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**Title:** Copy letter from Donal O’Sullivan, Ambassador of Ireland to Great Britain, to HJ McCann, Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs, reporting a meeting with Sir Stewart Crawford, Deputy Under-Secretary of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, regarding developments in Northern Ireland and the appointment of William Whitelaw as Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

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Confidential

April 6th 1972

Dear Secretary

I spent about an hour yesterday afternoon with Sir Stewart Crawford, Deputy Under-Secretary of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

About the recent initiative, he said there is considerable satisfaction in Government circles here at the reaction to it. The political parties in Dublin have shown a very helpful attitude. Public opinion in this country is also strongly behind the initiative. The Unionists could hardly have been expected to show enthusiasm but "interesting and important differences of opinion among them in relation to it are emerging". The minority M.Ps in the North now have a heavy responsibility to bring their supporters behind them and away from the IRA. Gerry Fitt in particular has shown admirable statesmanship.

The Taoiseach's recent message to the Prime Minister has been studied with much interest. It made a very favourable impression on the Prime Minister and his colleagues.

I said that the initiative was, of course, only a start and that the follow-up to it in the coming months is all important. Sir Stewart said that Mr. Whitelaw is outstandingly the best man for the job. He is a completely fairminded person, is recognised as being receptive to new ideas and is by no means the type to let the grass grow under his feet. When he returns from his present visit to the North he is almost certain to have some proposals to put to the Government.



An early first move on internment is a strong possibility. Mr. Whitelaw may also want to get clearance for an immediate <sup>modification</sup> ~~modification~~ of the position about marches. This, however, is only speculation on Sir Stewart's part as it is necessary to await Mr. Whitelaw's return to London.

The establishment and composition of the Commission may present some problems. Some of those on the majority side in the North are making a lot of unnecessary fuss about the Commission, ignoring the fact that it will be merely a consultative body and will have no executive powers. In this context, it is encouraging that Mr. Faulkner can hardly count on full backing from a number of his colleagues. Mr. Bradford is being most reasonable and present indications are that a growing number of ex-Ministers may follow the Bradford line. While one must keep one's fingers crossed about the future activities of Vanguard, the risk of trouble from that source seems to be diminishing; one of the reasons being that Mr. Craig is largely "a gas bag". For the first time in my many conversations with him, Sir Stewart showed no enthusiasm for Mr. Faulkner. Mr. Faulkner could have been more helpful on the initiative and "it would probably be a good thing if he did not get into Westminster." Paisley is somebody who needs to be watched. He is now full of sweet reasonableness, sees the present developments as presenting him with his political opportunity but, in the view of Whitehall, he is not a person to be trusted.

Sir Stewart said there is still a lot of shootings and other incidents across the Border. The Gardai are, in many instances, ineffective and we can expect to be under increasing pressure "when discussions start" to do more to put an end to these happenings.



Sir Stewart mentioned in passing that it has been a matter of surprise in official circles here that "more has not been made of the denial of certain civil rights in the South." It might be helpful to the overall situation if we could make some early moves to correct this position.

Sir Stewart paid a particularly warm tribute to the Cardinal for his recent statements. They made a most favourable impression here. If other Church leaders could be encouraged to come out strongly on the same lines, this might be very effective in drawing off support for the IRA.

Sir Stewart told me that there is a good deal of concern here about the effect of the Scarman and Widgery Reports. Widgery is unlikely to be available for a few weeks and, while the release of the Scarman Report is imminent, Sir Stewart said he had no information as to its contents. This, to say the least of it, seems strange.

Somewhat uncharacteristically, Sir Stewart was very outspoken in his criticism of Mr. Wilson for his visit to Dublin. This was little more than "an effort to climb on the bandwagon". Mr. Wilson's meeting with the IRA was "an insult to the Dublin Government." However, this apart, Mr. Wilson had behaved in a statesmanlike manner on the initiative.

This was my first call on Sir Stewart since my return. As you can see, our conversation was in very general terms. It could scarcely have been otherwise until Mr. Whitelaw has reported on his present visit to the North.

Yours sincerely

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