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Northern Ireland

Meeting in Copenhagen with British Prime Minister,
Mr. Callaghan

Taoiseach,

Your invitation to Mr. Callaghan is "to discuss the different aspects of the Northern Ireland situation and other matters of mutual interest".

Doubtless some of the meeting will be concerned with the issues you discussed when you last met Mr. Callaghan, in September, 1977, in London. These were -

- (1) pay and incomes policies;
- (2) the site for the JET project;
- (3) attitudes to trade unions;
- (4) creeping integration of Northern Ireland with United Kingdom;
- (5) the need for an initiative in Northern Ireland, so as to preserve politics, as distinct from violence;
- (6) the "negative guarantee" and the necessity for a recognition, in British policy, of the legitimate aspiration of the majority of the Irish people for unity;
- (7) economic co-operation as between North and South;
- (8) the position of the British Government, in relation to its parliamentary majority and Unionist etc support;
- (9) the necessity for consultation as between Southern interests and Unionist representatives.

Other issues were discussed, in considerable detail at the plenary session of the meeting, which followed the tete-a-tete.

The items likely to arise at the forthcoming meeting in Copenhagen are documented in the Foreign Affairs brief. Issues to which you may wish to pay particular attention are -

- (1) the content of the meeting with Mr. Callaghan, which will

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be concerned with political, economic and security issues;

- (2) and the impression on it, which is to be conveyed to the media.

On the content, a major issue will be the fate of the recommendation of the Speakers Conference for an increase in the number of seats for Northern Ireland representatives in Westminster, from 12 to 17 or 18. Obviously, this could be a major move towards integrating Northern Ireland with the United Kingdom. These views have been conveyed repeatedly, and strongly, to British authorities. It is no harm to repeat them. It is noteworthy, in particular, that the British decided recently that the legislative programme was too full, for the coming session, for the inclusion of legislation to implement the report. Even when this recommendation is implemented, it cannot become effective until after the next following general election. This means, in effect, that implementation would probably not take place, until the mid-1980s, if at all.

The other major political issue is probably the lack of movement, or even the prospect of movement, on structures of Government in Northern Ireland. The British are arguing that the Unionists have moved from their old stances and that they now understand fully what is not available to them. The implication is that the obstacle to initiatives is the SDLP.

It is a little difficult to accept this assessment. It may be due to the fact that if the absence of political initiative in Northern Ireland is recognised, and accepted publicly by the British, it will give sustenance to Loyalist demands for the transfer of more executive powers to Local Government authorities in Northern Ireland, as ~~move~~ move towards the restoration of full majority rule there. In this sense, it could be counterproductive to question publicly the absence of political movement in Northern Ireland. At the same time, the reality is that Unionist intransigence on power sharing, participation, or partnership, is making meaningful talks next to impossible; this position may well continue to obtain now that the forthcoming general election in the U.K. is starting to throw forward its shadows.

A third political aspect, which is connected also with the question of integration, is the tendency, on the part of British authorities to try to concentrate North/South discussions on the problem of security, leaving all other aspects, political, economic etc to be dealt with in the context of Anglo-Irish relations. This tendency to highlight security is one which should not be accepted. North/South relations cover the entire

area of contacts, dealings, and possibilities as between all parts of this island and cannot be categorised into North/South and Anglo-Irish divisions.

Insofar as economic issues are concerned the work of the Steering Group set up following your meeting with Mr. Callaghan last September, is, more or less, completed. On the Anglo-Irish side, the Group found that existing relations were working reasonably well, and could, in the main, be left to the Departments principally concerned. A major issue which is likely to arise, following these meetings, is that of the electricity inter-connector as between Wexford and the U.K. grid. This has important implications for energy supply here, and may well draw EEC assistance - as a trans-border project involving the more economical use of energy.

Other Anglo-Irish subjects discussed by the Steering Group were customs clearance procedures, transport questions and the application of the CAP to all Ireland, on a uniform basis. (The latter suggestion was ruled out by British and Northern Ireland officials, as outside their mandate.) On North/South co-operation the most notable feature is the extraordinary range of contacts already existing. There are possibilities for expanding these contacts, to the benefit of both parts of the country. However, the major issue is that insofar as possible the contacts should be developed so that relationships, as between North and South, are encouraged, on a personal basis, as a preliminary, to political or other movement. It could well be worthwhile getting the endorsement of the British Prime Minister to the continuance, and, if possible, the intensification, of these contacts. On security, the documentation in the Foreign Affairs brief, is clear, essentially, the trouble probably started from Army briefings of British politicians, which point to the South as a haven for the men of violence, operating in Northern Ireland. Item 6 in the brief deals with this issue with reasonable finality. The major point is that the violence is occurring deep in Northern Ireland. If the authorities there cannot prevent it, it flies in the face of common sense to argue that the fault lies in the South.

Admittedly, there are difficulties here nobody denies that. However, there is a well recognised procedure for dealing with these. If the British have problems, they should use these procedures. If the procedures are unsatisfactory, then, the discussions should be on methods of improving them - not on a public airing of alleged imperfections.

The major practical issues, on security, are likely to be -

- (1) extradition;
- (2) possibilities of/R.U.C. presence at interrogations in the South; and

- (3) methods of perfecting statistical or other objective criteria to show the nature and origins of Northern Ireland violence - so as to make counter measures more effective.

Of these, perhaps the extradition item will be the main question raised by Mr. Callaghan. Our Constitutional difficulties are clear. They make extradition a non starter, so far as we are concerned. To get over these difficulties we have provided the Criminal Law Jurisdiction legislation. However, despite the existence of this legislation on the statute book for two years now, there has not been a single application for its use. Neither has there been an application to activate the provisions of the 1861 legislation, which apply to murder committed after December, 1973.

A major point in relation to security, could well be to get the energies at present being expended in attacking or defending the positions of the two Governments diverted into a constructive effort to counter violence.

On the media, and the impact of the meeting generally, it would seem well to play down beforehand any expectation of dramatic conclusions or initiatives. It is especially necessary to bear in mind the deep felt of many Northern people that matters affecting them should not be settled as between Dublin and London but with them directly. This view has been expressed for a long time, with, perhaps, increasing emphasis, of late. It would also seem to be important not to appear to pre-empt the meeting between the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Secretary of State, which has been arranged, but which was cancelled, because of the death of the former President. It could be indicated, that this would take place as arranged, to discuss political, economic, and security aspects of North/South relations. It is for consideration whether it should be suggested to the Garda Commissioner that he now take up the invitation of the Chief Constable in Northern Ireland, for a meeting - in advance of the Ministerial meeting. This could remove the reason for Mr. Mason's insistence on bringing the Chief Constable with him. Obviously to give the proposed Ministerial meeting a high profile in the security area.