

PS/PUS
4 MAY 1993

ASST
SEC - 6 MAY 1993
CENT SEC

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- 1. cc Mr Quinn
 - 2. cc Mr ~~Harrell~~
 - 3. R. - any reply from Mr Maccabe?
- The action at it is simply a continuation of the visits you have discussed with Mr Jew + Mr Gallagher.
- Time for a reminder to his office?

- cc. PS/Mr Fell - B
- Mr Thomas (L&B) - B
- Mr Watkins - B
- Mr Williams - B
- Mr Maccabe - B
- Mr Dodds - B
- Mr Archer, RID, FCO - B
- HMA Dublin - B

NOTE FOR THE RECORD

JW
5.1

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IRISH VIEWS OF UNIONISM - MEETING ON 27 APRIL 1993

The PUS chaired a discussion in his room at Stormont Castle on Tuesday 17 April 1993 arising from some written exchanges between colleagues on how the Irish Government might be brought to a better understanding of unionism. Mr Fell, Mr Thomas, Mr Williams, Mr Watkins, Mr Dodds, Mr Archer, HMA Dublin and I were present for the meeting.

2. At the PUS's invitation Mr Watkins introduced the discussion. It had, he said, come about because of the recognition that the traditional Irish analysis was to see the British as the main impediment to a solution of Northern Ireland's problems. The Taoiseach's constitutional republicanism (recently on display in the United States) was a clear expression of this view. The difficulty came when they tried to deal with anything outside that tidy vision - and unionism did not fit that model. Or did it? The difficult question for the Irish to face was whether Unionists are really Brits in North East Ireland rather than errant Irishmen. Even Dick Spring's slightly different view appeared to miss that for Unionists there was a two point compass pointing to Northern Ireland and to Great Britain, and that without appreciating the latter dimension any understanding of unionism would be deficient.

3. The Ambassador felt that Spring probably did realise that Unionists were British, but would not wish to say so explicitly. Generally in the Republic there was little interest in the subject, and where it did exist people would have Southern Protestants in mind. Where there were contacts with Unionists from the North they were predominantly with middle class Protestants - working class unionism was totally foreign territory. There was also no genuine thinking about how Unionists might be accommodated in a united Ireland - the issue was generally avoided as being too difficult. The Ambassador then added three practical comments on how this situation might be altered:

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

- (a) the DFA would be unwilling to learn, especially from HMG;
- (b) it would be difficult anyway to find interlocutors willing to talk fundamentals uninhibitedly among themselves;
- (c) it would be important to find the 'right' kind of Unionist to engage in this process (not simply the ones the Irish already spoke to on occasions).

4. Mr Fell felt that the issues involved had crystallised into two questions. Firstly a mechanistic one - how could we set about educating our Irish interlocutors. Secondly the need to address some linked questions about unionism for ourselves - was unionism pro-British or anti-Irish, and how could respect for both traditions in Northern Ireland (à la Hume and Spring) square with a unitary unified Irish state. On the latter point, was it not true that the logic tended to lead to partitionist solutions of one kind or another in Ireland.

5. Further discussion of these questions continued with a number of personal and anecdotal witnesses cited in support of the points made. The following substantive reflections were also adduced:

- (a) Irish officials (and Ministers) must be encouraged to a disposition to deal with the totality of relations between the two Irelands;
- (b) it could be useful to deliver some culture shock to the Irish, exposing them to the man from the pub on the (Upper) Newtownards Road as much as to John Dunlop or Robin Eames. The opportunities should nevertheless be explored to target some different audiences - for example Grade 7 equivalents in the DFA (including their travellers in Northern Ireland), Mansergh and Finlay, and so on.

X 6. Mr Chilcot concluded that this was useful medium term work. Was there anything immediate to be done? After a brief further discussion of some possibilities it was agreed that attempts should be made to thicken visiting to Northern Ireland from the Republic [action promised by HMA Dublin and Mr Watkins] and that names for a dinner, to be hosted by the British side of the Secretariat, should be compiled [action by Mr Watkins in consultation with Mr Maccabe].

Signed:

TONY BEETON
PRIVATE SECRETARY
4 MAY 1993

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

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