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Title: Note by Dermot Nally, Assistant Secretary, Department of the Taoiseach, recording the substance of telephone conversations with Maurice Hayes, one of the Secretaries to the Northern Ireland Constitutional Convention, on 8 and 9 September in which reports were made on the progress of proceedings

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NORTHERN IRELAND

NOTE:-

Mr. Maurice Hayes, one of the Secretaries to the Convention, phoned ~~me~~ on 8th September to say that, as he now saw it, the Convention seemed to be teetering on the edge either of success or failure. There had recently been some glimmer of hope in talks by the Loyalist side of a ten year constitution or of a voluntary temporary coalition, which could make allowance for participation by the SDLP or minority representatives. The UUUC side was being well represented by Mr. Craig.

The progress that was being made had not been helped by the murder of the two UDR men or other events in South Armagh. In particular, the killings in the Orange Hall there recently had produced a very bad mood at the meetings. The Loyalist side were in a thoroughly "bolshie" frame of mind as a result.

The way things seem to be developing now was that either some proposals, which could be discussed at the Convention would have to be developed, or something like the Paisley proposals for a boycott would emerge. If the proposals were that talks should go on, in the absence of guidelines from the groups which are meeting, the difficulty of the Convention would be to settle on anything to talk about.

His impression of the SDLP was that they were too "re-active". They tended to react to proposals put to them by the Loyalist groupings and did not produce proposals of their own. They appeared to be extremely reluctant to commit themselves to paper. The general atmosphere had not been helped by Hume's recent speech, which the Loyalist representatives said was a breach of the agreement not to go public on matters relating to Convention activities, while the groups were meeting.

Mr. Hayes said that the sectarian murders were providing a focus for all of them which "pulled them up short".

He would be meeting Senator Mary Robinson, and Mr. Donal Barrington (Adviser to the SDLP) shortly.

MH

9th September, 1975.

NOTE:-

Mr. Hayes phoned me again on 9th September about the

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rejection by the Loyalist grouping yesterday of the concept of power sharing in Government in Northern Ireland. His view was that the terms in which the rejection had taken place make it impossible for the SDLP to talk in the Convention.

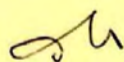
His impression was that Craig had rigged the earlier meeting, the result of which had been a disclaimer of Paisley's call for a boycott on the Convention in view of the security situation. Paisley, in turn, had rigged Monday's appearance by the UWC men, including Jim Smyth.

The result of yesterday's happenings was, as Mr. Hayes saw it, that the SDLP could not even be seen to be in dialogue. The Loyalists were behaving so unreasonably that they had, in fact, got the SDLP off the hook. A majority report emerging from this type of approach could be of no possible value to them. Any such report would fall with "a dull thump" in Westminster.

I asked Mr. Hayes how long it would, in fact, take to produce such a report - on the best assumptions as to participation etc. by the different groupings in the Convention. Mr. Hayes said that if the report were started next week it would take until the end of October or early November even to get it into a form in which it could be presented.

I asked if he had views on possible developments, on the political front, in view of what had happened yesterday. Mr. Hayes was pessimistic on this question.

He agreed that he would keep in touch - suggesting that it might be possible, or desirable, for him to come, quietly, to Dublin for talks.



9th September, 1975.

[Copy to Mr. S. Donlon, Department of Foreign Affairs.]