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Reference Code: 2001/6/516

Title: Copy letter from Donal O’Sullivan, Ambassador of Ireland to Great Britain, to HJ McCann, Secretary of the Department of External Affairs, concerning O’Sullivan’s meeting with Mr Jones, the Northern Ireland Agent in London, mainly discussing the situation in the Ulster Unionist Party.

Creation Date(s): 29 July, 1970

Level of description: Item

Extent and medium: 5 pages

Creator(s): Department of the Taoiseach

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Strictly Confidential

July 29th 1970

Dear Secretary

We had the Northern Ireland Agent (Mr Jones) and his wife to lunch yesterday. They arrived at 12.45 and left at 4 o'clock. At the outset, Mr. Jones was quite guarded in his remarks about the Northern situation but he softened up considerably as time went on. He gives the impression of being quite a broad-minded person on the Northern situation and he commented a number of times on the fact that it was always a surprise to him that people who were regarded as most moderate Protestants proved at heart to be quite bigoted. Jones himself appears to have no beliefs but his wife is a practising Anglican. Their only son married a Catholic, now non-practising, and he works in Belfast.

Mr. Jones expressed himself as seriously concerned about the recent decision to cancel all Parades for six months, not because he necessarily approves of these Parades, but because no adequate reason for the decision has been given. This has placed him in a very embarrassing situation here in trying to deal with enquiries in the matter. He sought instructions from Belfast as to the line he should take in dealing with these enquiries and the instructions he received were "so stupid and clearly untrue" that he could not even put them on an office file. He tore them up.

He has no doubt in his own mind that Major Chichester Clark was simply told by London to cancel all Parades. This is an indication of the tough line to be expected from Mr. Heath "who is extremely cold and won't stand any nonsense".

Mr. Jones's own view is that the decision to cancel all Parades for six months cannot ~~only~~ but give rise to further trouble. Apart from this, Major Chichester Clark in accepting this dictation from London has greatly weakened his own position. It is now quite clear to many of his supporters in the North that he is merely a tool in the hands of the London Government and he is now losing all credibility as a worthwhile leader. He said he had reluctantly to admit that the Major is "completely clueless on political matters".

If Chichester Clark goes, what then? As a successor Ivan Neill would, in Mr. Jones's view, be a worse disaster but he may have to be the choice. Faulkner who, incidentally is a very close friend of Jones's and whom Jones greatly admires, is hardly likely to get the top job. He moved too much to the Right early on and now fully realises the mistake. He is not greatly trusted by his colleagues in the Government. Mr. Jones said that, if the opportunity offered, he would like me to meet Mr. Faulkner at a family lunch at his home here. An exchange of views between us might be useful.

As to future developments in the North, he said that in his view it is absolutely imperative that there should be no slowing down in the implementation of the reform programme. There are many who think that Faulkner is a reluctant supporter of reform but nothing could be further from the truth. Faulkner is a realist and he may indeed be the only person in the North capable of putting the programme into full effect. If there is any avoidable delay in implementing the programme this is bound to give rise to further trouble and the Belfast Government will become even

more discredited than it is at present.

Without any prompting from me, Mr. Jones went on to say that he is becoming increasingly convinced that, in view of the attitude of the extreme elements on both sides and the extent to which they are under external Left Wing influence, it is now very doubtful whether the implementation of reforms will in itself bring peace. A growing number of Unionists, including some in the Government, would now readily admit privately "that the sands may be running out for them". They think that an eventual solution of the Constitutional problem is inevitable even though it may be a long way off. If this is the prospect ahead, the question arises as to what the best approach to the matter is. Is there, for example, any possibility that as a first step "your people would at all entertain the idea of, in some way however vague, bending your knee to the Queen"? I said I thought this entirely out of the question. Any step by us in the direction of some form of return to the Commonwealth would give rise to the most serious political situation. In any event, the Commonwealth will probably begin to lose a lot of whatever cohesion it has once Britain joins the EEC. Mr. Jones said he fully appreciated the point I was making but he then wondered whether, as two Islands off the European mainland, it would not be possible for us to get closer together in some way in a Common Market context. I replied that we are, of course, both approaching the EEC as members of a Free Trade Area Agreement which in itself is a very close relationship and asked if he was thinking in terms of having a political dimension added to this relationship. He replied in the affirmative and I said that the idea seemed to me to be worth thinking about, adding that any

commitment on our part "to bend our knee to the Queen" would, in my view, be a complete non-starter. I went on to say that it should, given goodwill on both sides, be possible to think up approaches to a solution of the basic problem which would fall short of this. He then asked me to regard our conversation as "purely personal, private and friendly" and added that it was perhaps wrong of him to use the expression "bending the knee to the Queen". Anyhow, he said we will have further opportunities to discuss the whole situation and he was happy that such a friendly relationship has developed between us.

He spoke in the highest praise of the stand which the Taoiseach is taking and added that the Taoiseach is greatly admired by Mr. Faulkner. Faulkner is, above all, a ^{pragmatist} ~~protagonist~~ and he would, as a minimum, be all in favour of close co-operation in day to day matters between the North and the South. In Mr. Jones's view, the sooner this co-operation can be resumed and expanded the better.

If the present unrest continues indefinitely the North could, according to Mr. Jones, become an economic desert. There is no possibility at all of attracting new external investment there while trouble exists in the area. Worse still, there is a serious risk of the withdrawal of certain industries from the North with a consequent reduction in employment opportunities there. His latest information is that, from the point of view of tourism, this year is being regarded as almost a complete write-off. If unification of Ireland is to come about, it is in our interest too that the Northern economy should prosper.

Mr. Jones then expressed himself as impressed by the almost unanimously favourable response by the Press in this country to the Minister's recent visit to London. Some of his colleagues in the Northern Office have found this disturbing and they are reluctantly admitting that opinion in influential circles is moving in our direction. This cannot but have some effect on official attitudes.

Without giving any reasons, he expressed the view that General Freeland is not the most suitable person to head the forces in the North. He also has reservations about Burroughs whom he regards as "far too much of a dyed-in-the-wool civil servant" for the job that has to be done. I said I had no view on General Freeland's suitability but that I personally felt that Oliver Wright was a more effective performer than Burroughs.

Mr. Jones spoke in the most disparaging terms of Craig whom he knows quite well and whom he dislikes intensely. He described Craig as a stupid man whose influence in the Northern political scene will fortunately be a diminishing one.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

At the conclusion of our meeting, Mr. Jones said we must resume contact as soon as we are both back from holidays. He would particularly like if we could spare a week-end in September or October to spend with his wife and himself at their cottage which I think is in Northumberland. I said we would be very happy to do this.

Yours sincerely

H J McCann Esq
Secretary
Dept of External Affairs