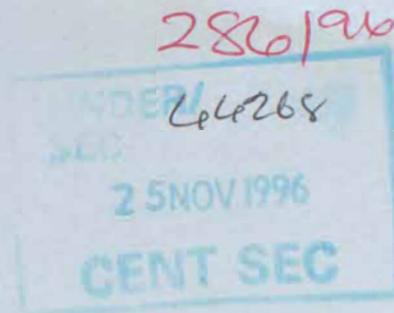


CONFIDENTIAL

FROM: QUENTIN THOMAS
POLITICAL DIRECTOR
25 NOVEMBER 1996
QT/MR/2819 (B)



MR P BELL

cc PS/PUS (L&B)
Mr Fell
Mr Steele
Mr Daniell
Mr Leach
Mr Stephens
Mr Watkins
Mr Wood (L&B)
Mr Beeton
Mrs Collins
Mr Cornick
Mr Hill (L&B)
Mr Lavery
Mr Maccabe
Mr Perry
Mr Priestly
Mr Whysall (L&B)
Ms Bharucha
Ms Mapstone
Mr Lamont RID/FCO
HMA Dublin
Mr Fisher

Mrs McAuley
27/11

Mr Jones

Mr Davies

28/11



DEBUNKING THE BUNKER - THE TRUTH ABOUT MARYFIELD

Many thanks for sending me a copy of your thought-provoking minute of 22 November to Mr Fisher.

2. I am grateful for what you have done to promote knowledge and understanding of Maryfield, not least in the social dimension, and to erode the continuing mistake that Maryfield is an Irish only enterprise.

3. It will obviously be difficult ever to achieve a proper understanding of the issue, at least as we would regard it, but I am sure it is right that we continue to try, partly that we are seen to do so so that the argument does not go by default.

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4. There of course continue similar, and probably equally irrepressible, misunderstandings about the Framework Documents. I see that in the recent debate in the House of Lords on 2 November Lord Cooke of Islandreagh said that the Frameworks Document "as good as promised a step towards a dual sovereignty in the form of cross border institutions with executive powers. In parenthesis I say that everyone in Northern Ireland is in favour of extensive cross border cooperation to mutual benefit but not in the form of cross border institutions with executive powers." Obviously, if the scheme in the Frameworks is joint sovereignty it is joint sovereignty over the whole island and not just over Northern Ireland. But of course it is not.

[SIGNED]

Q THOMAS
POLITICAL DIRECTOR (L)

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CONFIDENTIAL

QT/MR/2819-25.11.96

286/96

FROM: P N BELL
JOINT SECRETARY
22 NOVEMBER 1996

ASST SEC 25 NOV 1996
CENT SEC

INDEX/EG
25 NOV 1996
CENT SEC

08506/11
Mrs McAuley 27/11

has been done
This seems to miss the point but just about anything joint will not achieve the debunking aim.

- cc: PS/PUS (B&L) B
- PS/Sir David Fell B
- Mr Thomas (B&L) B
- Mr Steele B
- Mr Daniell B
- Mr Leach B
- Mr Stephens B
- Mr Watkins B
- Mr Wood (B&L) B
- Mr Beeton B
- Mrs Collins B
- Mr Cornick B
- Mr Hill (B&L) B
- Mr Lavery B
- Mr Maccabe B
- Mr Perry B
- Mr Priestly B
- Mr Whysall B
- Ms Bharucha B
- Ms Mapstone B
- Mr Lamont, RID B
- HMA, Dublin B

C

MR FISHER

DEBUNKING THE BUNKER - THE TRUTH ABOUT MARYFIELD

Our objective

One of our objectives for 1996/97 remains: "to promote within Northern Ireland a better and more realistic understanding of the role and functions of the Intergovernmental Conference and the Anglo-Irish Secretariat in terms of the Government's wider political strategy".

The problem

2. If we were being paid by results, I do not believe we would be living in fear of excessively large bonuses this year. We have made some progress: the occasional gossip column reference to our

joint activities; we are, as a matter of deliberate policy, trying to encourage a more joint approach to the "entertainment and outreach" programme of the Secretariat - again with a modest degree of success. But, welcome though they are, the reactions of some of our guests that they had not hitherto realised that there was a British presence at Maryfield before, cuts two-ways; and, as the mean little leader in the "News Letter" of 15 November "celebrating" the 11th anniversary of the Anglo-Irish Agreement shows, it is still possible to present the Anglo-Irish Secretariat as the 'sinister Maryfield Secretariat' of the Dublin Administration?

