

CONFIDENTIAL

25/9/97
SUB/01009/97
mcl
Sinn Féin file

DB/39/9

FROM: MRS DOREEN BROWN
CENT SEC

cc PS/Attorney General

PS/PUS (B&L)

- O

PS/Sir David Fell

- O

Mr Thomas

- O

DATE: 25 SEPTEMBER 1997

Mr Steele

- O

Mr Bell

- O

Mr Blackwell

- O

Mr Leach

- O

Mr Shannon

- O

Mr Brooker

- O

Mr Hill

- O

Mr Woods

- O

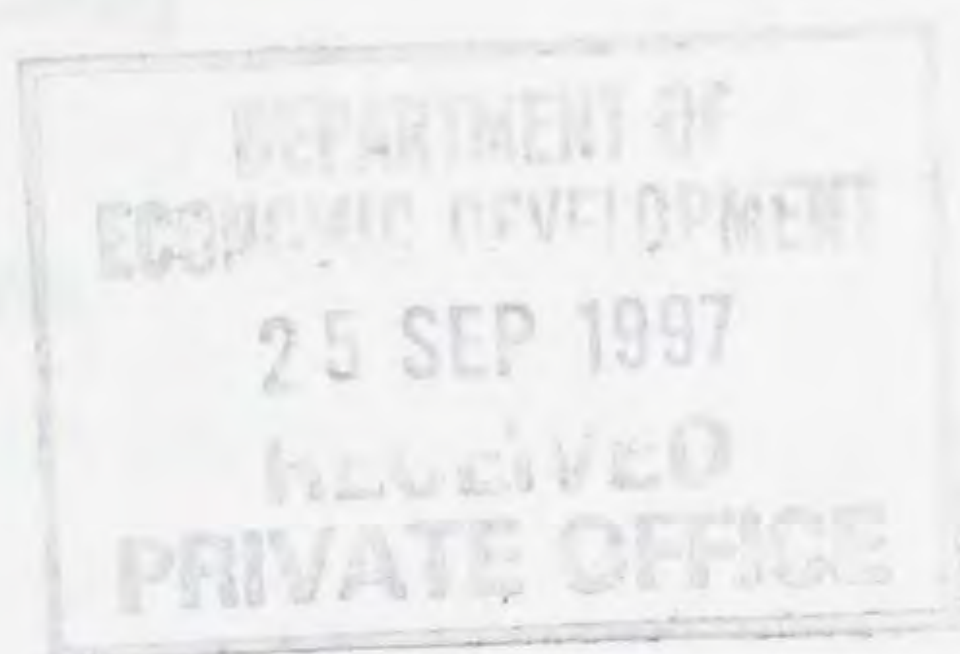
Mr Steele, NIAO

Mrs Rogers

- O

Parliamentary Section

- O



NI PERMANENT SECRETARIES
DEPARTMENTAL CO-ORDINATORS
PRIVATE OFFICES

ACCESS TO GOVERNMENT : CENTRAL SECRETARIAT CIRCULAR ON CONTACT WITH SINN FEIN

1. On 16 June 1997, Departments were provided with revised guidance on contact with Sinn Féin.
2. The Secretary of State has decided, in the light of Sinn Féin's admission to the Talks and their affirmation of the Mitchell principles, that they should be treated on the same basis as other political parties. The attached guidance therefore **replaces** that issued in June this year and should be applied by Departments until further notice.
3. Departments should, as in the past, bring this guidance to the attention of appropriate staff. Non-Departmental Public Bodies should also be made aware of the revised guidance and their own practice should reflect the same principles.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

4. Any queries should be addressed to Central Secretariat (5)28153/(5)28158/(5)28168 who will consult Political Affairs Division and Constitutional and Political Division, NIO, as necessary.

[Signed: DAB]

D A BROWN

CONFIDENTIAL

GUIDELINES FOR CONTACT WITH SINN FÉIN

1. This guidance replaces the Central Secretariat guidance issued on 16 June 1997.

The New Policy

2. In the wake of the Secretary of State's announcement on 29 August that she regarded the ceasefire as unequivocal and Sinn Féin's formal commitment to the Mitchell principles of democracy and non-violence on 9 September, Ministers have agreed that they would be ready to consider requests from representatives of Sinn Féin to meet Ministers and officials on their merits. Such requests from Sinn Féin should be dealt with on the same basis as requests from other parties having regard to the level of their electoral support and political representation.
3. This new policy has been specifically introduced on the basis that it will continue in operation only for so long as Sinn Féin remain eligible to participate in the Talks and the IRA ceasefire remains in place. The policy would therefore have to be reviewed again urgently, were either of these two factors to change.

Contact Points

4. Any queries should be addressed to Central Secretariat (5)28153/(5)28158/(5)28168.

SEPTEMBER 1997