



Prime Minister

### GAELIC TELEVISION SERVICES

I have seen Douglas Hurd's helpful minute of 17 October and the attached report which records the discussions which his officials and mine have had with Treasury. If we are to reap the benefits of going some way to meet the needs of the Gaels, the chosen mechanism must be able to operate satisfactorily over a period of time and must present a consistent approach (at least so far as principles are concerned) between Wales and Scotland.

Of the 7 questions posed in the paper by officials, the most crucial are the first 4, the answers to which will establish whether we set up a Gaelic Production Fund and if so who should run it. But answers to the remaining 3 questions of detail are also important. For a start they are inter-related: we must avoid a combination of specificity on the total number of additional hours of Gaelic broadcasting with a funding mechanism which entails future problems in meeting the cost of these hours.

I firmly believe that both S4C and the arrangements for Gaelic should be funded by Home Office as part of broadcasting provision. The Scottish Office has no responsibility for broadcasting and it is important that the Home Office should continue to be seen as a UK department in this respect. Furthermore, it is clearly desirable to fund the arrangement for Gaelic in the same way as for Welsh. The alternative approach would require the Gaelic Production Fund to be financed from outwith the Scottish PES block as there is no comparable programme in England. I believe that 200 additional hours of Gaelic broadcasting would be sensible provision (indeed it is the minimum meaningful concession) and subject to my comment above about funding arrangements I would wish the ITC to require franchise holders to show a specified number of hours of Gaelic programmes, this being the only means of guaranteeing that the creation

of the Fund has the desired effect. I would not, however, see it as appropriate for either the Bill or the ITC to follow the pattern of the S4C legislation and be specific about the amount of peak hour broadcasting in Gaelic - it would suffice for the ITC to ensure that "some" of the Gaelic programmes were shown in peak hours.

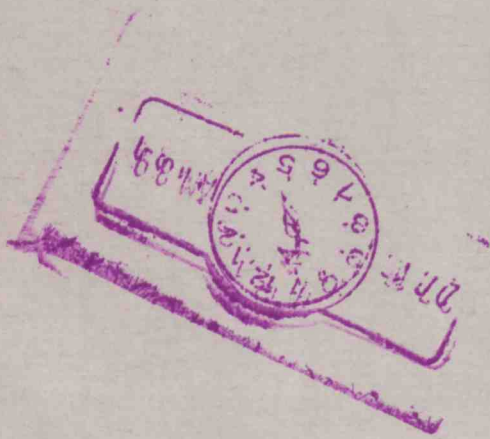
To sum up, I am glad that Douglas accepts the need for special arrangements for Gaelic broadcasting and I agree that the support should be provided through a Committee of the ITC. Given that the funding arrangements for S4C are not finalised and that the funding arrangements for Gaelic have consequences for other aspects of the proposed scheme, I would suggest that a coherent position on these various details could be reached more successfully by a quick meeting of the 4 Ministers most concerned (Home Office, Treasury, Welsh Office and Scottish Office) than by correspondence.

I am copying this to Douglas Hurd, to other members of MISC 128 and to Sir Robin Butler.

MR

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26 October 1989



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