

SUBJECT CCMASIAK <sup>hie</sup>

bc PC.

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

6 February 1986

Dear Jim,

## PRIME MINISTER'S LUNCH WITH NORTHERN IRELAND REPRESENTATIVES

The Prime Minister gave lunch yesterday to a number of Northern Ireland representatives (list enclosed) for a general talk about the way ahead in the province. It turned into a very open and useful discussion. This letter summarises some of the main points made.

- there was no doubting the real sense of grievance and let-down among the Protestant community about the lack of consultation with them during negotiation of the Anglo-Irish Agreement. It would not have rankled so much but for the fact that the SDLP had been consulted.

- the recognition in an internationally-registered agreement of Northern Ireland's status did not cut much ice with the Protestant majority. Nor did the promise of improved security cooperation. People tended to see the Agreement as a success for IRA violence and SDLP abstentionism.

- nonetheless there were some chinks of light. The real concerns in Northern Ireland were with jobs and other bread and butter issues. There was evidence of widespread willingness to go on doing business with Northern Ireland Ministers. There was a grudging recognition that the Agreement should be given a try, if only because there was no alternative.

- this heightened the importance of the Government making clear that there was no going back on the Agreement. Any shadow of doubt on this would lose the Government all credibility.

- it had to be recognised that those who would be prepared to tolerate the Agreement had no political mouthpiece. They were all caught up in the Unionist political machine. The conclusion from this was that the Government had no alternative but to listen to the Unionists' elected representatives.



- some of the latter were not as impervious to change as it might appear. But although different approaches were being discussed by the politicians, all were at present based on the assumption that the Anglo-Irish Agreement must go.

- looking to the future, three main steps were identified for consideration by the Government: more sensitive implementation of the Agreement and greater consultation with the Unionists: a firmer line with the Republic and the SDLP: and moves towards devolution.

- on the first point, it was suggested that the Agreement needed to be more Anglo and less Irish. There should be more structured consultation with the Unionists. And Northern Ireland MPs should be given a bigger role at Westminster. So far as possible legislation affecting Northern Ireland should be dealt with in exactly the same way as for the rest of the United Kingdom, in order to diminish the feeling that Northern Ireland was different.

- a firmer line with the Republic and the SDLP was regarded as the most pressing requirement. It was widely thought that the Republic Government were intruding into areas where they had no right to intervene. There was a real risk that they would wreck the Agreement if they pushed too far too quickly. Action needed by HMG was to react publicly and vocally when Irish Ministers over-stepped the mark, to press the Irish government to make some concessions (the only specific one mentioned was to suppress the Secretariat), and to urge them to make the SDLP come out with a public statement of support for the police and the security forces.

- on devolution, it was argued that it was vital to give politicians in Northern Ireland a useful and practical role. Earlier schemes for devolution and regional government should be looked out again: a number of useful ideas had been discussed in the early 1970s. There was some disagreement about the form of devolution. Some supported the Assembly. Others thought there was no place in Northern Ireland for a legislature: what was needed was a regional government tier broadly on the lines of a County Council. There was general support for some form of power-sharing (referred to as shared responsibility) though without the trappings of a Council of Ireland.

- it would be helpful if the Prime Minister could herself find a way to address the people of Northern Ireland.

The conclusions drawn from the discussion at the end by one of the participants was that there could be no going back on the Agreement; the Government must work very hard to change perceptions of it in the North; the exploitation of the Agreement by the Republic needed to be reined in; arrangements should be explored for devolution with built in protection for the minority; and the SDLP must not be

allowed to believe that they could achieve their aims simply by standing pat.

I am copying this letter to Joan MacNaughton (Lord President's Office), Len Appleyard (Foreign and Commonwealth Office), David Morris (Lord Privy Seal's Office), Stephen Boys Smith (Home Office), Richard Mottram (Ministry of Defence), Murdo Maclean (Chief Whip's Office), and Michael Stark (Cabinet Office).

*yours sincerely,*

*Charles Powell*

C D POWELL

Jim Daniell, Esq.,  
Northern Ireland Office



LIST OF GUESTS ATTENDING THE LUNCHEON TO BE GIVEN BY THE  
PRIME MINISTER ON WEDNESDAY, 5 FEBRUARY 1986 AT 12.30 PM FOR 1.00 PM

The Prime Minister

The Right Reverend the Lord Bishop of Down and Dromore

The Right Reverend the Lord Bishop of Clogher

Mr. W.R.G. Martin

President, Ulster Farmers Union

Professor Desmond Rea

Department of Business Studies,  
Ulster University. Convenor of  
important discussion groups  
seeking cross community political  
progress

Mr. V. Haslett

Insurance Broker; Chairman  
NI Sports Council

Sir Peter Froggatt

Vice Chancellor, Queens  
University

Mr. N.G.D. Fergusson

Chairman, NI Housing Executive;  
ex UUP politician

Mr. Dawson Moreland

Ormeau Bakery; business  
interests in farm feedstocks  
etc; Chairman, Health Central  
Services Agency

Rt. Hon. Tom King, MP

Mr. Charles Powell



To Charles Powell  
CWP 17/1.

WITH

THE COMPLIMENTS OF THE  
PRIVATE SECRETARY

NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE

WHITEHALL

LONDON SW1A 2AZ

Neil Ward.

MC → W McMullan  
for 595

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THE BISHOP OF CLOGHER  
The Rt. Rev. Gordon McMullan

The Rt. Hon. Tom King, M.P.,  
Secretary of State for Northern Ireland,  
Stormont Castle,  
Belfast. 4.

8<sup>th</sup> February, 1986.

Dear Secretary of State,

May I thank you for the opportunity of meeting the Prime Minister a few days ago. I found it not only a pleasant occasion in terms of personal friendship and hospitality but one which I valued particularly because it provided the opportunity to share with the Prime Minister something of what decent, honourable, law-abiding, and basically reasonable people in Clogher Diocese feel and think.

I know from past experience that having suffered so much over the past sixteen years it has a powerful psychological effect for those people to know that their emotional pain is personally explained to those who occupy the chief places of decision making in Northern Ireland and Westminster. This also helps to ease any temptation to think that only strident and militant voices and attitudes receive any notice at top political levels.

Again thank you for last Wednesday's opportunity.

Yours sincerely + Gordon Clogher



# Housing Executive

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The Housing Centre  
2 Adelaide Street  
Belfast BT2 8PB  
Telephone: Belfast 240588

Chairman  
N. G. D. Ferguson DL

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The Right Honourable Tom King Esq MP  
Secretary of State for Northern Ireland  
Northern Ireland Office  
Stormont Castle  
BELFAST  
BT4

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date 10th February 1986 your reference

our reference



*Dear Secretary of State,*

I greatly appreciated the opportunity to talk to you at luncheon last Wednesday, and am grateful for my inclusion in a most interesting discussion after lunch. Thank you so much.

Except to say to you then that the Board of the Housing Executive and I should very much like you to come and visit us, I did not think it appropriate to raise the subject of housing any further.

However, as you will already know, the level of funding for next year, and indications for subsequent years, have caused us disappointment and concern, and we would welcome a chance for an exchange of views.

May I now therefore, invite you to meet the Board on some mutually convenient date, when I hope that as well as having time for discussion you would lunch with us.

Yours sincerely,

*Norman Ferguson.*

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N.G.D. FERGUSON  
Chairman

