

CONFIDENTIAL



BRITISH EMBASSY,
DUBLIN.

17 December 1980

M J Newington Esq
Republic of Ireland Department
Foreign and Commonwealth Office
London SW1

Dear Mike

fn. Am - 19/12

MR LENIHAN'S GAFFE

1. I think it was on the BBC radio news at 1pm on Friday 12 December that I heard Mr Lenihan reported as saying that as a result of the Dublin Summit everything was on the table, including constitutional matters. That evening Barney Smith rang me at home to say that RID had telephoned to us the text of the Prime Minister's proposed statement responding to what Mr Lenihan had said. I telephoned Michael Alexander with a suggested amendment, which in the end was not required because the paragraph concerned had been deleted. However, Michael took the opportunity of telling me that the Prime Minister wished Mr Lenihan to know how she felt about his remarks and hoped this could be done that evening.

2. I was able to get hold of Wally Kirwan who had clearly been expecting us to react (as had Dermot Nally), expressing the hope that perhaps the Foreign Minister could be persuaded to take a holiday and stay away from correspondents. Anyway, he undertook to see that the Prime Minister's wishes were followed through that evening. He must have acted quickly because Mr Lenihan's gloss was reported in Saturday's Evening Press on sale about 3pm and I saw a shot of him on the 10pm ITV News on the Saturday evening where he was clearly recovering lost ground and putting the relevant passage of the communiqué in the proper perspective. It is unfortunate that although he was quoted as saying essentially the same thing by the Evening Press and the Sunday Tribune as well as ITN the DFA have told us that there is no official text and his remarks were not picked up in Monday's Dublin papers.

Yours ever

Leonard

L C W Figg

Copied to:-
M O'D B Alexander Esq
No 10 Downing Street

CONFIDENTIAL