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The arguments are well set out. RID would like to proceed. A good speech could be put together. We would need to avoid anticipating the Presidency. The No 10 dimension is the determinant.

From: Edward Oakden
Date: 24 September 1997
cc: PS/Mr Henderson
Mr Tebbit
Mr Budd
Mr Richards
Heads: EUD(I)
EUD(E)
EUD(P)
CFSPD
RID
News
Mr Adams, Cabinet Office
HMA, DUBLIN
Mr Parker, UKREP

EW 24/9
Mr Jones Parry
Private Secretary

SECRETARY OF STATE'S SPEECH IN DUBLIN: 3 NOVEMBER

Problem

1. Whether to maintain the Foreign Secretary's commitment to speak to the Irish Institute of Economic Affairs.

Recommendation

2. That you discuss further with PS/No 10, drawing on the arguments below.

3. From the FCO viewpoint, there is a strong bilateral case for going ahead; and a reasonable, though not overwhelming, EU case for doing so. RID, News Dept, EUD(E), EUD(P), CFSPD and UKRep agree.

Argument

4. We discussed last week and you requested further advice. The FCO arguments for going ahead are:

- the Taoiseach has agreed to speak alongside Mr Cook, on the latter's first visit to Dublin as Foreign Secretary; *See 1 at 6 now 1 Burke*
- there is a consequent risk of Irish slight if the Foreign Secretary were now to cancel, including by Ahern personally;
- the Foreign Secretary has recently stressed the importance of better bilateral relations, both intrinsically and as a way of improving the climate for exchanges over Northern Ireland; and the importance of personal contacts between Ministers to this end. The Prime Minister has endorsed this (the Secretary of State's minute of 16 July to the Prime Minister and the Prime Minister's letter to Cabinet colleagues of 22 July).

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- the Institute have already changed both the date and the title at our request. Although their seminar is still focused on the British Presidency, the title of the Foreign Secretary's speech is now the looser "Towards a People's Europe";
- there remains a good case for a formal statement of the government's approach to Europe, building on the Hamburg speech. This would flesh out what "a Europe for the People" really means, and need not be specifically in terms of the Presidency. In particular, it need not go into the five Presidency priorities, covering rather what other member states will see as the leading items on the EU's agenda, especially employment, Agenda 2000 and perhaps EMU;
- alternatively, the Foreign Secretary could tackle a primarily foreign policy focused theme, about some of the CFSP and other external challenges facing the EU (including, but not only, in our Presidency), which would have a shorter EU internal section towards the end;

5. The arguments against remain real. It is not necessary to give a speech - there are other ways of getting our message across - and there is a danger of pre-emption. But the Foreign Secretary will be conscious of this, and should be able to deflect such questioning. There can be no complaint about his talking on either CFSP subjects or the approaching EU agenda, and we should try to avoid a position where we cannot speak at all about British aims for the Presidency until the launch. It is the five themes that we need to keep back. We understand that the Prime Minister is unlikely to want to speak for more than ten minutes at the launch, on both the logo and the themes, so he will not have time for much detail.

6. Bilateral considerations suggest that the balance of argument from the FCO viewpoint clearly favours going ahead. The issue is whether No 10's concerns are strong enough to outweigh this. If the decision were to pull the plug, better that this should happen quickly.

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Stop press

1. Since Mr Jones Pary signed this off, The Embassy in Dublin have reported that The Irish Foreign Minister, not the Taoiseach, will speak alongside The Foreign Secretary.
2. This somewhat weakens the CONFIDENTIAL case for The Foreign Secretary's attendance. But the bilateral balance is still firmly in favour of his going. The EU case is as before. In short, same recommendation, but a little less strong. No 10 will still be determinative.

Edward Oakden 25/11