



**Towards  
a National Policy  
for Gaelic**

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**Comunn na Gaidhlig**



## Appendix 3

**Questions to the Secretary of State, the Rt. Hon George Younger, at Co-Labhairt 1985, on July 19th 1985, at Sabhal Mor Ostaig, Skye.**

**Mrs Kathleen MacAskill, Councillor, Western Isles Islands Council:**

The Secretary of State has reminded us that responsibility for education rests primarily with the local authorities. Nevertheless, the S.E.D. gives positive directions to such authorities on most educational matters. In the light of recent initiatives, does the Secretary of State now accept that the time is right for the S.E.D. to give the kind of positive lead which will encourage local authorities to devise and implement a positive education policy towards Gaelic?

**Secretary of State:**

As I said in my speech, the initiative has to come from local education authorities. We are anxious to do what we can to help them with discussion and advice and help, and, if any education committee or council wishes to make contact with, and discuss, or get guidance from the S.E.D., they will have my warmest blessings to do so and I will make sure that my officials in the Scottish Education Department are ready and willing to enter into a close dialogue with education authorities to discuss what may be needed for Gaelic education. I think that is the most positive way forward for us at the moment.

**Mr Duncan Grant, Councillor, Highland Regional Council:**

Will the Secretary of State indicate his views on the question of specific grants to local authorities for the Gaelic language? In the past, specific grants for Gaelic have been refused by the Scottish Office because of COSLA's opposition to that principle. COSLA's view on this matter has now changed in response to the Montgomery Committee's report and it now approves of specific grants for local authorities. In view of this will the Secretary of State give favourable consideration to specific grants for Gaelic?

**Secretary of State:**

Yes, I too was encouraged to see, in the response of COSLA to the Montgomery Committee, that there appears to be a shift in view. Perhaps I should say, on COSLA's behalf, that this was not an anti-Gaelic move of theirs — they don't like specific grants at all, for anything. But I do think it is encouraging that they have taken this response to the Montgomery Report and I am therefore proposing to ask my officials now to enter into discussions with COSLA as to whether this can be extended to the Gaelic field. I can't anticipate what response we shall get but I thought you might like to know that I am asking my officials to make contact with them and to discuss this with them.

**Mr Aonghas MacNeacail, Highland Society of London:**

It has been made quite plain here today that the Secretary of State accepts that the Gaelic language has an important role in everyday affairs in Scotland, particularly in the Highlands and Islands. Would the Secretary of State now accept that the language has a status as one of the two languages that are spoken in Scotland that should receive official recognition as an official language by Parliament? There are many differences between the treatment, for instance, of Gaelic and Welsh, and this is one of them. Would the Secretary of State now agree that the time has come when official recognition should be officially given to the Gaelic language?

**Secretary of State:**

I would like to think about the implications of that a bit more deeply. What I would like to do is to move forward in using Gaelic for documents and so on, where it is appropriate and useful to do so, by way of

edging forward the frontiers. The report which is due shortly about the school in Uist is to be published in both languages, for example: I would like to edge that kind of development forward and see how we can extend the frontiers. At the moment, I would not think it would be appropriate yet to go completely for dual language recognition but I would certainly try to move a bit in that direction.

**Mr Duncan MacLeod, Secretary, Association for Television and Film in the Celtic Countries:**

As the Secretary of State has indicated this afternoon, we are at a time when many initiatives are being taken in support of Gaelic, but we have to recognise that the awesome power of English language programming on four television channels can negate all the other efforts being made for the language. Would the Secretary of State, therefore, be prepared to introduce legislation, based on the principles that established the Welsh Fourth Channel Authority, to make it possible for the broadcasting authorities to co-operate, with a view to providing a regular daily Gaelic language television service on a single dedicated channel?

