

CONFIDENTIAL

FRM M L Hutchinson (Mrs)
Central Secretariat
24 September 1990

cc: PS/Secretary of State (B&L)-M
PS/Ministers (B&L)-M
PS/PUS (B&L)-M
PS/Sir Kenneth Bloomfield
Mr Ledlie
Mr Chilcot - M
Mr Hodges
Mr Elliott
Mr Alston
Mr Hewitt
Mr Loughran
Mr Gowdy
Mr P Bell
Mr I Devitt
Mr R Wilson
Mr S P Hughes

Mr Fell - DED
Mr Hopkins - IDB
Mr Parkes - DENI
Mr Murray - DOE
Mr Semple - DFP
Mr Thomas - NIO - M
Mr A Wilson - NIO
Mr Hamilton - ~~Central Sec~~

aw 26/9.

VISIT BY IRISH AMERICAN PARTNERSHIP (IAP) - MISSION TO IRELAND:
19-27 OCTOBER (NI: 21-23 OCTOBER) 1990

Further to my note of 21 September, I should be grateful if you would provide relevant briefing for Secretary of State re: Irish American partnership visit by no later than Thursday 11 October 1990.

~~z.a. note~~
P.P. M L HUTCHINSON (MRS)

MR Walker

~~MR Wilson~~

MR Yang

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George

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

to take

1. All such decisions are taken by the Secretary of State.
2. The West Belfast Committee have now written to the Secretary of State and their representations, and those of others who have also written to the Secretary of State on this issue, are presently being considered.
3. It is not Government policy to discuss individual cases.
4. The Secretary of State's decision in respect of the West Belfast Branch does not affect other branches of Glór na nGael or Government support for the Irish language generally.

Only if pressed

5. Individual cases are always subject to review and decisions can be changed if circumstances warrant.

CAUTION:

For legal and security reasons the Secretary of State cannot disclose the information on which such decisions are based. Ministers should not be drawn into discussion or speculation about the basis, or validity, of the decision in this case, or any other and should not offer any elaboration on the Parliamentary Statement of 27 June 1985. This is particularly important in view of the suggestion that there may be moves to have the case referred for judicial review.

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

Name: T. (a)
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C O N F I D E N T I A L

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DRAWAL OF FUNDING FROM THE WEST BELFAST COMMITTEE OF GLOR NA
NGAEL

Line to take

1. The decision to withdraw public funding from the West Belfast Committee of Glor na nGael was taken by the Secretary of State in line with Government policy as set out in the Parliamentary Statement of 27 June 1985 by the then Secretary of State Mr Hurd ie that Government is not prepared to provide public funds to groups or organisations where to do so would give rise to a grave risk of improving the standing and furthering the aims of a paramilitary organisation, whether directly or indirectly.
2. Government policy in respect of support for the Irish language remains unaltered. Government recognises the contribution which the Irish language makes to Northern Ireland's cultural heritage, and the importance of the language to many people in Northern Ireland, and will continue to support efforts to enhance awareness and appreciation of the language through both the voluntary and statutory sectors.
3. Glor na nGael has many branches in Northern Ireland. The Secretary of State's decision only affects the West Belfast branch.
4. There is no political vetting. The Secretary of State decides each case on its merits and the position is kept under review. The policy is even handed and is applied regardless of the source of paramilitary influence.
5. It is not possible to discuss individual cases.

Background

1. Government policy, as set out in Mr Hurd's Parliamentary

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Statement of 27 June 1985, (copy attached) is to deny public funding in cases where the payment of such funds would give rise to a grave risk of improving the standing and furthering the aims of a paramilitary organisation, whether directly or indirectly.

2. In line with this policy the Secretary of State decided on 26 July that funding should be withdrawn from the West Belfast Committee of Glor na nGael. The decision was conveyed to Glor na nGael on 24 August.

3. Glor na nGael is an all Ireland voluntary body whose stated objectives are to stimulate, promote and participate in cultural activities concerned with the achievement of a greater understanding of the Irish language and culture. The West Belfast Committee, which is situated at 211A Falls Road, has operated an ACE Scheme since 1985 and at the time of the Secretary of State's decision had 19 approved ACE places (17 of which were filled) plus one full-time core worker funded under the ACE Scheme. The ACE employees were primarily engaged in the promotion of Irish through the support of 5 Irish language pre-school play groups, the provision of an Irish Language Resource Centre and translation service and the support of Irish language activity generally. The estimated full year ACE cost to public funds was in the region of £100,000. In the past the West Belfast Committee had also received some one-off payments from BAT funds and an element of Arts Council support.

4. It was recognised that the withdrawal of ACE funds would have a significant impact on the organisation and would attract criticism as an attack on the Irish language and, possibly, on the provision of pre-school provision in areas of high deprivation. Additionally, the fact that the Committee were joint winners of a National award presented to the Committee in Belfast by the ROI Minister of State for the Gaeltacht, Mr Pat The Cope Gallagher, ensured an Irish Government interest in the Secretary of State's decision.

