



Prime Minister

NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE
GREAT GEORGE STREET,
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*This is an interim report
on the papers which have
been referred to in the letter on the
Northern Ireland issue on 22nd June.*

MS

Clive Whitmore Esq
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*REV
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July 1982

Dear Clive,

1. Thank you for your letter of 30 June about the documents *— attached.* which Mr Molyneux sent to Ian Gow about conversations between Mr Abbott and Mr Sloan.

2. Mr Sloan has been known to us as a post-graduate research student at Keele University. Yesterday we were informed, confidentially by Conservative Central Office, that for a number of years he has been and indeed still is employed by the Official Unionist Party and works for Mr Molyneux. If this is so, it is strange that he did not reveal this connection in his dealings with us, nor indeed does Mr Molyneux refer to it in his note explaining that Mr Sloan got in touch with him.

3. The history of our dealings with Mr Sloan is as follows. He wrote to the Northern Ireland Office on 9 January 1981 saying that he was a post-graduate research student writing a PhD thesis and in particular engaged on a paper entitled "the Northern Ireland Conflict in Anglo/Irish Relations". He asked for a talk with an official "who has to deal with the various political problems of the Northern Ireland conflict on a day-to-day basis".

4. He was seen by Mr Abbott on 26 January 1981 for over an hour on the normal basis whereby academic researchers are given unattributable information of a factual character and at this interview Mr Abbott noticed that Mr Sloan had a Belfast accent. The latter wrote a warm letter of thanks and at his request was seen by Mr Abbott on 17 November 1981 in connection with the next stage of his research which he said was on "Anglo/Irish relations viz a viz Northern Ireland". He had a further talk on 17 February 1982 with another official and followed this up with a letter asking "on a non-attributable basis of course" for further information about views on devolution within Northern Ireland which he received in writing.

5. Turning now to the document, it gives the appearance of consisting of precise answers to questions and furthermore by the insertion of dots at the foot of page 1 followed by the words ("phone rings") conveys the impression that it is a verbatim record.

6. Mr Abbott strongly denies that the document is an even remotely accurate account of his meeting with Mr Sloan. Indeed it is evident from the first words of "Answer 1" that the author has no notion of elementary facts of Irish/American politics. Anybody who can record as the response of an experienced official in the Northern Ireland Office that the Ad Hoc Committee tends to be dominated by the 4 Horsemen and that Mr Biaggi is one of the Horsemen is bound to be in a pretty confused state of mind.

7. Apart from other preposterous statements attributed to Mr Abbott, it is interesting that the expression "at the minute" in Answer 1 - "John Hume is in Washington at the minute" is a Northern Irish usage. Mr Abbott is not a personal friend of Mr Hume (Answer 2a) and doubts whether Mr Hume has the slightest idea who he is; Mr Abbott has never met, nor so far as he knows, spoken to Mr Trimble whom he is also said to claim as a close friend.

8. Some of the absurdities in the document have been pointed out in the House by members not notable for supporting Mr Prior's proposals - see for example Mr Paisley in Hansard for 29 June at cols 837-8 and Sir Philip Goodhart cols 857-8.

9. As to what should be done next, my Secretary of State is considering whether to recommend to the Prime Minister that some independent enquiry, e.g. by a QC, should be set up, but it might be difficult to formulate satisfactory terms of reference and the setting up of an enquiry might itself give an impression that the allegations had substance. Before coming to a decision on this he would propose to see to what extent the matter is further probed in Parliament or in the media and whether any residual doubts or anxieties remain.

*Mons.
Steph*

S W BOYS SMITH