**Secretary of State:**

That would be an absolute giant of a step to take in a oner and I think we are quite a long way from that at the moment in Scotland. I don't think you can just translate the Welsh situation over like that. The constitutional position is this: the Government's role is to fund the BBC, and the BBC takes its own decisions as to the balance of such things. I can say the Scottish ministers support and applaud the recent initiatives for increasing the number of Gaelic programmes. I again think that the appropriate course for us at the moment is to encourage that. I have heard some interesting ideas in the course of the last twelve hours — last night I was talking to some of your number about this — some interesting ideas about how it might be possible to get the various channels together. I would like to think about those ideas a bit more following the talk we had last night to see if there is anything I could do to stimulate or help such a move, but I quite accept that we do want to keep on pressing for as much more of the air for those in the Gaelic speaking areas as we can.

**Professor Nigel Grant, Department of Education, Glasgow University:**

Two and a half years ago some of your officials in the S.E.D., in discussions with Comhairle nan Eilean, declared that the Department of Education was "neutral towards the survival of Gaelic in Scotland". This was, I accept, merely a personal statement by an official, but it came to be understood by many authorities as representing the official position of the S.E.D. Since then, many of us have tried to get research approved on Gaelic and we were told, "Ah well, you see Gaelic is a politically sensitive issue." Can we take it from the welcome remarks of the Secretary of State today that the S.E.D. is now taking a positive view towards Gaelic and is no longer neutral?

**Secretary of State:**

Certainly my attitude towards Gaelic is by no means neutral. It is very important, however, to make clear that being "not neutral" does not mean that you are then able to produce out of a hat umpteen expensive rabbits, but certainly neutrality is not, I don't think, the name of the game at all. Many of us — certainly I do — feel very strongly that we must do what we can to help you in what you are doing and certainly within the limits of the resources that we have, we will do what we can. I hope that you will feel we have moved in some way towards this.



**John Farquhar Munro, SDP Representative:**

In considering the level of specific grants for Gaelic will the Secretary of State ensure that any provision made for specific grants will be in addition to the current provision being made for local authority expenditure and that separate provision is made in the White Paper for Public Expenditure?

**Secretary of State:**

I cannot guarantee that any money allocated to specific grants will always be extra to other provision. That does not mean to say that it is never going to be, but I couldn't guarantee that it always would be, because we have to negotiate with all the other departments of Government a global sum and we have to decide whether any specific grant would be extra to it or within it. I couldn't pre-empt that decision now, but I now know what is your view.

**Rev. Jack MacArthur, Conference Chairman:**

We are very grateful for the frankness and openness of the Secretary of State with us this afternoon, in a very difficult area, and I believe that, in being with us, you have helped us greatly in clarifying our thinking.

There was one other thing that several folk have raised with me, both those present and not present, which has been quite controversial over the years — that is, the long standing problem of road signs. I have never quite understood why road signs have become the cause celebre that they are but one has got to recognise the fact that they have a symbolic value for people.

To set the record straight — and to get this out of the way once and for all — it would be useful to us to know your own attitude to Gaelic or bilingual road signs, and we would ask you to have your officials look at the situation and have discussions with people in other areas who have, in some cases, decades of experience of bilingual road signs, so that we can get this resolved one way or another.

**Secretary of State:**

Having travelled from Broadford Airfield to here several times in the last twenty four hours, it seems to me there are Gaelic road signs here already!

Could we just — it seems heresy to say so in this hall — for a few seconds forget about Gaelic and talk about road signs. Road signs are a perpetual problem — and this has nothing to do with Gaelic at all — because of the need to try and keep them simple and clear. I've had more trouble over the years than I can think of trying to reconcile the conflict between people who have reasons for having hotel signs or advertising for communities that get by-passed, and the absolutely proper wish of the road sign managers to keep road signs easily understood and not cluttered too much with "so and so's tea-room" and "Do come to Pittenweem" and all that sort of stuff littering the road sides. So it isn't an anti-Gaelic movement.

I certainly am prepared to entertain proposals for bilingual road signs and look at them sympathetically wherever we can without causing unnecessary difficulties. I am as sceptical as you are about the accidents point, I must admit. Without giving any blanket assurance that we're going to litter the whole place with them, I would say that I'm prepared to entertain sensible proposals for bilingual road signs because I don't see the slightest bit of harm in it, and I can't see how anybody does. So, with that sort of sympathetic response, I hope that you will feel that, if you produce some sensible proposals, I will at least look at these very open-mindedly.