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5. Since the decision became public it has been criticised not only by the West Belfast Committee but also by Sinn Fein, the Ultaich Trust and a range of voluntary bodies and responsible individuals, including Mr Stott MP Opposition Spokesman on Northern Ireland. Some have presented it as an attack on the Irish language and others as a political miscalculation prejudicial to other Government policies are were making a positive impact in Catholic/Nationalist communities. The Irish Government have also made known their concern.
6. The criticism has been fuelled by a contemporaneous decision by the Police to permit a city centre collection by the West Belfast Committee (the Police decision and the notification of withdrawal of funding arrived on the same day and has given rise to accusations of inconsistency in the two decisions).
7. Decisions by the Secretary of State under the 1985 Parliamentary Statement are kept under review and can be changed in the light of a change in circumstances. Decisions are taken on the basis of confidential security advice available to the Secretary of State. There is no political vetting. It is not Government policy to discuss individual cases.
8. The decision in respect of the West Belfast Committee does not affect other branches of Glor na nGael nor does it affect Government policy on the Irish language. Recent Government support for the Irish language has included:

Caution

For legal and security reasons the Secretary of State cannot disclose the information on which such decisions are based. Officials should not be drawn into discussion or speculation about the basis, or validity, of the decision in this case, or any other case and should not offer any elaboration on the Parliamentary Statement of 27 June 1985. This is particularly important in view of the suggestion that there may be moves to have the case referred for judicial review.

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

27 June 1985

PARLIAMENTARY QUESTION

The Secretary of State, Rt Hon Douglas Hurd MP, today gave the following written parliamentary reply to Mr John M Taylor (Solihull), who had asked what plans Mr Hurd has to ensure that Government financial support for community activities is not used to foster the aims and objectives of paramilitary interests.

Mr Hurd: "It is the Government's policy to encourage voluntary and community-based activity which has the genuine aim of improving social, environmental or economic conditions in areas of need, and various grant-aid schemes exist for such purposes. However I am satisfied, from information available to me, that there are cases in which some community groups, or persons prominent in the direction or management of some community groups, have sufficiently close links with paramilitary organisations to give rise to a grave risk that to give support to those groups would have the effect of improving the standing and furthering the aims of a paramilitary organisation, whether directly or indirectly. I do not consider that any such use of government funds would be in the public interest, and in any particular case in which I am satisfied that these conditions prevail no grant will be paid."

C O V E R I N G C O N F I D E N T I A L

CONWAY STREET MILL
BUT POINTS

1. The Government policy is to encourage and support voluntary activity of genuine benefit to local communities (eg the "Making Belfast Work" initiative).
2. Government is not prepared to provide or authorise the use of public funds to groups or organisations where to do so would give rise to a grave risk of improving the standing and furthering the aims of a paramilitary organisation, whether directly or indirectly.
3. The nature and extent of paramilitary influence within Conway Mill is such that this policy has been applied to groups operating in or out of the Mill.
4. There is no political vetting: the policy is aimed at paramilitary organisations not political parties.
5. Decisions are taken by the Secretary of State after careful consideration of all the relevant factors, and the position is kept under review.
6. Policy is even handed: cases where support has been denied are almost equally divided between the two sides of the community.
7. It is not possible to disclose the information on which decisions are taken.
8. (If pressed on acceptability of some activities in the Mill).
The Government has to consider the whole picture which includes the nature and extent of paramilitary influence within the Mill.

C O V E R I N G C O N F I D E N T I A L

GR.2921/RW

C O V E R I N G C O N F I D E N T I A L

BACKGROUND (NOT TO BE DISCLOSED)

1. Since September 1985 Government funding has been refused for activities operating in and out of Conway Street Mill. Successive Secretaries of State have been satisfied from information available to them that to give support to such activities would have the effect of improving the standing and furthering the aims of a paramilitary organisation, whether directly or indirectly.

2. In early 1989 HMG refused to allow IFI money to go to Conway Mill (the Anglo/Irish Agreement provides that disbursements from the Fund shall be consistent with the economic and social policies and priorities of the respective Governments and HMG indicated that funding of Conway Mill was not acceptable). This decision gave rise to considerable criticism of the Fund among Irish/American interests in US, both inside and outside Congress. In fact the Fund is obliged to conform to HMG's policy in this matter which was the subject of a Parliamentary Statement by the then Secretary of State, Mr King, on 9 February 1989 (copy at Annex A). Mr King's statement also reaffirmed the continuing validity of Mr Hurd's original statement on the funding of community groups on which the denial of funds to Conway Mill is based (a copy of Mr Hurd's statement of June 1985 is also attached at Annex B).

3. In a written Parliamentary Answer of 14 December 1989 (copy at Annex C) the present Secretary of State confirmed that the denial of support to groups operating in or out of Conway Mill was due to the nature and extent of paramilitary influence within the Mill.

C O V E R I N G C O N F I D E N T I A L

C O V E R I N G C O N F I D E N T I A L

The denial of support to Conway Mill, including the blocking of IFI support, has been criticised by various MPs, local community groups, churches etc in a campaign which appears to be orchestrated principally by Father Desmond Wilson who runs an education project in the Mill and who is a director of the company which owns the Mill (Conway Community Enterprises). Father Wilson (among others) has been told that if he is prepared to relocate his activities outside the Mill, grant-aid could be reconsidered. There have been discussions recently on this basis between Father Wilson and BELB and DENI officials.

5. For legal and security reasons, the Secretary of State cannot disclose the information on which the decision has been taken in this, or any other case. Officials should not be drawn into discussion or speculation about the basis, or validity, or decisions on Conway Mill, or any other case and should not offer any elaboration on the Parliamentary Statements on this issue.

August 1990

C O V E R I N G C O N F I D E N T I A L

GR.2921/RW

27 June 1985

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