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4 March 1993

L. Harrell
Confidential for a draft .pt.,
which should cover X.Y+2,
& presumably also on
correspondence with
Tray Gallagher.

D E S Blatherwick Esq CMG OBE
DUBLIN

321/3
SEC
- 5 MAR 1993
CENT SEC
Mr W. G. ...

f.s.)
ASST
SEC - 8 MAR 1993
CENT SEC

You may wish to
comment?

Bell
4/3

NORTH/SOUTH VISIT PROGRAMME

1. Peter Bell's elegantly termed Parishesque account of crack amongst the canapés at what was obviously a thoroughly good McKervill party mentioned Mary Harney's comments on visits to Northern Ireland.
2. We have, of course, been looking at the possibilities for getting more key people from the South to Northern Ireland for some time. Most recently we have agreed with the Embassy that we should work out a detailed strategy for visit programmes for 1993/94, which will aim to get key politicians, and other useful people identified by the Embassy, to Britain and to Northern Ireland.
3. It is frustrating that the hard work by the Embassy last year met with such a negative response from the politicians contacted about visits to Northern Ireland. We agreed that you should try and reinforce your direct contacts by talking to people such as Jim Tunney, but in the end the Irish election intervened.
4. As you put together your plans for new efforts in this area, you may wish to take into account one or two additional ideas from here. We have previously agreed that it would be appropriate to volunteer official briefing to those in the Dail who visit Northern Ireland regularly for one reason or another. This includes spokesmen on Northern Ireland. I am sure that we should continue to try to steer such visitors to contact with Stormont or with Northern Ireland Departments where this is relevant. With a new government coalition and reshuffles of portfolios on the opposition side there will be new people with responsibilities for Northern Ireland. Is there a case for a double strategy of approaches to individuals and to party leaders to encourage party spokesmen to take up offers of briefing?

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5. In organising our sponsored visitors programme we normally try to avoid allowing political parties to nominate persons for inclusion in visits, but this is not an absolute rule and in some countries it has proved worthwhile to try to get agreement with parties about an on-going programme of briefings. I recognise that you have already been over the ground thoroughly and that the fundamental problem is that many politicians do not want to be seen to be the recipients of official briefings at Stormont. Nevertheless I am sure that we should persevere and be willing to be flexible about what is on offer. Fortunately the costs of visits to Northern Ireland are not high and I assume that government sponsorship is not therefore an absolute requirement. It follows that any reluctance to accept official sponsorship (eg payment of costs) need not be the complete barrier to visits that it might be elsewhere in the world. Do you think that it would be worthwhile making another effort at the beginning of the new financial year to discuss at party or party-leader level how we can get more visitors to Northern Ireland in the next 12 months? Options range from a completely sponsored programme with all arrangements made for the visitors by Central Secretariat, PAB, or whoever the NIO wish to nominate, to making the arrangements for specific calls with no help with costs (a sort of Category III programme). My assumption is that we shall have to accept that the visitors will want balanced programmes and may wish to spend time listening to critics of the government. I do not think that this need disturb us or should be any reason why we should not encourage more visits to the North.

6. Another possible approach would be to discuss with the parties visits targeted to specific areas eg transport links, health, housing etc. It is very much in our interests that there should be better understanding in the Republic of Ireland of what is actually done to improve the socio/economic condition of Northern Ireland.

7. One other idea, which you and I have discussed previously, is that it might be worthwhile to plan on a future Seminar, whether just North/South or involving also British representatives, on inner city problems. Problems in Dublin are similar to problems in Belfast and there must be a lot that both cities can learn from each others approach to common problems. I suspect that Dublin might have more to learn than Belfast, but from the

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Belfast point of view and from our own it would be advantageous to demonstrate that a great deal has been done in Northern Ireland to tackle inner city problems. What do you think prospects are for selling such an idea in Dublin or to the Irish Government if it appeals to Departments in Northern Ireland. I recognise that there might be difficulties in mounting this on a city to city basis, but it need not be tackled in this way. Support from both governments would be necessary, but there are various ways in which a Seminar could be mounted.

8. I know that you have already given a lot of thought to all of this. It would be helpful to be updated on how your plans now stand.

SIGNED

G R ARCHER
REPUBLIC OF IRELAND DEPARTMENT

cc PS/PUS B
PS/Mr Fell B
Mr Thomas B
Mr Bell B
Mr Williams B
Mr Wood B
Mr Brooker B
Mr Dodds B
Mr Hill B
Mr Maccabe B
Mr Rickard B
Mr Stephens B

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