

1924/92
Irish Med.

Mr Jackson
Thank you
21/10

Mr Peavey 21/10 you may be
interested to see.

FROM: MRS D BROWN
CCRU

cc Mr Watkins
Mr Jordan
Mr Canavan
Mr Jackson
Mr McCormick
Mr Corbett

21/10

19 October 1994

TO: PS/MICHAEL ANCRAM (DENI, B & L)

Mr Leonard

ULSTER-SCOTS AND ARTS COUNCILS

1 Councillor Dr Ian Adamson, Deputy Lord Mayor of Belfast, wrote to Michael Ancram on 27 September, in reply to PS/Michael Ancram's letter of 15 June 1994 to Mr John G Fox (Annex 1), asking the Minister for any information on which academic specialists regard Ulster-Scots as a regional variety of "English", if by "English" the Minister meant Received Pronunciation. Dr Adamson's letter also seeks the formalisation of "East/West" links between the Scottish and NI Arts Councils.

Ulster-Scots

2 The English language encompasses a vast range of varieties which are distinguishable not only in terms of sounds but also syntax, word-construction, and vocabulary, whereas Received Pronunciation refers only to a single system of pronunciation. PS/Michael Ancram's letter does not refer to Received Pronunciation, so, strictly speaking, this point does not require a response, however, the assertion that Ulster-Scots is a language separate from English should be rebutted.

3 Ulster-Scots is a regional variety of English, historically related to Lowland Scots which came to Ulster with the Plantation. The aim of the Ulster-Scots Language Society is to preserve and re-establish Ulster-Scots as a full, modern, working language discrete from English. Independent academic advice which CCRU has

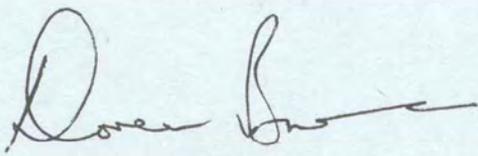
obtained is that Ulster-Scots is not a full language but is related to Standard English by a continuum which runs from Standard English to the most heavily marked regional speech.

- 4 The Ulster-Scots Language Society also draws a parallel between Irish and Ulster-Scots, based on the notion that they are both discrete from English, and infer from this that the Government, in keeping with its principle of equity of treatment, must afford parity of treatment - especially in resource allocation - to Ulster-Scots and Irish. This is an unnecessary and divisive politicisation of Ulster-Scots, which is likely to do a grave disservice to the promotion of awareness and appreciation of Ulster-Scots, which is an integral part of the complex cultural identity of Ulster.

Arts Councils

- 5 Formal links already exist between the four Arts Councils in the United Kingdom. The Chairmen and Chief Executives meet from time to time (usually twice a year) to consider matters of common interest.
- 6 In addition, the Chief Executives of the Arts Councils in Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland, Scotland and Wales (the so-called "Celtic Quartet") meet annually to exchange information and ideas. The last such meeting took place in Wicklow in May.
- 7 While there is no formal mechanism for consultation exclusively between the Arts Council of Northern Ireland and the Scottish Arts Council, officers of the two Councils are in frequent contact about areas of mutual interest and individual projects which extend to both territories.

8 I attach for consideration a draft reply to Dr Adamson. This summarises the view of two eminent Scottish linguists - Tom McArthur and A J Aitken - that the relationship between, on the one hand, the varieties of Scots (including Ulster-Scots), and Standard English on the other, is a continuum, and that Scots is, therefore, not autonomous from Standard English. The reply also states the position regarding contacts between the various Arts Councils.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'D Brown', with a stylized, cursive script.

D BROWN

DRAFT

Councillor Dr Ian Adamson
Deputy Lord Mayor
City Hall
Belfast BT1 5GS

October 1994

Dear Councillor Adamson,

You wrote to Michael Ancram on 27 September regarding Ulster-Scots and the formalisation of east-west links between the Scottish Arts Council and the Arts Council of Northern Ireland. The Minister has read your letter and has asked me to reply on his behalf.

You asked for information on which academic specialists considered Ulster-Scots as a regional variety of English, if "English" was intended to mean Received Pronunciation. In my reply of 15 June "English" should be read in its broadest sense and not as meaning Received Pronunciation, which is only one phonological system of English, and refers only to pronunciation, and not to syntax, morphology or lexis.

Tom McArthur, Editor of the Oxford Companion to the English Language, a Scot and co-editor of "Languages of Scotland", favours the idea of a "family of Englishes". Professor McArthur includes both Scots and Ulster-Scots in his model entitled "Circle of World English".

