

**NATIONAL ARCHIVES****IRELAND**

**Reference Code:** 2004/21/670

**Title:** Draft letter from Minister for Foreign Affairs Garret FitzGerald to Gerry Fitt MP, expressing concern at the attitude of the Social Democratic and Labour Party to efforts being made by the Irish government in regard to political progress in Northern Ireland.

**Creation Date(s):** [July, 1973]

**Level of description:** Item

**Extent and medium:** 2 pages

**Creator(s):** Department of the Taoiseach

**Access Conditions:** Open

**Copyright:** National Archives, Ireland. May only be reproduced with the written permission of the Director of the National Archives.



OIFIG AN AIRE GHNÓTHÁI EACHTRACHA  
OFFICE OF THE MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS

BAILE ÁTHA CLIATH 2  
DUBLIN 2

DRAFT.

*nos muid -  
in 2 aonreacht  
le 27/8/73  
to Mr. Pitt. 10/8/73*

Dear Gerry,

I have been seriously concerned about the reports in all three Sunday papers from SDLP sources about your Party's attitude to my Government.

Several weeks ago we had a full discussion with an official delegation from your Party, after which those representing the SDLP stated both to the Government members present and later to the Press that they were very pleased with the frank and full discussions we had had.

Last week I was asked to receive another official delegation of your party who raised with me and the other Ministers present two statements attributed to the Secretary of State, Mr. Whitelaw, concerning this Government's Northern Ireland policy. We were told that the Secretary of State had stated that we did not support the policy of making the Council of Ireland responsible for the police, and that he also had stated that we supported the establishment of an Executive in advance of agreement on a Council of Ireland.

We told your delegation that our position was not as the Secretary of State was reported to have represented it. This Government had pressed the British Government strongly on the reform of the police. We had not, however, yet considered or made up our minds about the possible relationship between the Council of Ireland and the police, and had accordingly expressed no views whatever to the Secretary of State, on which at this point we have an open mind.

With regard to the Executive, we told your delegation that the only reference we had made to this subject was a warning by the Minister for Foreign Affairs several months ago to the Secretary of State that it was unlikely that agreement could be reached on establishing an Executive in advance of agreement on a Council of Ireland and other matters, and that a much more likely pattern of events would be parallel negotiations on these matters, followed by 'a package deal'.

Your delegation expressed themselves satisfied by this statement, and pleased that this clarification had been given to them.

Subsequently the Minister for Foreign Affairs took up with the British Ambassador the two points raised by your delegation, expressing his concern at what had happened.

Against this background you will readily understand my concern at the week-end reports emanating from your Party, which appear to suggest that your delegation did not accept the clarification offered to them, despite their statement at the time that they had done so.

I understand that your Chief Whip, Mr. Devlin, raised with the Minister for Foreign Affairs on Saturday, before these reports appeared, the question of earlier press reports of last week's meeting between your delegation and myself and my colleagues. I can state that no press briefing was given here either by myself or any of the Ministers meeting your delegation, or by the Government Information Bureau or the Information Division of the Department of Foreign Affairs - neither of whom were in fact informed of the discussions - or by any other Irish Government source that I am aware of. Any reports that appeared were either fabrications - and their inaccuracy suggests that this was the case - or else emanated



OIFIG AN AIRE GHNÓTHÁI EACHTRACHA  
OFFICE OF THE MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS

BAILE ATHA CLIATH 2  
DUBLIN 2

- 2 -

from other sources. The only contact with the press that we are aware of in relation to the matter was that mentioned by Mr. Devlin to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, between your delegation and Chris Glennon.

I am writing to you in the hope of clarifying the position in relation to these matters so that unfounded reports of disagreements between my Government and your Party on these matters may be effectively scotched. *and, if possible, of setting up a formal liaison between us so as to avoid misunderstandings in future.*