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Title: Copy letter from Ambassador of Ireland to Great Britain Donal O'Sullivan to Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs HJ McCann, reporting discussions with Stewart Crawford of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, regarding the Safeguarding of Employment (Northern Ireland) Act and various long-term ideas for a solution to the Northern Ireland problem.

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Strictly Confidential

June 2nd 1971

Dear Secretary

At a Dinner given last evening by the Norwegian Ambassador for a Parliamentary Delegation from his country, which is visiting Dublin today, I met Sir Stewart Crawford and Mr Ford of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. I took the opportunity with both of repeating in some detail our concern about the Safeguarding of Employment (Northern Ireland) Act. In fact, I pointed out that were it not for our casual meeting at the dinner I would have had to seek an urgent call on one or other of them as I had just received instructions to this effect following your letter of the 28th May to Ambassador Peck. Both undertook to take note of what I had said and to report in the Department.

I was able after dinner to have a quiet chat with Sir Stewart on the Northern question. He started off by referring to the Taoiseach's recent statement to which exception was taken here and said he was very sorry to have to adopt such a strong line "but there were pressures on us", the reference here being, I felt, to the reaction of Mr Faulkner. Sir Stewart then assured me that the last thing London wants is to create difficulties for the Taoiseach as they understand his problems. Sir Stewart went on to praise the statements subsequently made by the Taoiseach and added the curious comment that "when he seems to be using his own words there is no problem".

From there, Sir Stewart proceeded to tell me that Ambassador Peck is to be instructed shortly (he is coming to London tomorrow) to start soundings about a suitable date for a meeting between the Taoiseach and Mr Heath. The early autumn is the time in mind here i.e. after the parading period and perhaps when the two Parliaments are still in recess.

Sir Stewart expressed himself as quite pessimistic about the situation in the short-term. I said I shared his feeling and added the view that things have reached a stage where serious thought should be given to a long-term solution. He admitted that his own mind is slowly turning in the same direction and he asked "would it not be possible to think in terms of some federal arrangement". I told him that a federal arrangement which would bring us within the Commonwealth would be quite unacceptable to us even as an interim measure. He said he understood our position but this did not exclude the possibility of some other solution on the same lines.

I then mentioned the suggestion of an Economic Council for Ireland stressing in that context that membership of the EEC will inevitably bring the North and South closer together and present a situation where, for economic reasons, there should be the fullest co-operation because of the similarity of the problems in both parts of the Island. This, I said, could be a first step. It could be followed by the setting up of a Council of Ireland as provided for in the 1920 Act, a development which, in turn, would at the appropriate moment lead to full reunification. These, I stressed, were personal observations which I had no authority to make. Sir Stewart said he was very glad that we were able to have this chat. I could take it that the idea of a long-term solution is not altogether absent from the Prime Minister's mind. "He is nothing if not a realist and this long drawn out trouble in

the North is not doing the reputation of either of our countries any good abroad". It would, I said, be a tremendous step forward if the Taoiseach and the Prime Minister could talk about the long-term solution, even in an exploratory way, at their coming meeting. His comment on this was "we'll see. There is no shortage of goodwill as between these two men".

Yours sincerely

DONAL O'SULLIVAN

Ambassador

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