

CONFIDENTIAL

HCS/10/154

- cc PS/Minister of State (L&B) - B
- PS/Dr Mawhinney (L&B) - B
- PS/PUS (L&B) - B
- Mr Burns - B
- Mr Miles - B
- Mr Chesterton - B
- Mr Spence
- Mr Kirk - B
- Mr Bell
- Mr J McConnell - B
- Mr Masefield - B
- Mr Wood - B
- Mr Daniell

PS/Secretary of State (L&B) - B

BRITISH "NEUTRALITY"

1. I continue to be concerned about the implications of some current discussion of this topic.
2. I understand very well the argument which Mr Hume of the SDLP has been advancing to Sinn Fein in the course of the recent dialogue between the two parties. He has been saying, in effect, that Sinn Fein and the IRA miss the point in their talk of "getting the British out of Ireland". The problem, for those who want to advance the cause of Irish unity, is not with the British but with the Unionists. If nationalist Ireland can convince the Unionists that Irish unity could be achieved on terms protective of their interests, no British government would do anything to hold it back. That is the significance of Article 1 of the Anglo-Irish Agreement.
3. It is, I think, perfectly legitimate for Government to reinforce Mr Hume's arguments by pointing out, as the Secretary of State did himself in his recent speech, that there is no wider British economic and/or strategic interest requiring a continuing British presence in Ireland. This should have been self-evident to all but fanatics for a long time.
4. On the other hand, I must warn most earnestly against any statements likely to reinforce the "laager mentality" of the Unionists' community. Those who think that they will resign themselves to "the inevitability of the historical process" do not, I suggest, understand their cast of thought.
5. Nor do I find it is always appreciated as it ought to be that it is as valid an aspiration to remain a British citizen as it is to want to be an Irish one. The loyalty to British institutions which carried us over the trauma of the introduction of direct rule and the shock (for such it was) of the introduction of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, should not find itself friendless.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

6. I have disinterred the attached extract from a paper I wrote for Mr Hurd when he was Secretary of State in 1985, and in the context of the report of the New Ireland Forum. Might I suggest that some of the arguments remain valid despite the subsequent lapse of time?

*K.P. Bloomfield*

K P BLOOMFIELD

7 October 1988

CONFIDENTIAL

2