

**CONFIDENTIAL**

From: THE PRIVATE SECRETARY



NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE

WHITEHALL

LONDON SW1A 2AZ

Ms Alison Smith  
Private Secretary to  
The Lord Privy Seal  
Whitehall  
LONDON  
SW1A 2AT

*Prime Minister* (4)

28 August 1985

*mt*

*Dear Alison,*

MINISTERIAL DEALINGS WITH SINN FEIN MEMBERS

*-A15 AT FLAP*

My predecessor wrote to yours on 17 January 1984 offering detailed advice on the Government's relations with Sinn Fein elected representatives.

At the district council elections in Northern Ireland on 15 May, the total of Sinn Fein councillors increased from 3 to 59. The Secretary of State carefully reconsidered the Government's policy in the light of these results and decided that there should for the time being be no change, although he recognised that the larger number of councillors would pose problems for Ministers and officials.

.....

The guidance enclosed with Mr Hill's letter of 17 January has therefore been revised to cover expected difficulties. These relate primarily to Ministerial visits to district councils and to customary official dealings with councils, and are therefore not directly related to Whitehall Departments. Nevertheless, for consistency and to avoid confusion, it seems wise for all parts of the Government machine to have the same piece of paper to hand. I therefore enclose a copy. The important points to bear in mind are that any request for a meeting between a Minister and a Sinn Fein elected representative (even if part of a larger delegation with other parties) should be refused, and the enquirer should be asked to put his views in writing (paragraph 2); and that a letter from a Sinn Fein elected representative to a Minister should invariably receive a curt, formal and short Private Secretary reply, whilst still dealing adequately with the problem raised by the constituent (paragraph 7).

Although  
**CONFIDENTIAL**

**CONFIDENTIAL**

Although the possibility of their writing to London may be remote, I enclose an up-to-date list of Sinn Fein elected representatives, including the names of their district councillors.

....

I am sending a copy of this letter, as before, to the Private Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the Private Secretaries to other Ministers in charge of Government Departments.

*Yours sincerely,*

*Jonathan Duke-Evans*

J B DUKE-EVANS  
Assistant Private Secretary

**CONFIDENTIAL**

**CONFIDENTIAL**

To : Private Office Staff

#### APPROACHES TO GOVERNMENT BY MEMBERS OF SINN FEIN

1. The purpose of this note is to restate the policy on government contact with Sinn Fein and to offer guidance on handling the problems likely to be encountered as a result of the expected increase in the number of Sinn Fein Councillors following the District Council elections. The note, which supersedes my note of 18 January 1984 is NOT for general distribution. It does not affect the question of access by Sinn Fein to prisons and prisoners, where the policy is unchanged.

#### MEETINGS WITH MINISTERS

2. Any request for a meeting between a Northern Ireland Office Minister and a Sinn Fein MP, Assembly Member or Councillor (even if part of a larger delegation with other parties) should be refused and the enquirer asked to put his views in writing. A request for a meeting from anyone else with links with Sinn Fein should be referred to advice to the Secretary of State's Office who will consult Central Secretariat as necessary. You should expect such a request to be refused and you should therefore give no indication that the request is likely to be granted : you should aim to steer the matter towards correspondence.
3. It should be made clear to any District Council with Sinn Fein members which asks to send a deputation to see the Minister that the deputation should not include any Sinn Fein councillors, who would not be admitted to the meeting.

#### VISITS TO DISTRICT COUNCILS

4. Ministers do not rule out visits to District Councils on their home territory simply because Sinn Fein councillors might be present, but each visit should be carefully considered on its merits. The general aim is to avoid any impression that Ministers are associating with Sinn Fein councillors, while not allowing Sinn Fein in effect to veto Ministerial attendance by announcing their intention to be present. In each case the Minister should be consulted before any decision is reached and should be given all relevant information, including details of any Sinn Fein members likely to be present. The Secretary of

**CONFIDENTIAL**

# CONFIDENTIAL

State's office should also be consulted before arrangements are finalised. Visits to a council with a Sinn Fein chairman should be kept to a minimum.

