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ROINN GNÓTHAÍ EACHTRACHA
DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

W. J. Brennan
Taoiseach $\frac{23}{6/69}$

BAILE ÁTHA CLIATH 2
DUBLIN 2

20 Meitheamh 1969

Dear Ó Nualláin

The Tánaiste has asked me to send you, for the information of the Taoiseach, the attached note of a conversation he had with Mr. Edward Heath, M.P., Leader of the Conservative Party in Britain, in the course of his visit to London for the Twentieth Anniversary of the Signature of the Statute of the Council of Europe *on the 5th May 1969.*

Yours sincerely

W. J. Brennan

An Dr. N. S. Ó Nualláin
Rúnaí
Roinn an Taoisigh

NOTE

Mr. Edward Heath, M.P., Leader of the Conservative Party, approached me at the Reception given in Lancaster House by the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on the 5th instant on the occasion of the Twentieth Anniversary of the Signature of the Statute of the Council of Europe with a request that I bring him to the Tánaiste, who was then engaged in conversation with other people at the Reception. Mr. Heath said that he wished to speak to the Tánaiste on the present position in Northern Ireland, and particularly on the matter of the Tánaiste's recent visit to New York to advise U Thant of the situation.

Mr. Heath said to the Tánaiste, in a somewhat hectoring tone of voice, that the Tory Party, which, he added, "would be the next Government", was extremely anxious about the present position in Northern Ireland and was extremely concerned about what he described as the interference of "Éire" in the situation there; "Éire" had no right to interfere in the affairs of a part of the United Kingdom; to have brought the question to the attention of the United Nations was the very last thing the Irish Government should have done; "Éire's" interference could only have the effect of jeopardizing the chances of peace in a part of the United Kingdom for which "Éire" had no responsibility. Mr. Heath emphasised that, in his opinion and in the opinion of the Conservative Party, which would form the next Government, Northern Ireland was as much a part of the United Kingdom as Yorkshire, and intervention in Northern Ireland affairs and, in particular, reference to the United Nations were unasked and unwarranted; the

situation in Northern Ireland was purely a matter for the British Government and the Northern Ireland authorities.

Mr. Heath went on to say that any hope of good relations between "Éire" and the British Government - which would be a Tory Government very soon - had been put in jeopardy by the Irish Government's decision to bring the matter to the attention of the Secretary-General of the United Nations. The Tory Party, he said, had never been satisfied with the terms of the Anglo-Irish Free-Trade-Area Agreement and would, on assuming office, seek to have the Agreement revised; our policy of interference in the internal affairs of the United Kingdom could result in damage to Anglo-Irish relations in the economic sphere. Mr. Heath's statement in this connection amounted to a threat of economic sanctions unless "Éire" ceased to intervene in affairs between the British Government and the Government of Northern Ireland, which was an integral part of the United Kingdom. Mr. Heath added that the policy of the Irish Government would seem to be aimed at threatening the unity of the United Kingdom.

The Tánaiste disagreed strongly with the views expressed by Mr. Heath. It was not a question of our endeavouring to break-up the United Kingdom but of the British Government breaking up the unity of Ireland; Ireland had been "one" before the "United Kingdom had become one". The necessity for reform in Northern Ireland was obvious on such questions as "one man, one vote", abolition of gerrymandering and the granting of Human Rights. In the latter connection, the Tánaiste pointed out that the British Government found itself unable to accede to the International Convention on

Human Rights because of the restrictive régime in Northern Ireland. He explained to Mr. Heath that, because of the deteriorating position in Northern Ireland, and following a decision of the Irish Government, he had gone to New York to advise U Thant of the situation; he also stated that, as the Irish Government believed that the British Government had a responsibility for the situation, they had decided that the Taoiseach should discuss the matter with Prime Minister Wilson. The Tánaiste said that, in advising U Thant of the situation, he had not requested that any action should be taken by the United Nations nor had he tabled any Resolution or Motion at the United Nations; in fact, since becoming a member of the United Nations in 1956, Ireland had not sought, by way of a Resolution, to bring the question of Partition before the United Nations. We had, however, adverted to the question on a number of suitable occasions by way of speeches by Ministers and officials of the Irish delegation to the U.N. The absence of universal local-government franchise and gerrymandering, which exacerbated the situation in Northern Ireland, were, in our opinion, matters of which the Secretary-General of the United Nations should be fully informed. The Tánaiste requested the Ambassador to send to Mr. Heath a copy of the transcript of the long Press Conference which he had given to the United Nations Correspondents Association Club in New York on the 23rd April last; Mr. Heath would see from the transcript the nature of the views expressed by the Tánaiste on the occasion. He hoped that reforms would be introduced as quickly as possible so that the present situation could be kept under control; if this were done, peace would be quickly restored and the ultimate problem of the unity of Ireland achieved in time. He added that the Irish Government

could never accept the principle implicit in Mr. Heath's remarks that Ireland should be forever divided.

In reply, Mr. Heath, whilst maintaining his attitude, spoke in a less upbraiding manner. He could not accept the principle that "Éire" had any right to interest itself, or the United Nations, in the affairs of Northern Ireland, which was a part of the United Kingdom. He said that the agitation for "one man - one vote" affected Local Government only and that this would, in any event, be granted at some time in the future. The Tánaiste emphasised that there was also the effect of the policy of gerrymander, which influenced even elections to Stormont and Westminster, the voting for which was by universal suffrage. He emphasised that the establishment of "one man - one vote" would be of little or no use unless the constituencies were reasonably delineated, instancing in this connection the case of Derry City. The Tánaiste said that he could not accept Mr. Heath's view that we had no right to interest ourselves in the situation and recent developments in Northern Ireland. When the Tánaiste said that the Unionists in the North should recognise that we are now living in the last third of the twentieth century and not in the middle of the nineteenth century, Mr. Heath said that Miss Bernadette Devlin, M.P., was "something from the last century"; her sentiments were "appalling" and incredible in the case of such a young girl. This remark of Mr. Heath's was made towards the end of the conversation and was countered by the Tánaiste saying to Mr. Heath that he should realise that Miss Devlin "is really your baby."

5.

I have sent today to Mr. Heath a copy of the transcript of the Press Conference given by the Tánaiste in New York on 23rd April, 1969.

J. G. MOLLOY

J. G. MOLLOY,
Ambassador.

7th May, 1969.