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This was the first official contact leading to the A.9. Agreement, 1985 on 2/9/86

ROINN AN TAOISIGH

Misc. F. 2.

Uimhir..... 2/9/86

To:

STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL

From:

Sir Robert Armstrong, Secretary to the British Cabinet and Mr. David Goodall, Deputy Secretary, Cabinet Office, visited Dublin on 1 March, 1984 and met Mr. Dermot Nally, Secretary to the Government, Mr. Sean Donlon, Secretary and Mr. Michael Lillis, Assistant Secretary, Department of Foreign Affairs. The undersigned also attended. The meeting was at Sir Robert Armstrong's request. He had insisted on absolute confidentiality.

He said that he was coming on the instructions of the Prime Minister and the British Cabinet to put some suggestions which had emerged on their side following the Taoiseach's meeting with the Prime Minister in Chequers. The British Cabinet had been given a general outline by the Prime Minister but the details were only known to her and to the Foreign Secretary and to the Northern Ireland Secretary of State.

Sir Robert Armstrong outlined the proposals under the headings of

- (1) security
- (2) governmental arrangements and citizenship rights etc. and
- (3) constitutional matters.

The security proposals would involve -

- (1) the creation of a security band on the Border instead of the present Border line, extending north and south depending on the perceived security need in a particular locality. It could be quite large or small depending on local circumstances. It could possibly be organised on a police divisional basis. The band area would be overseen by a Joint Security Commission and be policed by joint crime squads which could develop later into a common form of police or crime squad. The Commission could examine the potential for common law enforcement in the band area;
- (2) a Law Commission for the island as a whole, to seek convergence of criminal laws in both jurisdictions, with the possibility of an All-Ireland court, either simultaneously or later.

The Governmental arrangements envisage matters such as citizenship rights (including more equitable franchise arrangements in the North) and other measures of a symbolic nature - like the flags and emblems legislation - which would appeal to the minority community;

The constitutional arrangements envisaged would involve two elements: some form of guarantee of the constitutional position of Northern Ireland perhaps on the lines of

*Taoiseach
As requested
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ROINN AN TAOISIGH

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Sunningdale. On this special attention would have to be paid to Articles 2 and 3 of the Republic's Constitution. He described these elements as a sine qua non.

Sir Robert emphasised that all the proposals were totally without commitment on their side. At this point they were being made for the purposes of getting some form of political movement going.

The Irish side said they had no notice of these suggestions and would therefore not comment on them officially in anyway. Questions asked or points put were for clarification only - and were totally without commitment.

In the subsequent discussion of the proposals the following points emerged. These also reflect a number of questions put by the Irish side:

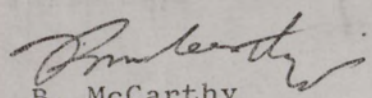
- (1) Their proposals could, they suggested, be viewed as "building blocks" for a system of joint sovereignty or a unitary state - the two blocks were the security band proposal and the All-Ireland Law Commission.
- (2) They had not given any detailed thought to the government of Northern Ireland under such proposals. This was really a detachable element and depended on our attitude to, say, power-sharing. They might look at the local government area to see if power sharing could be developed there or if minority/majority requirements could be catered for in the administration of that tier of Government.
- (3) They would not exclude the operation of a security band arrangement for areas such as West Belfast.
- (4) The incorporation of the human rights convention in the laws North and South could be examined.
- (5) A parliamentary tier as envisaged in the Anglo-Irish Joint Studies could also be looked at.
- (6) If questions had to be answered in either Parliament, or elsewhere, it would be stated that discussions at official level were taking place in the normal way as part of the AIIC mechanism following the last meeting at Prime Ministerial level and to prepare for the next meeting. As was normal practice in preparation for these meetings, no details could or would be revealed of anything that was being discussed.

ROINN AN TAOISIGH

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From:

- (7) The question of an extended meeting between the Taoiseach and the Prime Minister at the Brussels Council would be considered, without attention being drawn to it.


B. McCarthy
2nd March, 1984.