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Note:

In the course of a discussion with the Minister arising out of correspondence with Fathers Faul and Murray of Armagh, the Minister raised the question of our attitude towards the Irish National Caucus. He distinguished between it and Noraid, which was of course beyond the Pale, and wondered whether we might not look again at the Caucus. We should approach the matter cautiously so as not to alarm Paisley.

I replied that this was a question on which we should get the views of the Embassy in Washington but that I saw difficulties and reasons for caution. The INC was controlled by men (Fr. MacManus and Dr. Burns-O'Brien) who had made extreme and bellicose statements in the past. The Minister observed that that was some time ago. I said that even if they now claimed to have altered their attitudes, we would have to consider the effect on Unionist opinion of a rapprochement between the Caucus and us. Secondly, INC policy in favour of "peace and reconciliation" was different from ours - they apparently favoured a "peace forum" involving, in theory, all groups including I.R.A. and U.D.A. gunmen and apparently did not share our view (or that of the SDLP) regarding the value of an acceptable partnership administration in Northern Ireland as a first aim. Thirdly, they shared and contributed to the common Irish-American view that Catholics in Northern Ireland suffered grave injustices and impaired human rights and were in a classic colonial situation - a view which was at variance with the facts (while of course we took full account of certain residual and justified grievances). I remarked finally that it would be very difficult to arrange a discreet rapprochement - the INC was in the business of publicity and would give maximum exposure to any approach from us.

When I referred to the primacy, where we were concerned, of our contacts with Speaker O'Neill and his friends, the Minister said that he would like to make a quick visit to the States to see Mr. O'Neill. He envisaged an in and out trip so as to make his number with the Speaker and to confirm his desire to maintain close relations with him. The Minister would not envisage contacts with

any other Irish-American individuals or groups. I noted the Minister's proposal and said we would examine its feasibility - consulting the Embassy - and report back. If the visit were to be to Washington it would be for formal reasons necessary to envisage a call on Secretary of State Vance. In regard to Mr. O'Neill I mentioned his influential position vis-à-vis the Administration. In comparison, the INC came nowhere. I referred to Minister O'Kennedy's attitude to relations with the INC which was that they needed us far more than we needed them.

John

D.M. Neligan

16 January, 1980