

LD/302.

Rs

Department of Health,
Social Services & Public Safety

From The Permanent Secretary
Mr D C Gowdy

RESTRICTED

FROM: D C GOWDY
DATE: 16 February 2000

cc Mr Semple
Permanent Secretaries
Mr Jeffrey
Mr Stephens
Mr Smyth
Mrs Brown
Mrs Flanagan
Mr McCartney
~~Mrs Devlin~~
Mrs McGivern

Mr Beattie

LD 17/2

Mr McCusker

FLAGS AND IRISH LANGUAGE ISSUES

1. I am grateful to you for copying to me your minute of 15 February to Mr Semple.
2. I very much support the line you are taking in relation to the flying of the Union Jack. The direction which Bairbre de Brún had issued that the flag should not be flown remains in force until we countermand it. It is therefore very important that we receive clear guidance quickly on this issue.
3. In relation to the use of the Irish Language, I agree that some sensitivity is required. While it is one option to retain the bilingual notepaper, there is an equally valid argument that during Direct Rule we should revert to the English only version which we had prepared on a contingency basis prior to devolution. I think it would be rather strange for NIO Ministers to issue letters, etc on bilingual paper for some of their responsibilities but not for others. The safer option would be to revert to English only but to make it clear, if asked, that the stocks of bilingual paper were retained for the resumption of devolved government once the current suspension can be ended.

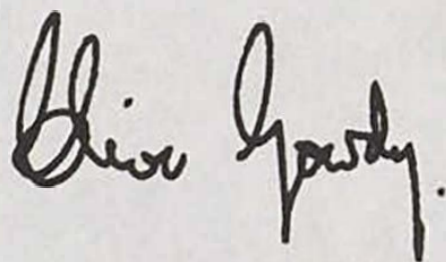
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4. I think the point in relation to bilingual advertisements is even stronger. As the Accounting Officer in a Department using bilingual advertisements, I was increasingly concerned at the value for money aspects of this and I was preparing a submission to put to Bairbre de Brún to draw this out. In the absence of a formal written instruction or a wider Executive Committee decision that bilingual advertisements should be placed, there was a clear area of vulnerability for me. I would therefore support the view that we should not continue with bilingual advertisements during the period of suspension.
5. I would be happy to provide any additional information if that would be helpful.



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