with future Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen in mind. The crucial constraint of section 19 of the Constitutional Act was stressed. Mr. Spence went on to describe the role of C.A.U. and its computerised list of individuals willing to serve on public bodies. In doing so, he highlighted the small pool of able people willing to serve in this way; the historical reluctance of members of the minority community to serve on certain bodies and the difficulties in obtaining female nominees. While the Irish had been involved to date in attempts to fill 'A' category appointments, Central Secretariat was keen to enlist their help in adding to the general pool of names for all appointments. Mr. Spence recognised that the Irish had been asked for names without any indication of the qualities expected to fill a particular vacancy. Other problems had arisen where it had become known that approaches had been made to certain individuals by the DFA and there was always the danger that an Irish "nominee" when appointed would fuel Unionist suspicions and perhaps result in pressure on the "Unionist" members to resign as part of the anti-agreement campaign. Miss Owens emphasised the value of a full pen-picture and other biographical details especially when CAU wished to suggest names to Departments and for their information, gave the Irish copies of the forms used by CAU.

4. Mr. O'Ceallaigh felt there would no problem in producing this information in future. They were also making some progress in establishing a general pool of names but this task would be easier if they were able to claim some successes. In future they would endeavour to suggest more appropriate names, but if their suggestions were impractical they would value the opportunity to withdraw and re-submit another name. It would also be helpful if in the case of Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen, the Irish could be given an indication as to the likelihood of the present encumbrants being re-appointed.

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5. Miss Owens gave details of the other considerations given to appointments relating to total length of service, age and number of other appointments generally allowed. Consideration was given as to how the Irish could be made aware of impending vacancies in categories B and C and Miss Owen agreed to provide similar information to that which had been given for the five specified bodies. This would let the Irish see when vacancies were arising, and whether or not they did so as a result of the entire membership being required to retire at a particular time.
6. In concluding the discussion, it was felt that the refinements suggested would assist the implementation of Article 6 but did not rule out the possibility of further modifications being required. It was agreed that the procedures would be kept under review.
7. Mr. O'Ceallaigh and Miss Doyle were extremely grateful for the additional information and for the opportunity of discussing this matter frankly with Mr. Spence and Miss Owens.

PRINCIPAL SECRETARIAT

30th May, 1986