5. During visits Ministers will wish to ensure that any contact with Sinn Fein members is kept to the minimum and does not stray outside council responsibilities. Ministers will also need to be carefully briefed on, for example, advance identification of Sinn Fein councillors, the extent to which Sinn Fein is involved in the workings of the Council (for example in the committee structure), the policies adopted by Sinn Fein locally, and particular issues on which Ministers may be lobbied by Sinn Fein councillors (as distinct from issues which the Council as a whole might raise). Care will also have to be taken on the handling of photocalls and the stage-managing of visits generally. As far as individual courtesies such as handshakes are concerned this should be left to the Minister's discretion.
6. The advice at paragraphs 4 and 5 also applies to Ministerial attendance at any events where Sinn Fein councillors are also likely to be present eg opening of a new building organised by a council or events organised by an Area Board. Again each case will need to be considered on its merits and the Secretary of State's Office consulted, as necessary. Ministers should however be advised to reject any such invitation where the principal host is expected to be a Sinn Fein representative.

## LETTERS TO MINISTERS

7. Letters from Sinn Fein MPs, Assemblymen and councillors (including those holding an Official Council position) addressed to Ministers should not receive Ministerial replies but should receive curt, formal and short Private Secretary replies (as should a letter from unelected spokesmen and party officers). Letters to Ministers raising constituents' problems must be dealt with adequately in the interests of the constituent but should be brief and formal, avoiding any appearance of friendliness (eg phrases such as "thank you" for your letter of ..... or "I regret" that I am unable to grant your request ..... should be avoided). You need not be reluctant to give a negative answer when a negative answer is justified. For some letters (eg a brief covering letter to a document which has been widely circulated or a particularly abusive letter) a one sentence acknowledgement by a Private Secretary would be appropriate. You should pay particular attention to the style, substance and possible

**CONFIDENTIAL**

political implications of the replies (especially with letters dealing with broad policy issues). If you have any doubt about the content or tone of a letter you should consult Central Secretariat.

#### APPROACHES TO OFFICIALS

8. The normal response to telephone enquiries to Private Offices from Sinn Fein members (or those claiming to speak on their behalf) should be to ask them to put the point in writing. In exceptional cases when the request cannot reasonably be dealt with in correspondence, eg an urgent request for compassionate parole to see a dying relative, Private Offices should refer for advice to the Secretary of State's Private Secretary who will consult Central Secretariat as necessary.
9. Policy is unchanged on approaches from Sinn Fein representatives to local offices etc concerning purely constituency matters which do not appear to raise wider questions of policy. These will be dealt with at local level in the same way as similar approaches from other MPs and Assemblymen or members of the public. Staff have been instructed that if these approaches do go wider or if they have any doubts they should refer them to their Minister's Private Office. You should in turn consult senior officials in your Department and Central Secretariat.
10. Officials who are locally-based have been instructed that they may continue as at present to undertake any necessary liaison with District Councils and individual councillors on matters within the Council's direct responsibilities and on any constituency matters which councillors may raise - this applies irrespective of the political complexion of the Council or Councillor concerned. Separate advice has been issued to senior headquarter officials (Assistant Secretary level and above) about receiving deputations which include Sinn Fein councillors and paying site visits to Councils where it is known that a Sinn Fein councillor would be present. Such head-to-head discussions are to be avoided whenever possible. Ministerial authority will be sought for any proposed meetings of this sort, and the Secretary of State's office should also be informed.

#### GENERAL

11. As at present Ministers will not extend to Sinn Fein the customary courtesies

**CONFIDENTIAL**

**CONFIDENTIAL**

and hospitality given to other elected representatives. Sinn Fein representatives should not be invited to receptions, presentations, seminars or similar events being held by government or public agencies, whether or not a Minister is to be present. Mr Adams should not receive departmental publications etc which are given to other MPs as a matter of courtesy. If however Mr Adams or other Sinn Fein elected representatives makes a specific request for a document which is already generally available (and which would be supplied on request to elected representatives of other political parties) this should normally be supplied. Requests from other Sinn Fein sources should be referred to the place where the document can be purchased. Documents which are available free of charge should normally be made available on request.

