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~~Mr. McNamee~~ *Mr. McNamee*
St. PA on file re
prior initiative

Note

The Minister spoke to Mr. Prior on 15 February at 4 p.m.

The Minister informed the Secretary of State that a personal letter from him would be handed in to the Northern Ireland Office in London that day at about 4.30 by the Embassy. He indicated briefly the contents of the letter, namely the inadequacy of Mr. Prior's proposals insofar as we knew them to meet the requirements of the SDLP. The Minister said he hoped that Mr. Prior would not let the British Cabinet process go too far in deciding upon proposals of that kind.

Mr. Prior said that he would not expect a definitive decision until late March. He undertook to read and have carefully considered the matters put forward in the Minister's letter. He referred to what had been described ^{as the} "unboycottable" proposal to set up a sort of U.S. Executive style of administration, and said that all parties had indicated that it would not be acceptable to the Assembly for the Secretary of State to pick and choose his own partners in Government. Mr. Prior agreed that the meeting with the SDLP (on 29 January) had not been a good one but he pointed out that the SDLP representatives didn't understand the concept of shared responsibility until it had been explained to them in detail. He also commented that many SDLP ideas were quite impracticable and mentioned as one instance the suggestion that the Anglo-Irish Parliamentary tier should be in charge of security - this was not on. The SDLP, Mr. Prior said, had originally wanted an Anglo-Irish Council but, now that it had been established, it was discounted by them.

The Minister said that if the Government were returned to Office they would hope to make a contribution after 9 March.

The tone of the conversation was described by the Minister as warm. Mr. Prior's valedictory remark was to the effect that whatever the outcome on Thursday (i.e. in the Election) might be, he hoped we would win on Saturday (Rugby Triple Crown).

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D.M. Neligan

15 February 1982