



*Case*

Margaret } we shd  
Gery } keep instructions  
such as these  
in an easily  
accessible  
place - if we  
do not do so already!  
G 12/6.  
cc KODS

2515797 JA 28.5.97

*M. O'Neil*

5141/87  
Sinn Fein  
28.5.97

*ed/ckg 10/6*  
*Mr King*  
*Mrs O'Neill*  
*Ms McQuinn*  
*& return*

To: Departmental Board Members

From: Lorraine Fleming  
Private Office

**ACCESS TO GOVERNMENT: SINN FEIN**

Mr Loughran has asked me to circulate the attached Guidelines for Contact with Sinn Fein which have now been cleared by the Secretary of State.

*LK*  
**LORRAINE FLEMING**  
P/A to G Loughran

28 May 1997



DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

GUIDELINES FOR CONTACT WITH SINN FÉIN

1. In the absence of an IRA ceasefire, contact between Sinn Féin and Government Ministers and officials will be circumscribed as follows:
  - (a) Ministers will not hold meetings with Sinn Féin elected representatives or an exclusively Sinn Féin delegation in any circumstances nor will they meet, on Government property, a delegation or group which includes Sinn Féin representatives. The denial of Ministerial contact with Sinn Féin as a party is in line with the policy of the Irish Government.
  - (b) Ministers will continue their outside visits in Northern Ireland and Great Britain on the understanding that any contacts with Sinn Féin representatives will be incidental to the primary purpose of the visit. For example, visits to District Councils in Northern Ireland will proceed, given that their main purpose is to discuss Council business rather than meet Sinn Féin as a party and social contact with any Sinn Féin representative who may be present is avoided or minimised.
  - (c) Meetings between Sinn Féin representatives and senior officials to discuss policy issues may take place with the explicit approval of the appropriate Departmental Minister. In cases of doubt, advice should be sought from Constitutional and Political Division of the NIO in London (0171 210 6575).

Ministerial approval is necessary because Ministers have to be accountable to Parliament and able to confirm that they gave their agreement to such meetings. This approval could be generic or cover a series of meetings in appropriate circumstances.

CONFIDENTIAL

Every case for consideration, either a specific meeting or a series, should be regarded on its merits with no pre-disposition either for or against

- (d) Contact between Sinn Féin representatives and junior officials on purely constituency matters will continue as before to avoid any accusation of disenfranchising the relevant electorate.
- (e) Sinn Féin should continue to receive Press Notices and other material sent to all political parties in Northern Ireland. Letters signed by Ministers intended to go to all parties or party leaders should receive a Private Secretary signature in the case of Sinn Féin.
- (f) In order to be consistent in treatment between contacts by letter and personal contacts, Departments should ensure that letters from Sinn Féin elected representatives, party officers and unelected spokespersons addressed to Ministers receive a Private Secretary or official and not a Ministerial reply.

CONFIDENTIAL

- 7 -