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Briefs on Political and International Questions for
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* Appendix I: Memorandum on Discrimination in the Six Counties

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Mr. Wilson's attitude towards Ireland might be described as one of friendship tempered with correctness as far as the constitutional position of the Six Counties is concerned. Making due allowance for the fact that Mr. Wilson is returned with many Irish votes in the Huyton constituency of Liverpool and would no doubt welcome the elimination of the Six County Unionist block vote at Westminster, he seems basically well disposed to Ireland and appears to be more friendly than any other recent British Prime Minister.

His attitude was shown when he addressed the Irish Club Banquet in London on 17th March, 1965. When proposing the Toast of the "two islands" he said that by turning our backs on the past and looking to the future "there is nothing we cannot do together". The friendship between the two islands, he said, "has never been closer at any time in history - neither had hopes for still closer friendship ever been greater". It was the first time since 1911 that a British Prime Minister had agreed to be the chief guest at an Irish Club Banquet. He also said that he hoped for a future meeting between Capt. O'Neill and the Taoiseach "not in Dublin, not in Belfast but in No. 10 Downing Street". The reception in Stormont circles to that statement was cool.

Mr. Wilson's decision to agree to the Government's request for the return of the remains of Roger Casement to Ireland in February, 1965 is also evidence of Mr. Wilson's friendly attitude. In a letter to Mr. Lemass on 19th February about this matter he said that "it is the British Government's sincere hope that the return of the remains will help to consolidate the ties of friendship and common interest which link Britain and the Republic"

His signing of the Free Trade Area Agreement with Mr. Lemass at London on 14th December, 1965 marked an important step in the

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improvement of relations between the two countries.

A further gesture made by Mr. Wilson was the return to the Government in March, 1966 of the Irish Republic Flag which flew over the G.P.O. in Easter Week 1916.

As will be seen in the briefs on relations with Northern Ireland, Mr. Wilson has admitted in the House of Commons that all is not well in the North and on his talks with Capt. O'Neill on 5th August, 1966 he also admitted that matters other than economic matters were discussed. It is clear that his Government is exercising certain pressures, both public and private, on the Six County authorities to promote electoral reform and eliminate discrimination in the Six Counties.

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RELATIONS WITH NORTHERN IRELAND

II (a) General Policy - North-South Talks

It can be stated in general terms that the objective of the Government is to secure the reunification of the country by peaceful means, i.e. ultimately by agreement with the North. This entails the removal of the barriers of suspicion, mistrust and animosity which have divided Irishmen in the past, so that unity can be founded on tolerance and goodwill. The Government regard the maximum possible measure of cooperation in practical matters of public concern for the benefit of people living in both parts of Ireland, without sacrifice of principle on our part, as an important step in this direction.

Since the Lemass-O'Neill talks (January 1965 in Belfast and February 1965 in Dublin) progress has been achieved in practical cooperation in the fields of (i) lowering of some Twenty-Six County tariffs in favour of certain Six-County products (ii) electricity (the joint North-South Report) (iii) tourism. Cooperation has been agreed upon between both Tourist Boards and the British Travel Association in distribution of tourist literature and advertising of the country as "Ireland" covering both North and South for tourist purposes. Beginning of joint advertising will take place in the United States.

The former Taoiseach dealt with the constitutional position recently when he told the Dáil on 25th October ¹⁹⁶⁶ that we do not recognise that the partition of the country is a just or durable arrangement and therefore could not consider any constitutional change or other steps which would imply an abandonment of that position. It has been stated many times that a solution of this national problem would be an arrangement on the lines of the proposals put forward on behalf of Dáil Éireann prior to the

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Treaty negotiations of 1921 involving, subject to safeguards, the confirmation of the position of the Northern Ireland legislature with its existing powers within an all-Ireland constitution, for so long as the people of the North-Eastern counties might desire it.

CONFIDENTIALRELATIONS WITH NORTHERN IRELAND11 (b) Public Position of the British Labour Government on Partition

Last February the British Ambassador called ^{to D/Ex.Affs.} /to comment about an interview with the former Taoiseach reported in "The Word" in the course of which Mr. Lemass's comments on the re-unification of Ireland included the following:-

Q.: And do you think that the present British Labour Government will do much to bring it about?

A. Of course, no British Government or politician is going to risk his political neck at all for our sake. That's definitely so. I would say that the present British Government would wish to see the situation ended. They'll take no steps to end it, but if it did happen, they'd be delighted. They'll certainly put no impediment in the way of Irish re-unification...

The Ambassador mentioned that the public position on Partition of the present British Labour Government has not changed from that of the previous Conservative Government as set out in the Alport formula of 1957 (see attached copy of report in Hansard of 14th March, 1957, Columns 1308 and 1309). The Ambassador said that this was ~~was~~ carefully thought out formula at the time and the British Government consider that it would be unwise to depart from it. On the other hand he had suggested to his authorities that, having regard to the present improvement in North-South relations and in our relations with Britain, the interests of both North and South would be best served by a benevolent detachment on Britain's part. Any intervention at this stage would be likely to provoke an unhealthy reaction on one or other side of the Border. This view had been accepted in London. The Ambassador made a passing reference to Mr. Wilson's suggestion for tripartite talks at the Irish Club Banquet last year and the immediate reaction in Belfast. He said that any British comment on this subject is examined with

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a microscope by Belfast and, therefore, any departure from the Alport formula, however mild, would be interpreted as a significant step in the North in favour of Dublin and away from Belfast. He was fully aware that we would like the British Government to go further and to say that if North and South would agree on ending the Border the British Government would give its blessing or that there was no British interest in the maintenance of Partition.

The Ambassador indicated that he would be reporting to London on the Taoiseach's interview in "The Word" and would be expressing his own view that Mr. Lemass's remarks were not inconsistent with a correct understanding of the public position of the British Government. At no stage in the conversation did the Ambassador seek to imply that the public attitude of the Labour Government necessarily reflected their private attitude also.

In a written answer to a Question in the House of Commons on 15th November, 1966, by Mr. Arnold Shaw who asked the Prime Minister if he will take steps to initiate negotiations for the unification of Ireland, Mr. Wilson said "it is not I think for me to initiate such discussions".