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Title: Memorandum by Seán Donlon, Department of Foreign Affairs, reporting a meeting with Fr Pdraig Murphy, Falls Road, Belfast, discussing the actions of security forces in West Belfast, financial difficulties for relief causes in his area, and his apprehensions about British Army activity following the UK general election.

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CONFIDENTIALMEMO

I had lunch with Canon Padraig Murphy (P.P. St. John's, Falls Road, Belfast) in Dublin on 7 February. The main points he made were as follows:

I have noted second point

- acceptance of the Sunningdale Agreement in his area of Belfast is being put at unnecessary risk by the behaviour of the security forces. He has long since abandoned any efforts to document this misbehaviour and indeed much of what he complains of would probably best be described as insensitive behaviour, e.g. lifting a Catholic youth at his Protestant place of employment and thereby setting him up as a target for Protestant extremists. He was, however, also aware of doubtful interrogation methods, especially, he said, at Hastings St. RUC Station. He was not confident that anything could be done to bring about an improvement in the behaviour of the security forces except their replacement by normal policing and he did not see that as an imminent possibility. He doubted from his experience of four years' constant contact with senior Army officers in Belfast that any NI Secretary of State could ever hope to control completely the activities of the security forces and while he thought we should continue to press the British on the subject, he was not hopeful that much improvement would be achieved;

of which he is chairman,

- as usual, Canon Murphy is in financial difficulties! The Innocent Dependents Fund is £18,668 in debt and interest is accumulating on it at 14%. The fund was used to make payments to internees families until February 1973. About £200,000 was paid out altogether in 1971-73 and an estimated £45,000 of this came from the Irish Red Cross. The balance was raised by Canon Murphy from private sources in the U.S., Britain and Dublin. When the fund stopped making payments, it was about £35,000 in the red and all his efforts in the last year have been directed at clearing the debt. The various private sources, especially in the U.S. and Britain had dried up largely because people had become so suspicious of any fund raising for NI causes - Canon Murphy felt that Dublin's efforts to cut down IRA fund raising in the U.S. was largely responsible for this - and he had hoped that the Red Cross might be able to give more help to help dispose of the debt. The Red Cross, however, did not seem to have access to the same amounts as formerly and a recent request for assistance had not been fruitful;

- recalling the June 1970 Falls curfew, Canon Murphy is somewhat apprehensive that, in the event of a change of Government in Britain following the general elections on 28 February, there might be a violent reaction from loyalist extremists and that in the short period of indecision before a new Government was formed the Army might make its own policy which would have disastrous political consequences. I told him that Merlyn Rees M.P. appeared to be conscious of this danger but that it might be no harm if Canon Murphy, whom Rees knows well, found an opportunity between now and 28 February to convey his views to Rees or someone in the Labour Party.

Seán Donlon

8 February 1974