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**Reference Code:** 2005/7/631

**Title:** Report by S Gaynor, Department of Foreign Affairs, to S Donlon, Department of Foreign Affairs, regarding discussions with Paddy Devlin of the Social Democratic and Labour Party on the hunger strike of Marian and Dolours Price.

**Creation Date(s):** 6 June, 1974

**Level of description:** Item

**Extent and medium:** 2 pages

**Creator(s):** Department of the Taoiseach

**Access Conditions:** Open

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23.... Immediate for S. Donlon from S. Gaynor, London 6/6/74.

*M. H. H. H.*  
*1. Devlin*  
*2. Taoiseach.*  
*See memo dated 1/6/74*  
*1/6/74*

Paddy Devlin told Lynch and myself over lunch hour in strictest confidence the result of the meeting with the Price Sisters and subsequently with Jenkins this morning. When he saw them, the sisters were annoyed about Brockway's statement of yesterday and apparently had decided to continue the strike. Indeed our own view here was that the statement was unwise in the circumstances. They feel that Brockway made this statement about their situation for his own ends and that if they are to come off their strike, it is they who should determine its presentations to the public.

Devlin went over the whole situation with them again regarding Jenkins verbal assurance to Devlin, Stallard and Brockway that they would be returned to Northern Ireland in the course of this year." Devlin thinks that he has rescued the situation. The position is now that the sisters are considering Jenkins' assurance to the three. In the event of their coming off hunger strike, the Prices today laid down the following five conditions

- (1) that they not wear prison clothes,
- (2) that they be absolved from prison work,
- (3) that they be allowed food from outside the prison,
- (4) that they be allowed correspond with friends in Longkesh, <sup>Brixton?</sup>
- (5) that the remainder of their stay in Britain be in ~~Britain~~ <sup>Britain?</sup> ~~be in Briton.~~

Devlin thinks Jenkins will agree to these although Jenkins is worried about the food condition. Devlin's opinion on the sisters is that they will come off their strike. He said that the sisters were attentive at first but that their concentration lapsed. They were in a condition where they might not now be able to decide. Devlin is returning home now but will maintain

2.

contact with Jenkins. He is going to try to get their parents over to see the sisters tomorrow because they need the support of those close to them. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] End of Part one.

Part 2.

Jenkins, Devlin feels, wants the Prices transferred, as does Rees, and particularly Orme. Jenkins underlined for Devlin two sentences in his statement of last Saturday in this connection. These were the second-last sentence of the statement and the sentence which reads "I am deeply concerned that the lives of the sisters and others should not be needlessly lost". Those were the two key sentences on the positive side in the statement.

As I mentioned to you on the telephone, Devlin is very afraid of the effect that any publicity about his moves may have and asked that this message be made known to as few people as possible. In reply to a question as to how long the sisters thought their sentences would be, Devlin said that they were hoping for an amnesty sometime after their return to Northern Ireland.

We queried Devlin on his optimism about a good result and he was emphatic that things would come out right. Brockway, who has again come out in print in today's Evening Standard also says that he is hopeful. However one thing that struck me in our talk with Devlin was his reference to the fact that the sisters may have lost the power of decision. This may, I am afraid, be the lynch-pin of the whole situation.