**WHITEHALL DEPARTMENTS**

12. United Kingdom Ministers outside the Northern Ireland Office may receive correspondence from members of Sinn Fein (whether an MP, Assembly member, Councillor or in any other capacity with explicit links with Sinn Fein). Where the Sinn Fein connection is apparent, the appropriate response should be a curt, formal and short Private Secretary reply as in the case of NIO Private Offices and Ministers in charge of Whitehall Departments have been advised accordingly.



P CARVILL  
Central Secretariat  
20 May 1985

/JH

**CONFIDENTIAL**

## MEMBERS OF SINN FEIN ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES

### Members of Parliament (1):-

Gerry Adams MP - West Belfast

### Members of the Northern Ireland Assembly (5):-

Gerry Adams - West Belfast  
Owen Carron - Fermanagh/South Tyrone  
Danny Morrison - Mid-Ulster  
Jim McAllister - Armagh  
Martin McGuinness - Londonderry

### District Council Members (59):-

Ivan Barr	- Strabane District Council
Lughaidh MacGiolla Bhrighde	- Magherafelt District Council
Hugh Brady	- Derry City Council
Tommy Carroll	- Armagh District Council
Seamus Cassidy	- Dungannon District Council
Anita Cavlan	- Dungannon District Council
Paul Corrigan	- Fermanagh District Council
Patrick Cox	- Fermanagh District Council
Brendan Francis Christopher Curran	- Newry & Mourne District Council
Brendan Patrick Curran	- Craigavon Borough Council
Henry Cushinan	- Antrim Borough Council
John Davey	- Magherafelt District Council
Gerard Doherty	- Derry City Council
Joseph Doherty	- Magherafelt District Council
Brian Duffin	- Dungannon District Council
Elizabeth Fitzsimons	- Belfast City Council
Damien Gibney	- Lisburn Borough Council
Michael Hasson	- Limavady District Council
Margaret Hogan	- Ballymoney District Council
Teresa Mary Holland	- Belfast City Council
Sean Keenan	- Belfast City Council
Seamus Kerr	- Omagh District Council

Eamon Larkin	- Newry & Mourne District Council
Bobby Lavery	- Belfast City Council
Brendan Aodh Lewis	- Newry & Mourne District Council
Cormac McAleer	- Omagh District Council
Patrick Pearse McAleer	- Cookstown District Council
Jim McAllister	- Newry & Mourne District Council
Patsy McBrien	- Fermanagh District Council
Vincent McCaffrey	- Fermanagh District Council
Brian McCann	- Craigavon District Council
Francis McCarry	- Moyle District Council
Hugh McDowell	- Down District Council
James McIlduff (or McElduff?)	- Omagh District Council
Bernard McFadden	- Derry City Council
Michael McGonigle	- Limavady City Council
Gerard McGuigan	- Belfast City Council
Dodie McGuinness	- Derry City Council
Charles McHugh	- Strabane District Council
Sean McKnight	- Belfast City Council
Mitchell McLaughlin	- Derry City Council
Gerry McMenamin	- Omagh District Council
Francis Gerald McNally	- Cookstown District Council
Thomas McNamee	- Strabane District Council
Francis Mackey	- Omagh District Council
Stephen Maguire	- Fermanagh District Council
Thomas Maguire	- Fermanagh District Council
Alex Maskey	- Belfast City Council
Francis Molloy	- Dungannon District Council
Thomas Murray	- Fermanagh District Council
Chrisopher Neeson	- Cookstown District Council
Tony O'Driscoll	- Cookstown District Council



Hugh O'Neill

Cathal Quinn

John F Regan

Patrick Joseph Rice

Geraldine Ritchie

Patrick Anthony Toner

Patrick Pearse Young

- Fermanagh District Council
- Omagh District Council
- Moyle District Council
- Lisburn Borough Council
- Down District Council
- Magherafelt District Council
- Newry & Mourne District Council

Ireland Pt 20

Situation,

