

To all Prison Governors

GREETING CARDS IN THE IRISH LANGUAGE

1. At present only greetings cards printed in the English language are available from prison tuckshops. Recently however we have received petitions from prisoners requesting that cards printed in the Irish language should also be made available.

You will recall Mrs Magill asked for Governors' views on this and the returns showed no objections.

2. The matter has been carefully considered and, since prisoners are allowed to write a short greeting in Irish on cards and letters, there does not appear to be any reason for refusing to stock cards on which the greeting is printed in Irish.
3. Enquiries have been made and it has been confirmed that cards in the Irish language are available for various occasions and can be obtained from a local supplier or from sources such as the Irish Cancer Society.
4. It is proposed to place a stock of these cards in the tuckshop in each prison and Governors are therefore asked to indicate the type and number of cards they envisage would be appropriate to demand in their establishment. This will obviously be on a trial and error basis to begin with until the regular demand has been established.
5. Headquarters staff are prepared to purchase the cards directly assuming the prison provides the funds used for the purpose.

I would be grateful for an early response.

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27 July 1988

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CODE 18-77

Mrs Morrell - Mrs Mayill 4/7
Good. Thank you to you and Mrs. Mayill for the back ground work carried out. Please reply to me 2 outstanding petitions (Conor Ogan & Adams) after you have informed Governors by letter what we will be doing this. You will need to ask Govs. to let us have an idea of how many cards Mrs Mann may want initially & what sort. A lot of us see the letter before it goes, and am grateful for the initiative.
Mr Jackson issues CAM 4/vii

ScJ

30.6.88

IRISH GREETINGS CARDS IN PRISON TUCKSHOPS

1. Currently the only greetings cards on sale in the prison tuckshops are in English. We received a couple of petitions from prisoners, one of them Mr Dominic Adams (brother of Gerry), asking why cards with the greetings in Irish could not be stocked. We gave the prisoners holding copies while we made investigations.
2. The main consideration is that we allow prisoners to write their own greetings in Irish inside cards. It would not seem logical, therefore, to say we could not sell cards in the tuckshops that had similar greetings printed rather than added in manuscript by the prisoners. Furthermore, the fact that we now allow Irish publications to be presented for prisoners, and all of the prison libraries hold a number of books in Irish, would make a refusal to stock Irish cards difficult to justify.
3. I do not think we need to be concerned at this stage with the question of who actually purchases these cards for the prisons - it could be us or the prisons. I have identified a couple of suppliers, one of which is Gardiners in Lower Queen Street (typical examples are attached). We would not want to hold a large selection of Irish cards until we had seen the demand and, obviously, the demand will be higher at the Maze than at some of the other establishments. The stock of English cards currently held in the prison tuckshops is surprisingly large:-

Belfast	300 (variety for birthday, anniversary, etc)
Maze	2,000 (50 different designs; sell around 150-200 each week)
Magilligan	20 (orders taken from prisoners for specific cards and supplied following week)
Maghaberry (M)	50 (selection, but orders taken for specific cards requested by prisoners)
Maghaberry (F)	100 (selection, but orders taken for specific cards requested by prisoners)
YOC	20-30 (extra cards brought in for special occasions, eg Christmas, Valentine's Day, etc)

We have spoken to all Governors about this proposal and have not met with any opposition.

4. I do not think this is a matter with which we need to bother the Minister because, as I have demonstrated at paragraph 2, the principle has already been accepted. Moreover, there has been no 'campaign' from inside or outside the prison for this move.

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5. Perhaps you would consider this suggestion and let me know your views. It seems to me to be nicely in line with the Government's undertaking to respect the culture of the minority community, without being very dramatic. I should think it would rather surprise some of the prisoners too.

CM

CLAIRE MARSON

27 June 1988