

# NATIONAL ARCHIVES

## IRELAND



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Secret

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cc Tassier  
Tinaide  
Minister  
M/ Justice  
A.S.

Secretary  
Mr. Neely  
Mr. Vard  
Mr. Douglas

Discussion with Lord Whitlaw, 9th June 1985

Summary

1. Whitelaw was friendly and well disposed.
2. He has always followed the Northern Ireland issue attentatively but has been careful about the extent to which he displayed that interest. He is now becoming much more actively involved once again but he will still be prudent about showing his hand too publicly.
3. He thinks Sunningdale was the best effort that could have been made to "put the pieces" together. It did not succeed because Wilson at a crucial moment failed to challenge the Loyalist workers strike (May 1976). The effect of this - unfortunately - was to strengthen the Unionist hand by creating the belief that they could pull down anything they oppose. Many of his Cabinet colleagues now believe this and say (in this sense) "we cannot have another Sunningdale".
4. Mrs Thatcher "wants to do something" but he is hopeful rather than certain that she will. Enoch Powell's malign but indirect influence on her is strong. Whitelaw will work to oppose it.
5. He shares our worry about the present situation, notwithstanding the diminution in the statistics of violence which others point to. Granted Sunningdale - the best effort - cannot be restored, he sees no alternative to the approach in our present Anglo-Irish negotiations and, therefore, fully supports it.
6. He knew nothing of the recent "internal settlement" story in the Irish Times and did not believe it possible.
7. He thinks no police force should have the prefix "Royal" - but one cannot now change the name of the RUC. He finds the Hermon-Wren squabble ridiculous and did not sound over-enthusiastic about Hermon.
8. He seemed doubtful how far our mixed Courts proposal could be pushed through against Lowry - who says Catholic judges in NI oppose it and who also questions whether our own judges would support it.
9. I used the occasion to press our point that CBMs - particularly reform of the security forces - must accompany and not simply be left to follow eventually from the involvement of Dublin envisaged in the current document. He took the point well and will talk to Hurd and others about it.

TH.  
London 11 June 1985