

Ireland

NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE
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R Lyne Esq
Foreign and Commonwealth Office
London
S W 1

8 June 1981

Dear Rodin,

NRA

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COOPERATION NORTH

Cooperation North was set up in Dublin in June 1977 to encourage the improvement of understanding and cooperation, notably through economic collaboration, between Northern Ireland and the Republic. It receives considerable international support from business and financial institutions and has made contacts with individual members of the Irish Government. Its Council members are influential and important figures in their own fields which cover both the private and public sectors. The organisation is genuinely non-political and since its inception has worked hard to promote economic, social and cultural contacts across the border. It has also been active in encouraging an exchange of views between professional bodies, town councils and other agencies from both Northern Ireland and the Republic.

At the beginning of this year, Cooperation North established itself in the United States under the title of Ireland Cooperation North Incorporated. During a visit there in February, its energetic Chairman Dr O'Regan was received by the Minister at the Washington Embassy and by other officials in the United States. He is returning to the United States later this month to seek finance from large foundations there. In view of the Anglo-Irish nature of Cooperation North's work and now its American angle, my Secretary of State thought that Lord Carrington might like to see the attached note of a recent meeting between NIO officials and Dr O'Regan. We are now considering how best to advise him on how he might raise funds in Great Britain.

In view of the relevance of Cooperation North's work to the development of Anglo-Irish relations, I am sending a copy of this letter with its enclosure to Michael Alexander at No.10.

Stanley

S W BOYS SMITH

~~E.R.~~NOTE OF A MEETING WITH DR O'REGAN IN NIO (L) ON MONDAY 11 MAY
AT 12 NOON

Present: Mr Moriarty Dr O'Regan
 Mr Benson
 Mr Abbott

1 After initial courtesies, Dr O'Regan explained that in its first 2½ years Cooperation North had striven to promote economic collaboration and good relations generally between the two parts of Ireland. Their non-political stance was widely accepted North and South, and they now wished to build on their promising start by expanding their operation both in Ireland and also in the United States. The organisation received about a £100,000 a year from banks and industry for its Irish operation. Currently this was largely channelled into their series of study papers on North/South cooperation. An American counterpart - Ireland Cooperation North Incorporated - had recently been launched and Dr O'Regan would seek finance in the United States from large foundations there during his forthcoming trip from 18 May - 20 June. He also hoped to direct interest in, and concern about, Northern Ireland into constructive channels by encouraging support for his organisation's activities. To function effectively Cooperation North now needed some £½ million a year. The organisation could not be seen to be taking money from either the United Kingdom or Irish Governments, but the two Governments could nevertheless complement its work by coordinating their efforts in certain spheres and by preparing public opinion North and South for closer relations between all the people of the island.

2 Dr O'Regan agreed with Mr Moriarty that for well understood political reasons much of this work must be done at one remove from government. The recent successful joint visit to the United States by the Lord Mayors of Dublin and Belfast under Cooperation North's auspices was an example of what could be achieved. But in Dr O'Regan's view, the two Governments could be more positively involved, albeit behind the scenes, by encouraging public bodies to work together in the interests of the island as a whole. For

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example, the Northern Ireland Tourist Board and Bord Fáilte should be seen to be promoting Ireland abroad. There had been excellent cooperation in the mid-1960s but this had been overtaken by the outbreak of violence: that cooperation should be revived. More substantially, the two development agencies in Ireland should collaborate in attracting inward investment; and in international markets goods from the two parts of Ireland should appear side by side. There could be greater cooperation within Ireland. For example, demand for and supply/^{of} University places North and South should be properly articulated: the current vacancies in the New University of Ulster should be filled by students from the Republic which could not meet student demand.

3 In reply, Mr Moriarty said that these points were well taken. Much of what Dr O'Regan had said was in line with the philosophy which underlay the current programme of joint studies. But cooperation was/^a sensitive subject politically. Moreover, at the practical level, there would doubtless be limits on the extent to which the two development agencies could work effectively together given that they were in competition.

4 To keep up Cooperation North's momentum, Dr O'Regan said that a letter would issue shortly to selected individuals in both parts of Ireland eg Chief Executives of state bodies, captains of industry and church leaders, explaining Cooperation North's objectives and seeking their support. The organisation could do much if it had sufficient funds. For example, it needed £20,000 to run a series of conferences: Gallaghers had been asked to help. Thanks to support from the ^governments of the United Kingdom and the Republic, they now had £40,000 from EEC. Hitherto, they had not approached bodies in Great Britain. Could we think who might help?

5 Mr Moriarty undertook to consider who in Great Britain might be worth approaching. We would be happy to give letters of introduction and support. In conclusion, Mr Moriarty encouraged Dr O'Regan to keep in touch with NIO as we would like to help as and when we could.

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6 (Note. Dr O'Regan has recently seen Sir Kenneth Stowe and Mr Bell and he will see HM Ambassador to Dublin shortly. During his visit to the United States in February to establish Ireland Cooperation North Incorporated Dr O'Regan was received by the Minister at the Washington Embassy and also by the staff of BIS New York and NIIDO.)

N.C. ABBOTT

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13 May 1981

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