

FROM: PS/DR MAWHINNEY (B)
4 JANUARY 1990

cc PS/Dr Mawhinney (B, L & DENI)
PS/Sir K Bloomfield
Mr P Holmes
Mr J McConnell

1. Mr Jordan 5/8/11
2. Mr M'Keon 10/11
You will be interested in the
general thoughts on the
paper 8/11

Mr Han
Mrs Miller
P. note & arrange filing -
Cultural profile papers pro. tem.
10/11

NOTE OF A DISCUSSION WHICH TOOK PLACE DURING A DINNER IN STORMONT HOUSE ON MONDAY 11 DECEMBER 1989

PRESENT: Minister
Sir K Bloomfield
Mr Holmes
Mr J McConnell
Professor Harkness (Chairman, Ulster Folk and Transport Museum)
Mr E Montgomery (Ulster American Folk Park)
Mr K Jamison (Director, Arts Council)
Professor Alan Astin OBE (Chairman, Arts Council)
Mr M Barnes (Director, Opera House and Belfast Festival)
Mr D Kinnen (Director, NI Centre for Learning Resources)
Dr N Dugdale CB (British Council)
Dr M Hayes (PCA and C for C)
Professor Aidan O'Reilly (University of Ulster)
The Hon Hugh O'Neill (NI Tourist Board)
Dr G Quigley (Chairman, Ulster Bank)
PS/Dr Mawhinney

1 The Minister and Sir Kenneth Bloomfield opened the discussion by describing an idea they had been formulating regarding the possibility of organising an event or a series of events in the US to heighten awareness of the more positive side of life in Northern Ireland.

2 The discussion which ensued took the form of a "bull session" where guests gave their initial reaction to the idea and suggested ways in which it might be developed. The following points were made.

i Careful thought would have to be given to when this event would be staged, bearing in mind Mr Needham's plans for a celebration in 1991. It was generally agreed that organizers might plan for 1994.

- ii Another consideration which it was suggested should be borne in mind was the need to take account of other programmes and events organized on an on-going and less high-profile basis - use might be made of these existing programmes. Indeed it was suggested that a "big bang" approach might not be necessary, or as productive as using or developing existing arrangements and initiatives.
- iii Thought would also need to be given to the nature of any event/programme which would be organized, in terms of a possible mix of cultural and artistic events with elements of business and industrial promotion.
- iv Organizers would need to consider which groups the event would be designed to target, bearing in mind the interest of the Scotch-Irish as well as Irish-Americans.
- v Consideration would also have to be given to the perspective from which the event would be staged, ie whether it would be an all-Ireland perspective, or looking at Ulster and its links with Great Britain, or indeed, and less likely, from the Northern Ireland perspective alone.
- vi In any event, it was generally agreed that the organizers would have to be clear on their objectives before firm plans were made. Another point agreed was that efforts should be made to attempt to guarantee excellence in events/performances on the programme.
- vii Further points made included the importance of bearing in mind the need not to forget about Europe as a target for the heightening of awareness about Northern Ireland's positive side. Several ideas also emerged regarding the actual mechanism by which the event might be staged, ie it might take the form of a festival of events targetting several cities either all at once or consecutively, and could be staged around the time of the Soccer World Cup.

It was also suggested that use might be made of new technologies, linking schools and young people in technological projects. Schools and young people might indeed be involved in various ways, including the possibility of organizing exchanges.

viii On the whole, general willingness to explore the idea further was expressed. It was agreed that the organizers should look to attracting support from the US, particularly from those in the US such as the Mellons who have had a long-standing interest in Northern Ireland. It was further agreed that Sir Kenneth would prepare a paper examining the various possibilities for the organization of such an event.

Betty Biuck

PP JUNE INGRAM
PS/Dr Mawhinney

US II PEFO

DATE 5.6.90

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No. 5.119