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Suggested draft reply to Mr. Wilson's
opening words of welcome

Thank you, Prime Minister, for your very kind words of welcome.

On the occasion of this, my first visit to you in my new rôle as Head of Government, I should like to assure you that I shall continue to pursue the policy of my predecessor, Mr. Lemass, in seeking to promote closer and friendlier co-operation between our two countries to the mutual advantage of each.

I am mindful of the steady progress that has been made in this direction in recent years and, in particular, I am very conscious of the many significant steps that have been taken in the immediate past in which you personally, Prime Minister, played such a decisive rôle. If, after the centuries of our troubled past, our two countries can ~~continue~~ advance in growing co-operation, friendship and harmony towards the solution of our mutual problems, then I believe that we together can serve as an example to the rest of this strife-torn world. This is something for which posterity would be ever grateful. May I therefore express the hope that you will continue to take a direct personal interest in Anglo-Irish relations so that working together we may write happier chapters of history for our two islands which geography has placed so close together.

Footnote

Amongst the "significant steps" referred to above were:

- (1) the return of the Casement remains
- (2) the Free Trade Area Agreement
- (3) the return of the 1916 Flag, and
- (4) the pressures, public and private, brought to bear on the Stormont régime.

It is thought better not to refer individually to the steps in the opening remarks, particularly as knowledge about the fourth item is imprecise, and it might be impolitic to mention it at this point. It might be more appropriate to touch on it in the course of the discussion on relations with Northern Ireland.