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SEC *Le6866 423/97*
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FROM: QUENTIN THOMAS
POLITICAL DIRECTOR (L)
20 March 1997

Mr Bell

cc PS/PUS (L&B)
PS/Sir David Fell
Mr Steele
Mr Daniell
Mr Leach
Mr Stephens
Mr Watkins
Mr Wood (L&B)
Mr Beeton
Mr Brooker
Mrs Collins
Mr Hill
Mr Lavery
Mr Maccabe
Mr Perry
Mr Lamont, RID
HMA, Dublin
Mr Fisher

ASST *08472/3*
SEC 24 MAR 1997
CENT SEC

C

Mrs J
Mr M. Staley
25/3
W02973

"DEBUNKING THE BUNKER"

I agree with your own reservations about Stephen Grimason's idea for a fly on the wall programme about Maryfield.

2. I also agree with Mr Wood's comments including his suggestion that in a different context we may be able to respond positively to the idea of some exposure of Maryfield. The effort may well be worth making, and there are signs that Dr Mowlam in particular will want to make the effort, but I think Maryfield is peculiarly an example of that phenomenon whereby the more you expose the more the conspiracy theorists take it as confirming that even more and worse is withheld.

(Signed QT)

QUENTIN THOMAS
PD(L)
OAB 6447

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FROM

A WOOD
DIRECTOR, INFORMATION SERVICE
20 MARCH 1997

ASST 00 443/3 CC
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- PS/PUS B(&L) - B
- PS/Sir D Fell - B
- Mr Thomas - B
- Mr Steele - B
- Mr Daneill - B
- Mr Leach - B
- Mr Stephens - B
- Mr Watkins - B
- Mr Beeton - B
- Mr Brooker - B
- Mrs Collins - B
- Mr Hill - B
- Mr Lavery - B
- Mr Maccabe - B
- Mr Perry - B
- Mr Lamont, RID - B
- HMA, Dublin - B
- Mr Fisher - B

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C

[Handwritten signatures and notes: Mr McKeown 26/3, Mr Jones, LD 25/3]

Mr Bell - B

"DEBUNKING THE BUNKER"

I am conscious that, despite reminders, I have not yet given you my thoughts on this idea.

Without prejudice to the wider concept, I record that I am uneasy about the Stephen Grimason idea of a "fly on the wall" television programme, particularly on account of the proposed slot for filming - June/July. No prizes for supposing that events outside Maryfield might also serve to raise the temperature inside the building (this is not a comment on your Irish counterparts - simply to state that when things get hairy in the streets the same effect can be detected in normally more tranquil locations ...) which is quite possibly why Grimason has focussed on this summer.

Nor do I think - if Grimason intended it - that the comparison with the Irish presidency series is accurate and therefore helpful to making his case. Positively promoting your EU term is one thing - opening the doors on what is, essentially (and no disrespect

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intended) a service division for our two Governments is quite another.

Of course it is perfectly fair to argue that "Ur-Unionists" will continue to believe that, in addition to drawing up plans to unify Ireland, you and your colleagues are also celebrating Black Mass, slaving over your ouija boards and the like - and that the only way to disabuse them of this perception is to show them what really goes on. But there's the rub - because those same people will continue to believe, even after transmission of the most innocent and unexceptional footage, that "you didn't see the half of what really goes on in there!".

Let's be candid about the Grimason proposal as well as any others in the same vein: what will be for him "good television" may be - will be - for us "bad politics". Dull is what we want - but "dull" is not what he'll (want to) put on screen.

All that apart, I share your overall desire to de-mystify. If there is one constant running through the past ten years, it is the way in which the curtain has been lifted on a number of areas which were previously "no go" in terms of publicity. The result - generally that the dogs who used to howl nightly at the Government moon have now become "Basenji" clones in their silence.

My view is that, given the arrival of the new Government (and a fortiori if it is Labour) we may expect other requests (? from Peter Taylor at least) for an "inside view" of how Government works here. Set in the context of a wider-ranging film (which would, inevitably I suppose include a section on the Secretariat) it would seem to be a useful and instructive idea well worth considering positively.

If such a proposal does come forward, would you like to think about pushing for a "Maryfield Chapter" - I'd certainly give it my support.

(signed)

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FROM: P N BELL
JOINT SECRETARY
19 MARCH 1997

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

C

Handwritten notes:
Mr 2
Mrs 1
2/3
Mr 1
1029/3

MR FISHER

DEBUNKING THE BUNKER CONTINUED

At last night's St Patrick's Day party in the Secretariat, Mr Stephen Grimison approached my Irish colleague to suggest a "fly on the wall" treatment of life in the Secretariat on the lines of the recent series on the Irish EU Presidency - though, in this case, with only one programme in mind. The proposed treatment would be, for example, moving around the Secretariat (some pretty exciting footage here, one feels) and being present at the start of one (or more) of our Delegation Meetings - plus, one might imagine other meetings, briefings, socialisings ... then panning away as we got down to business. His idea would be to do these programmes over the period June/July (ie the Marching Season) with a view to transmission in Spring 1998, when, one hopes, passions would have cooled a little. There would also be interviews with Mr Donoghue and myself.

2. Mr Grimison has not even cleared these ideas with his own

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colleagues as yet. He does not intend to approach the British side formally until after our General Election. By which time I would hope to have anyway a set of clear proposals to put to whoever our Ministers may be. That said, however, even I wonder whether the Grimison proposal might be a reel too far - as does Mr Donoghue. During the ceasefire, he - like me - would have been more sympathetic; but the combination of active hostility to the Secretariat, plus the imponderable stresses and strains of the Marching Season means that even the Irish side is reluctant to expose their staff to camera. It is also very difficult to imagine how even an edited version of an internal Secretariat meeting would not give the impression, to those minded to be so impressed, that the Irish side were seeking to influence operational police decisions So there is shared scepticism here about the main proposal. Which does not, however, necessarily exclude, and here Mr Donoghue and I are at one, the possibility of some more modest media intrusion, even with camera in hand.

3. During the Election period, I shall be trying to pull together all the various strands on this subject with a view to having an agreed paper, ideally agreed with the Irish as well, that can be given to an incoming administration. But if you or copy recipients have any further views you want to inject, I should be very grateful to hear of them.

Signed:

P N BELL
01232-427532 Ext 302
KMR/PNB/10620

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