3. Moreover, one would have to be deaf and blind not to be aware of the continuing attacks on "Maryfield" by Unionist politicians whether in the Forum, the Talks, or the media. Meanwhile Mr Taylor and Mr Maginnis have been pursuing their crusades against the implicitly malign influence ... "Maryfield" on the RUC. So there remains a significant problem.

What can (or should we do about it)?

4. At one level, since Unionist hostility to "Maryfield" serves both as a proxy for their continuing rejection of the formal and institutionalised involvement of the Irish Government in the affairs of Northern Ireland since the signing of the 1985 Agreement, there may be realitively little we can do about it. Even if we arrived at the kind of "new and more broadly based Agreement" envisaged in "a New Framework for Agreement" - (paragraphs 39-49), I believe it would be optimistic to believe that resentment would wholly disappear: for the very existence of that (new) Agreement, albeit by agreement of all the parties, would be one of the elements that Unionists would still reluctantly sign up for, and at best as part of the price they would have to pay for legislative and executive devolution in Northern Ireland. (Which is not to say that nothing could be achieved through names and terminology: just as "R.Irish" appears to have shed some of the dislike attached to the former "UDR", a change of name and venue could work wonders for our heirs and successors). These are matters however for the long term.

Some questions?

5. In the short and medium term, we are likely to be faced with continuing hostility that is more or less rationally based. The purpose of this minute is to ask what we can, or should be doing in that short or medium term, at least to weaken the rational grounds for suspicion of Maryfield and its works. I offer accordingly two questions to which you may wish to add others:

- (a) what messages should we seek to be getting across?
- (b) by what means?; and
- (c) to what particular audiences?

Some answers?

6. We cannot, I think, rely on the formal purpose of the Secretariat, namely servicing the IGC, to take us very far - though it is true. More relevantly, should we not be stressing, positively, that:

- (a) the Secretariat provides a continued - and low key - channel of communication on matters of common concern (most obviously those specified in the Anglo-Irish Agreement) which enables: both Governments to be aware of each other's thinking; - not that this is the only way of achieving this; sensitive issues to be addressed quickly; and, perhaps most important of all, prevented from escalating into public disputes which serve no-one's interest.

7. And, negatively, that:

- (a) the Anglo-Irish Secretariat is in no sense a surrogate, or "extra layer" of Government in Northern Ireland; and

- (b) the Irish role, although they do not like it so described, is essentially consultative and they make representations which HMG accepts or not on their merits.

8. My own recent address to this topic has majored on the Secretariat's ability to facilitate "a continuing conversation" between representatives of the two Governments, on matters of common interest, and in the interests of Northern Ireland as a whole.

9. I hope it may be possible to work up half dozen bull points as to the messages we want to put across.

10. But to whom and how? At one level, to the kind of "opinion formers" and "makers and shakers" who come through the door of Maryfield. Both within and without central Government, I hope that those with whom we have dealings - above all dealings jointly - receive the message, implicit as much as explicit, that the "News Letter" view of the Secretariat is, at the very least, significantly off target. Hence, my introduction of the practice of joint entertaining which the existence of Talks on three days a week has inhibited from developing to quite the extent I had originally intended. But which certainly should be increased, and encouraged with all the resources at our disposal in 1997.

11. But how do we influence wider circles? I would be grateful for advice from Mr Wood. But possibilities include:

- (a) repeating the experiment, at a suitable occasion could be found, of my giving an "on the record" interview, as I did with full official blessing, to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the signing of the Agreement (although the article was eventually "spiked");
- (b) encouraging a "feature" by a suitable correspondent on Maryfield; or even

(c) letting a TV camera into the place (subject to what restrictions?).

12. You will have other ideas of your own: possibly including trying to place short features of our own, responding (eg by letters signed by both Joint Secretaries) to the more obvious travisties, a glossy spread in "Omnibus"

13. I should be grateful for your views (and indeed those of any copy recipient) with a view to working up a plan we could, where necessary broker with the Irish (mindful of the fact that their interests do not wholly coincide with ours: they benefit from a little mystification as it tends to enhance their role here in the eyes of their constituents and friends).

14. Perhaps, once comments are in, a discussion in CMT?

Signed:

P N BELL
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KMR/PNB/8304