

3 September 1993

262/93

From: D E S Blatherwick  
British Embassy Dublin

594/9  
CENT SEC 24 SEP 1993

ORDER/ 895/9  
CENT SEC 23 SEP 1993

To: Mr D Watkins

CC: PS/SofS (B&L)  
PS/Sir J Wheeler (B&L)  
PS/Michael Ancram (B&L)  
PS/PUS (B&L)  
PS/Mr Fell (B&L)  
Mr Thomas  
Ms Leach, SIL  
Mr Williams  
Mr Archer, RID, FCO

in hand

**FINE GAEL VISIT TO NORTHERN IRELAND**

1. John Bruton, the Leader of the Opposition, telephoned today to say that he would like to take a Fine Gael Delegation to Northern Ireland on 21 and 22 October, arriving perhaps on the afternoon of 21 October and returning late the next day. His party would include Enda Kenny, Maurice Manning, Jim O'Keefe and perhaps Gay Mitchell. (Manning is a senator, the rest are senior Deputies.) They would like to meet local politicians and look at health service reforms and the education system (in particular, how we cope with the differences between the two parts of the community). They would also very much hope to meet NIO Ministers.
2. Bruton said that David Trimble had told him at the BIA meeting in Cambridge that he thought the UUP would be willing to meet them but that it should be cleared through the Party Secretary (Wilson). Bruton assumed that the Alliance Party and SDLP would be willing to see them, but that the DUP would not.
3. Bruton added that some in his party were rather reluctant to make arrangements through the NIO, though he himself had no personal hang-ups. He wondered whether we might make the initial contact with the SDLP, explaining that we were exploring timings, and leave it to him to make the final telephone call. But for the rest, he would be grateful if we could put a programme together.
4. I said that I was sure we would much welcome a visit of this kind, and would be delighted to arrange a programme taking in the elements Bruton had mentioned.

5. This is indeed a very useful move and I hope we can pull out the stops. Bruton's team are all influential here and the more we can teach them the realities about Northern Ireland, the better. I hope that the Secretary of State and other Ministers, if available, will be able to meet them and give hospitality. It would also be useful if a briefing by the RUC could be arranged, and a senior Army officer perhaps included in the entertainment. Can you let me have a draft programme?

6. Bruton mentioned his embarrassment over his handshake with Counsellor Mitchell McLoughlan during the BIIPB Committee visit to Londonderry ten days ago. He was clearly upset that he and his colleagues had not been warned in advance. He said he did not propose to mention it next week but that the BIPB Committee Clerk would be writing to the NIO to complain. But I have no doubt that his purpose in mentioning it now was to make sure that he is not presented with a similar embarrassment during a visit in October.

(Signed)  
D E S Blatherwick,  
HM AMBASSADOR