**Poilisidh Nàiseanta**  
**airson na Gàidhlig**

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**Comunn na Gàidhlig**



## Paipear Taice 3

Ceistean gu Rùnaire na Stàite, An t-Uas. Seòras Younger, BP, aig Co-Labhairt 1985, ann an Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, air an 19mh de'n Iuchar 1985.

**A Bhean-Uas. Caitlin NicAsgaill, Comhairle nan Eilean:** Tha Rùnaire na Stàite air a chur 'nar cuimhne gur ann air na h-ùghdarrasan ionadail a tha am prìomh uallach airson foghlam. A dh'aindeoin sin, bidh Roinn Foghlam na h-Alba a' toirt stiùireadh do na h-ùghdarrasan air iomadh gnothaich comh-cheangailte ri foghlam. A bheil Rùnaire na Stàite ag aontachadh gum bitheadh e iomchaidh do Roinn Foghlam na h-Alba stiùireadh de'n t-seòrsa sin a thoirt do na Roinnean a thaobh na Gàidhlig agus am brosnachadh gus poilisidhean a dhealbhadh a bheir taic do fhoghlam Gàidhlig?

### Rùnaire na Stàite:

Mar a thubhairt mi anns an òraid agam, 'sann bho na h-ùghdarrasan ionadail fhèin a dh'fheumas an t-iarrrtas tighinn an toiseach. Tha sinne airson a h-uile cuideachadh a thoirt dhaibh agus, ma thig comaididh foghlaim no comhairle sam bith gu Roinn Foghlam na h-Alba a' sireadh taic no stiùireadh, nì mise cinnteach gun tèid fàilte a chur orra agus a h-uile cuideachadh a thoirt dhaibh. Tha mi a' smaoineachadh gur e sin an dòigh as fheumaile aig an àm seo.

### Maighstir Donnchadh Grannd, Comhairle Roinn na Gaidhealtachd:

An toir Rùnaire na Stàite dhuinn a bheachd mu thimcheall taic-airgeid shònraichte do na Roinnean airson na Gàidhlig? Roimhe seo, bha Oifis na h-Alba a' diùltadh taic shònraichte do'n Ghàidhlig air son gu robh COSLA 'na aghaidh. A rèir na freagairt a thug iad do Aithisg MhicGumaraid tha COSLA air am beachd atharrachadh air a' ghnòthaich seo agus tha iad a-nise deònach gabhail ri taic-airgeid shònraichte. Air sgàth seo, an cuir Rùnaire na Stàite aonta ri taic-airgeid shònraichte do'n Ghàidhlig?

### Rùnaire na Stàite:

Bha mise cuideachd toilichte fhaicinn gu bheil COSLA, a rèir choltais, air am beachd atharrachadh air a' cheist seo. 'S dòcha gum bu chòir dhomh a ràdh, as leth COSLA, gu robh iad an aghaidh taic-airgeid shònraichte airson rud sam bith, chan ann a-mhàin airson na Gàidhlig. Tha am freagairt a thug iad air Aithisg MhicGumaraid glè ghealltanach agus, mar sin, tha mi a' dol a dh'iarraidh air m'oifigich bruidhinn ri COSLA air co-dhiù a tha seo a' gabhail a-steach na Gàidhlig no nach eil. Chan urrainn dhomh a ràdh fhathast dè am freagairt a gheibh sinn bhuapa, ach bidh sinn a' bruidhinn riutha co-dhiù.

### Maighstir Aonghas MacNeacail, Comunn Gaidhealach Lunnain:

Tha e air a bhith glè fhollaiseach an seo an-diugh gu bheil Rùnaire na Stàite a' gabhail ris gu bheil àite shònraichte aig a' Ghàidhlig ann an Alba, agus gu h-àraidh air a' Ghaidhealtachd. A bheil Rùnaire na Stàite a-nise deònach inbhe a thoirt do'n Ghàidhlig, fo'n lagh, mar thè de'n dà chanan oifigeil a tha air an labhairt ann an Alba? A bheil e deònach a' Ghàidhlig a dheanamh co-ionnan ris a' Chuimris, anns an t-seadh seo?

