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**Title:** Letter from John McColgan, Private Secretary to the Minister for External Affairs, to NS Ó Nualláin, Private Secretary to the Taoiseach, stating that the Department of External Affairs does not favour entering into a formal committee with members of the Nationalist Party in Northern Ireland, and noting the likely establishment of a new political party [the Social Democratic and Labour Party] there.

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OIFIG AN AIRE GHNÓTHAÍ EACHTRACHA  
OFFICE OF THE MINISTER FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

BAILE ÁTHA CLIATH  
DUBLIN

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CONFIDENTIAL

4 Márta 1970

*Taoiseach 5/3  
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as suggested by the  
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5.3.*

Rúnaí Príobháideach  
Roinn an Taoisigh

With reference to your letter of 19th February enclosing for observations a copy of a letter of 14th February addressed to you by Mr. P. McCorry, Secretary to the Executive of the Nationalist Party, the Minister for External Affairs has asked me to say that in his opinion it would be unwise to agree to the creation of a Committee consisting of members of the Government and members of the Nationalist Party to keep the situation in the Six Counties under constant review. The Minister considers that the Government should not enter into a formal arrangement with any political party in the North but should instead keep in touch with all important strands of political thinking and activity in the area. This is likely to be a more fruitful attitude than exclusive recognition of one political party which would tend to antagonise other important elements in the Opposition and at the same time cut across any opportunities that might arise of influencing elements of the Unionist Party.

You are aware, of course, that in reply to a supplementary in Dáil Éireann on 2nd December, 1969, the Taoiseach said "I think it would be wrong to have discussions or consultations only with the Nationalist Party. That would be rather divisive in my opinion".

The Taoiseach is also, of course, aware very confidentially of the possibility that there will shortly be created a new political Party among the Opposition. It is not yet certain that Mr. Fitt will join the new party in the immediate future but it is our understanding that decisions may be taken tomorrow among the other potential founding members - Hume, Cooper, O'Hanlon, Currie and Paddy Devlin. It is anticipated that Thomas Gormley, ex-Nationalist M.P., may also join the new party at an early stage but, even with only five founding members, the new party will be stronger numerically than the Nationalist Party (which now contains only 4 M.P.s). The creation of the new party may eventually lead to the disappearance of the Nationalist Party as a significant force in the North.

Consequently the Minister suggests that a reply to Mr. McCorry's letter in the following terms might be suitable:

"The Taoiseach has now seen your letter of 14th February and has



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- 2 -

asked me to thank you for the expressions of appreciation at the Executive of the Nationalist Party concerning his policy in relation to recent events in the North.

The Taoiseach has asked me also to assure you of his continuing and constant concern about the progress of events in the North bearing in mind at all times that reunification of the country by peaceful means, with due respect to the attitudes of all significant bodies of opinion, is and will remain the foundation on which long-term policy must be based. In this respect the Taoiseach welcomes the views of the Nationalist Party which can of course be conveyed to him at any time."

*John McColgan*

Rúnaí Príobháideach.