A J Aitken, co-editor of A Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue, applies William A Stewart's sociolinguistic typology to assess the linguistic status of Scots. It is reasonable to extrapolate from this for Ulster-Scots. Stewart's typology prescribes four attributes of a language, all of which are necessary: standardisation, autonomy, historicity, and vitality. In his article "The Good Old Scots Tongue: does Scots have an Identity?" (Minority Languages Today - Edinburgh University Press) Dr Aitken describes Scots as follows:

"As a spoken language it lacks 'standardisation': it is heteronomous with - bound up in a sociolinguistic continuum with and constantly influenced by - Standard English, and therefore conspicuously lacking in the crucial attribute of 'autonomy'. ... In speech there is a continuum between varieties of Standard English, spoken either with RP or with more or less Scottish accents at one pole and non-standard Scottish dialects at the other pole."

As regards links between the Scottish Arts Council and the Arts Council of Northern Ireland, I should explain that consultation between the two Councils takes place in the context of two established fora. Firstly, the Chairmen and Chief Executives of the four Arts Councils in the United Kingdom meet from time to time (usually twice a year) to consider matters of common interest. Secondly, the Chief Executives of the Arts Councils in Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland, Scotland and Wales meet annually to exchange information and ideas.

While there is no formal mechanism for consultation exclusively between the Arts Council of Northern Ireland and the Scottish Arts Council, officers of the two Councils are in frequent contact about areas of mutual interest and individual projects which extend to both territories.

Yours sincerely,

PRIVATE SECRETARY TO MICHAEL ANCRAM MP



E459/94

NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE
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John G Fox Esq OBE BA
Chief Executive (Acting)
Belfast City Council
PO Box No 234
City Hall
BELFAST
BT1 5GS

15 June 1994

Dear Mr Fox

You wrote to Michael Ancram on 16 May to advise him of the motion which Belfast City Council passed at its meeting on 3 May regarding Gaelic and Ulster-Scots traditions. The Minister has read your letter and has asked me to reply.

The Government aims to promote wider understanding and respect for all aspects of Northern Ireland's cultural heritage and in 1993/94 contributed £1.5 million, in addition to EC Structural Funds assistance of over £700,000, to programmes and projects in this field.

Northern Ireland has a very rich and complex heritage and it is not possible to disaggregate Government expenditure according to the Irish, Scottish or other origins of cultural activities. However, it is incorrect to say that Government programmes fail to reflect Ulster-Scots heritage, traditions and identity. The Government, through Department of Education and Central Community Relations Unit programmes has supported a range of projects, which have promoted appreciation of and respect for Ulster-Scots heritage, traditions and identity.



Government policy on cultural traditions takes it as axiomatic that all strands of Northern Ireland's cultural heritage merit parity of esteem. However, Irish and English are discrete languages, whereas, in purely linguistic terms, Ulster-Scots is generally regarded by academic specialists as a regional variety of English. Therefore, calls for equal treatment with the Irish language are inappropriate.

The Minister agrees wholeheartedly with the Council's deprecation of the misuse of Irish for divisive political purposes. Indeed, the Government's policy on financial support for activities in the field of cultural traditions is entirely consistent with the Council's view that the diverse elements of Northern Ireland's cultural heritage should belong to everyone irrespective of their political, religious or ethnic background.

Finally, the Minister welcomes the Council's affirmation of its commitment to a pluralist society in Belfast.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K. Jagelman', is written over the typed name.

PP
KEITH JAGELMAN

Private Secretary to Michael Ancram MP

RECEIVED
D.S.N.L.
29 SEP 1994



CITY HALL,
Belfast.

27 September 1994

Mr Michael Ancram MP
Northern Ireland Office
Stormont Castle
Belfast
BT4 3SD

ACK'D A/E A pls
REFERRED TO S. CCRU
 Mr Higgins

Dear Minister

Thank you for your Private Secretary's letter of 15 June 1994, concerning my motion passed unanimously by Belfast City Council at its meeting on 3 May 1994, regarding Gaelic and Ulster-Scots traditions.

I would like to bring to your attention the rather disturbing paragraph which reads:

'Government policy on cultural traditions takes it as axiomatic that all strands of Northern Ireland's cultural heritage merit parity of esteem. However, Irish and English are discrete languages, whereas, in purely linguistic terms, Ulster-Scots is generally regarded by academic specialists as a regional variety of English. Therefore, calls for equal treatment with the Irish language are inappropriate'.

I would be most grateful for any information on which academic specialists regard Ulster-Scots as a regional variety of "English", (if by "English" is meant Received Pronunciation English and not the English language grouping) as they have different roots and origins.

I have requested that Belfast City Council obtain expert advice on the issue and they will be replying to the letter in due course.

I think we must have more enlightened thinking on such a sensitive issue as language in the Northern Ireland context. The best model I feel for us is that of the Scottish Arts Council and the formalisation of East/West links between them and the Arts Council of Northern Ireland must be a priority.

All good wishes.

Yours sincerely

J. A.

COUNCILLOR DR IAN ADAMSON
DEPUTY LORD MAYOR