### Rùnaire na Stàite:

Bu toigh leam barrachd tìde airson smaoineachadh mu'n sin agus na dh'fhaodadh e a bhith a' ciallachadh. 'Se an rud a bu thoigh leam an-dràsda, barrachd a dheanamh ann a bhith a' cleachdadh na Gàidhlig ann an paipearan oifigeil agus mar sin, airson na crìochan a ghluasad a-mach na h-uiread. Mar eisimpleir, bidh an aithisg a tha Roinn an Fhoghlaim a' cur a-mach air sgoil Staoinibrig a dh'aithghearr air a sgrìobhadh anns an dà chànan. Bu thoigh leam barrachd fhaicinn de rudan de'n t-seòrsa sin. Ach chan eil mi smaoineachadh gum bitheadh e iomchaidh fhathast inbhe oifigeil a thoirt do'n Ghàidhlig.

### Maighstir Donnchadh MacLeòid, Rùnaire, An Comunn airson Telebhisean agus Film anns na Dùthchannan Ceilteach:

Mar a tha Rùnaire na Stàite air a chur 'nar sùilean an-diugh, tha sinn beò aig àm nuair a tha mòran ga dheanamh gus a' Ghàidhlig a neartachadh. Ach, feumaidh sinn cuimhneachadh gu faod a' bhuaidh chumhachdach a tha aig telebhisean Beurla — air ceithir stèiseanan — na h-oidhirpean sin uile a chur an neo-fheum. Air sgàth sin, a bheil Rùnaire na Stàite deònach an lagh atharrachadh airson gum bi e comasach do na h-ùghdarrasan craolaidh co-obrachadh gus seirbheis chumbhalach telebhisein a chur a-mach anns a' Ghàidhlig, air sianal sònraichte, leithid a' Cheathramh Sianal anns a' Chuimrigh?

### Rùnaire na Stàite:

'Se ceum uabhasach mòr a bhiodh an sin agus saoilidh mi gu bheil sinn astar fada bho'n leithid a rud ann an Alba fhathast. Chan ionnan idir an suidheachadh anns a' Chuimrigh agus an seo. A thaobh an lagha, tha am BBC a' faighinn a' chuid airgeid bho'n Riaghaltas, ach 'se am BBC fhèin a tha a' tighinn gu co-dhùnadh air an seòrsa phrògraman a chuirear a-mach. Tha sinne glè thoilichte mu na h-oidhirpean a thathas air a dheanamh o chionn ghoirid air barrachd phrògraman Gàidhlig a chraoladh. A-rithist, tha mi de'n bheachd gur e an rud a tha iomchaidh dhuinne ar taic a chur ris na h-oidhirpean sin.

Chuala mi beachd no dhà glè inntinneach an-raoir mu dhòighean anns am faodadh BBC agus IBA co-obrachadh. Bu toigh leam greiseag a thoirt a' smaoineachadh air na beachdan sin, a dh'fhaicinn am bi e comasach dhomh cuideachadh le an toirt gu buil.

### An t-Ard-Oll. Niall Grannd, Roinn an Fhoghlaim, Oilthigh Ghlaschu

O chionn dà bhliadhna gu leth, thuit oifigeach o Roinn nan Fhoghlaim, ann an còmhraidh ri Comhairle nan Eilean, nach robh an Roinn "a' gabhail taobh seach taobh air a' Ghàidhlig". Ged nach robh an seo ach beachd pearsanta, tha daoine air a ghabhail mar bharail oifigeil Roinn an Fhoghlaim. On uairsin, nuair a tha cuid againn air a bhith a' sireadh airgeid airson rannsachadh mu'n Ghàidhlig, thathas air a ràdh ruinn gur e "gnothach polaiticeach" a tha anns a' Ghàidhlig. A bheil mi a' tuigsinn, bho na rudan taiceil a thuit Rùnaire na Stàite an-diugh, gu bheil Roinn an Fhoghlaim a-nise a' dol a thighinn a-mach "air taobh" na Gàidhlig?

