

UNDER/ 438/8
SEC
20 AUG 1991
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FROM: G R ARCHER
REPUBLIC OF IRELAND DEPARTMENT

DATE: 19 AUGUST 1991

cc	PS/PUS	B
	PS/Mr Fell	B
	Mr Ledlie	B
	Mr Hamilton	B
	Mr Thomas	B
	Mr D J R Hill	B
	Mr Cooke	B
	Mr Dodds	B
	Mr Hughes	B
	Mr Thorp, DUBLIN	B
	Mr Wood	B

Mr Alston B
NIO
Belfast

INFLUENCING OPINION IN THE REPUBLIC

1. I shall attend the meeting which you have convened on 20 August to discuss visits and exchanges, and in this context I have been looking at related minutes including those about platforms for speeches concluding with your minute of 16 August to Mr Thorp.

2. As seen from the FCO there are various ways in which we can aim to influence public opinion in the Republic:

- speeches by FCO Ministers aimed at maximum out-reach;
- speeches to targeted audiences by Ministers and officials;
- speeches by members of the Embassy;
- background briefing by members of the Embassy;
- the commissioning of articles for placement;
- two way exchange visits;
- educational cooperation (to influence the young).

A Major Ministerial Speech

3. I note that further thought is to be given to platforms for a speech by Mr Brooke. The Tipperary platform looks to me to be rather less useful than the others suggested. If the choice is between the Dublin Chamber and the Gaye Burne Show, should we not take account of the differences. Given Mr Haughey's own 1990 venture to Belfast, it would be difficult for the Irish Government to object to a speech to the Dublin Chamber, but the timing would need to be carefully considered if a set piece speech was to make substantial impact. A television appearance might be more sensitive with Mr Haughey: but I agree that there is a good case for such an appearance, if it can be linked to a visit to Dublin for other purposes. Once it is clearer if further talks are getting off the ground or not, this would be an excellent way of projecting the British point of view to a wide Irish audience. In particular, it could be an opportunity to dispose of any Irish misconceptions about alternative ways forward. There might be a case for dealing with this in public well in advance of any bilateral between the Taoiseach and the Prime Minister.

Other Speeches

4. The NIO may wish to also consider the case for other speakers visiting the Republic. Sir K Bloomfield spoke there occasionally to good effect. Mr McGuckian has also been an effective speaker in the Republic. The new Ambassador is also likely to have good opportunities on his arrival to take on occasional speaking commitments. I hope that we do not need to be too cautious about agreeing to putting such speakers on platforms. There will always be points to make even if it is necessary to be cautious at particular times of issues such as political development.

Background Briefing

5. Part of the Embassy's stock in trade. Possibly worth developing further. The new Ambassador will have excellent access in early months to eg newspaper editors. Worth considering special briefing on a line to take.

Placing Articles

6. I suggest that there may also be a place for specially commissioned articles. One possibility would be an analysis (perhaps by an FCO Minister) of the issues we face in Europe. There is scope for further consideration of how to develop consultation and coordination with the Republic in a European context against the background of our attempts to broaden our relationship with the Republic. Another possible area for an article might be commercial/development policies (possibly an article by Mr Needham). I would imagine that there should be no difficulty in placing something on these lines in the Irish press.

Exchanges

7. We are to consider North/South visits. We are examining separately the scope for an enhanced programme of exchanges between London and Dublin.

8. Mr Sainsbury will be visiting Dublin on 24 September. We have also ideas of thickening up bilateral relations in the transport field. Mr Freeman met Mr Lyons on 6 July in Rotterdam, and the Ministers have agreed to another bilateral later this year. The Home Office think it a little premature to consider talks involving a Home Office Minister.

9. The other area with potential for useful exchanges is within the ranks of Irish Members of Parliament. Under present FCO provision we could bring three young TDs to London in coming months. We may add to this the Opposition spokesman on foreign affairs, Mr O'Keefe. There will be implications for any plans that the NIO may wish to develop to get younger TDs to Belfast. It will be useful to discuss how we should coordinate these two initiatives.

Educational Cooperation

10. You suggested that another aspect to consider is cooperation in the educational/cultural field. This is currently considered by the Working Group of the Anglo/Irish Intergovernmental Council twice a year. This has given long standing support to youth exchange projects. The next meeting will be in October when the Working Group will consider detailed recommendations from a sub committee on ways in which cooperation in the education field can be further enhanced. Recommendations are likely to include

- that there should be increased research into linkages between schools in the Republic, Northern Ireland and England and Wales, and between schools in the three areas and other parts of Europe. This research would look at the reasons for success on existing linkages and the scope for using IT (eg electronic mail) for the development of such links;
- what sort of technology might be explored on a cooperative basis (eg programmes for computer system learning);
- the scope for educational cooperation within the North/West study;
- the opportunities for developing common linkages outside the Community.

11. A sufficient amount of work is being done in the educational field to make this a possible candidate for consideration at an IGC, subject to the views of DENI.

Conclusion

12. In summary I see advantages in enhancing the British profile in the Republic at a time when there may be a more sympathetic reception for our message than in the past. The Irish also respond favourably to special attention. There is also scope for broadening bilateral relations outside the immediate problems of Northern Ireland, and I believe that efforts should be made in this direction.

SIGNED

G R ARCHER