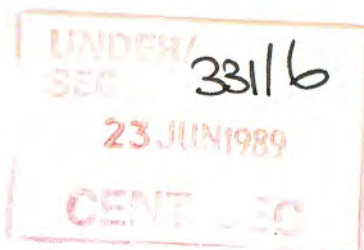


C O N F I D E N T I A L

NH/201/89

FROM: NIGEL HAMILTON
AS CENT SEC
DATE: 22 JUNE 1989



cc. Mr Spence

MR MASEFIELD - B

VISIT TO WEST BELFAST OPEN LEARNING CENTRE

1. As I advised you in our recent telephone conversation, a potentially embarrassing situation arose on 15 May at the West Belfast Open Learning Centre.
2. This Centre is located in the Kennedy Enterprise Centre (formerly the American Monitor Premises) and I enclose a note from DED which is the sponsoring Department on the incident.
3. Had the Minister's visit proceeded as planned, there could have been major difficulties since, in the attendant publicity which would have accompanied his official opening of the Centre, the press would most certainly have picked up these other visitors.
4. I realise of course that the Kennedy Enterprise Centre is fully owned by West Belfast Enterprises and they are therefore entitled to invite their own guests. The Open Learning Centre however is a DED project. In addition, I think we must all be particularly careful under the Making Belfast Work process not to create any unnecessary adverse publicity. You are aware from our visit earlier this week that the initiative covers a

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much wider area in Belfast and we must always be careful to have it presented publicly as a programme targeted at all the disadvantaged areas, and not certain selected areas.

5. No doubt there are other, wider implications which you will want to consider.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nigel Hamilton'. The signature is stylized with large, sweeping letters.

NIGEL HAMILTON
CENTRAL SECRETARIAT
EXT SC 289
/JH 523

C O N F I D E N T I A L

RESTRICTED

- 1. Mr Scott
- 2. Mr Alexander

DA 31/5/89

You may wish to send this to the print office - a shade possibly but it is long.

1395 30/5/89
685 C 1/6/89
2723 19.6.89

West Belfast Open Learning Centre

As you are aware, the Official opening of the Centre which had been scheduled for 15 May, was cancelled at short notice. The opening was to co-incide with a tour of the other tenants of Kennedy Enterprise Centre and an introduction to the Board of West Belfast Enterprise Ltd.

Dr Gerry Cleary of the NI Open Learning Centre had arranged for some groups to be working in WB Centre on 15 May and these arrangements were allowed to stand. On the day, Mr James Kennedy, Chief Executive of West Belfast Enterprises Ltd arrived in to the WB Open Learning Centre accompanied by several Maryfield Officials and Officials from the Department of Foreign Affairs in Dublin. The visitors toured the centre and were very impressed by all they saw.

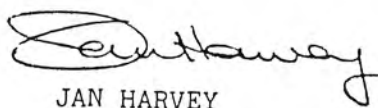
No advance notice of this visit had been given. I have confirmed with Derek Noble who had co-ordinated arrangements from the DED Side that he was also unaware of the visit.

As a general principle, I have suggested that Dr Cleary should write to Mr James Kennedy suggesting that any visits he wished to organize to the Centre should be arranged with the Centre Manager in advance not least as a matter of courtesy but also to minimize disruption to individuals and groups working there.

I am concerned, however, that no-one had advance notice of the 15 May visit. It is my understanding that Maryfield is supposed to advise Departments via NIO in advance of any visits etc within their sphere of activity.

On this occasion no difficulties arose save some embarrassment to the member of staff on site who was ill-prepared and at a loss to know how to react. Had the official opening gone ahead as planned the Minister would not have been briefed about who he would meet and indeed any publicity surrounding the event could have been diverted from the main purpose of highlighting DED's contribution to the Making Belfast Work Initiative.

I would suggest that arrangements for liaison with Maryfield should be reviewed in the light of the above. At the very least, Branches should be advised of such visits in advance so that appropriate arrangements can be set in motion.



JAN HARVEY

22 May 1989.