### Rùnaire na Stàite:

Chan eil mise idir coingeas a thaobh de a dh'èireas do'n Ghàidhlig. Ach bu chòir dhomh a dheanamh soilleir, ged nach eil, nach eil seo idir a' ciallachadh gun urrainn dhuinn airgead a thoirt seachad nach eil againn. Tha mòran dhinn a' faireachdainn gun bu chòir dhuinn ar cuideachadh uiread 's as urrainn dhuinn, an taobh-a-staigh de na crìochan a tha oirnn a thaobh airgeid, agus nì sinn sin: tha sinn an dòchas gu bheil sibh a' faicinn gun do rinn sinn na h-uiread mu thràth.

### Maighstir Iain Fearchar Rothach, Rìochdaire an SDP:

Ann a bhith a' tighinn gu co-dhùnadh a thaobh an taic-airgeid shònraichte, an dean Rùnaire na Stàite cinnteach gum bi an t-airgead a chuirear air leth airson seo a bharrachd air an airgead a thathas a' cur air leth mu thràth mu choinneamh Cosgaisean an Riaghaltais Ionadail?

### Rùnaire na Stàite:

Chan urrainn dhomh gealltainn gum bi an t-airgead a chuirear fa chomhair taic shònraichte an còmhnaidh a bharrachd air a' chosgais àbhaisteach — ged a bhitheas uaireannan — a chionn gu bheil againn ri tighinn gu aonta ri roinnean eile de'n Riaghaltas a thaobh na cosgais gu h-iomlan agus chan urrainn dhomh a ràdh dè an co-dhùnadh a bhitheas air na còmhraidhean sin.



**An t-Urr. Iain MacArtair, Fear-Cathrach a' Cho-Labhairt:**

Tha sinn dha rìreabh taingeil do Rùnaire na Stàite airson a bhith cho fosgailte agus cho taiceil ruinn; tha sibh air soilleireachadh mòr a chur air a' chùis dhuinn.

Bha aon cheist eile agam — ceist a tha daoine eile air a bhith a' cur riumsa o àm gu àm — agus 'se sin soidhnichean-rathaid dà-chànanach. Chan eil mi buileach cinnteach carson a tha faireachdainn cho làidir aig daoine mu'n ghnòthaich seo, ach chan eil rian nach eil soidhnichean-rathaid 'nan samhla air rudeigin nas cudtromaiche. Airson an ghnòthach a chur an dàrna taobh, bhitheadh sinn 'nur comain nan toireadh sibh dhuinn ur beachd fhèin air soidhnichean-rathaid dà-chànanach agus nan iarraidh sibh air na h-oifigich agaibh sealltainn air an t-suidheachadh, anns an dùthaich seo agus ann an ceàrnaidhean eile far a bheil daoine air a bhith cleachdte ri soidhnichean dà-chànanach o chionn deugachadh a bhliadhnaichean.

**Rùnaire na Stàite:**

Ann a bhith a' siubhal air ais agus air adhart eadar an t-Athleathann agus seo, bha dùil agamsa gu robh soidhnichean-rathaid Gàidhlig agaibh mu thràth!

Diochuimhnicheamaid mu'n Ghàidhlig airson mionaid. Tha duilgheadas an còmhnaidh againn a thaobh soidhnichean-rathaid, a' feuchainn ri rèite a dheanamh eadar daoine a tha ag iarraidh sanasan a chur aig taobh an rathaid, a' toirt seachad fiosrachadh air caochla chuspairean, agus an fheadhainn a tha a' cur suas na soidhnichean, oir tha iadsan airson gum bi h-uile soidhne cho faicsinneach agus furasda a leughadh is a ghabhas. Tha mise deònach èisdeachd ri iarrtas reusanta sam bith air seo. Chan eil mi a' faicinn cron sam bith anna — a thaobh sàbhailteachd, mar eisimpleir. Tha m'inntinn fosgailte mu'n chùis.