

northern IRELAND

PS/First Minister
PS/Deputy First Minister

OFMDFM
PRIVATE OFFICE

24 AUG 2000

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VISIT TO WASHINGTON BY FIRST AND DEPUTY FIRST MINISTER, SEPTEMBER 2000

We agreed in principle when the visit to Washington scheduled for July was cancelled that it might be reinstated during September. I have set out below the outline of a programme that might be appropriate, but I have not made any firm arrangements yet, pending comment from your side.

Timing

The availability of the President is the determining factor. Senior NSC staff have provided the assurance that the White House "really wants to do this meeting". With caveats about the demands that might be made on the President's time by the unfinished Middle East process, and by the hoards of foreign dignitaries who will be attending the UN Millennium meetings in New York from 6th September on, Tony Blinken was hopeful that he could revert in the next few days with more clarity as to the President's being available around 12th or 13th September.

Background

The visit will take place at a time when there is no way of predicting what level of interest will be shown in Northern Irish affairs by a post-Clinton Administration. The platform statement at the Republican convention indicated that a Bush Presidency would push for full implementation of Patten, a general review of deportation and extradition cases, and the appointment "if necessary" of a special US envoy. The Democrats chose a much more restrained approach, promising only to seek (in very broad terms) implementation of the Good Friday Agreement, and the encouragement of new and positive political relationships in Northern Ireland. Although platform statements are not fully binding, they provide a rough guide to the temperature on policy issues, and on this reading, a Bush Administration might be more actively engaged on Northern Ireland than one headed by Gore. What seems certain, however, is that neither will be as committed as Clinton. Subject to the continued implementation of the Good Friday Agreement, Northern Ireland as an issue will not vanish but may well move down the radar screen.

This analysis suggests that the objectives of the proposed visit by the First Minister/Deputy First Minister should be -

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INZ-SRPDI/INZ/PC/D/visit by timetable or ad hoc

Irish American opinion in general (and on the Senate Appropriations Committee that votes money for the International Fund for Ireland) that ignoring them would be perceived as a snub. Senator Mikulski is developing her personal interest in Northern Ireland, and has actually declared ^{herself} ~~himself~~ available in principle for a meeting on either the 11th, 12th or 13th of September. Careful consideration should be given to accommodating her. On the House side, a meeting with Representative Jim Walsh could be helpful in building a positive relationship with the Appropriations Committee, and for an exchange of views on the Walsh Visa programme; while Sam Gejdenson is ranking member on the House International Relations Committee, and is scheduled to take the Chair vacated by Ben Gilman at the end of the year, if the Democrats win a majority in the House.

There are two Congressional groups with whom contact might also be made. An ad hoc meeting of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee could be used to attract Senators with a broad spectrum of views; and in the House, the group that collects informally around the Gilman/King/Neal/Crowley axis represents a means of touching base with the main Irish American activists. The First Minister might address the first of these groups, while the Deputy First Minister took the second.

There are a number of other individuals with whom personal connections might be established in separate meetings if time permits - Senator Paul Sarbanes (a former Rhodes Scholar and member of the Foreign Relations Committee); Senator Barbara Boxer (Foreign Relations and recent visitor to Northern Ireland); Senator Mitch McConnell (Appropriations Committee and friend of the IFI); Representatives David Obey (Appropriations Committee); Tom Bliley (Chair, Commerce Committee); Doug Bereuter (the member of the Committee on International Relations tipped to take over from Ben Gilman if the Republicans retain control of the House); or Nancy Pelosi (Appropriations Committee, and interested in developing her knowledge of Northern Ireland).

Media

In terms of media coverage, the main presentational point - for this first visit at least - will be the two Ministers appearing and speaking in concert. We might think in terms of a National Press Club "Newsmaker" event; a post-White House press conference; plus a speaking engagement organised by the Center for National Policy to which press would be invited. Meetings with editorial boards are probably best avoided unless the two Ministers are able to undertake them jointly.

Hospitality

Assuming a two-night stay, an evening reception would be a useful way of making contact with a range of people the First Minister and Deputy First Minister might wish to meet and greet. If sufficient notice was given, it would also be possible to arrange a business-orientated lunch on one of the days, drawing in local entrepreneurs with either an established connection to, or an interest in, Northern Ireland.

The attached outline programme is based on the factors outlined in this note. Consideration can be given to creating space for downtime/individual engagements once the programme's main anchor points have been identified and secured.

I am ready to discuss any aspect of this note as a matter of urgency.

P. Smyth.

Peter Smyth
Director, Northern Ireland Bureau
23rd August 2000

Day 3

Calls on
Senators Kennedy & Dodd; Leahy
[Mikulski]
Representatives Walsh; Gejdenson

FM addresses Senate Foreign Relations-based
group

DFM addresses House Friends of Ireland-based
group

Seminar organised by Center for National Policy

Transfer to Dulles

Fly out early/late evening

OFFICE OF THE FIRST MINISTER AND DEPUTY FIRST
MINISTER

CC LIST

PS/First Minister
PS/Deputy First Minister ✓
PS/Mr Haughey
PS/Mr Nesbitt
PS/Mr Loughran ✓
Mr McCusker ✓
Mr W Haire ✓
Mr J A Canavan
Mr D Lavery ✓
Mr P May ✓
Mrs Devlin
Mrs Flanagan
Mr McCartney
Ms McGivern
Ms Kenny
Ms Smith
Mr Smyth
Mr McKervill ✓
Mr Campbell ✓
Mr Kerr ✓
Dr Gudgin ✓
Mr Barrington ✓
Mr Larkin ✓
Mr Logue ✓
Mr Larmour ✓
Mr Ross ✓
Mr Pringle ✓
Mrs Cosgrove ✓
Mr Keenan ✓
Miss Morgan ✓
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