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Reference Code: 2003/16/465

Title: Copy letter from Donal O’Sullivan, Ambassador of Ireland to Great Britain, to R McDonagh, Assistant Secretary at the Department of Foreign Affairs, reporting a discussion with Sir Denis Greenhill, Permanent Secretary of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, on the possibility of political progress in Northern Ireland.

Creation Date(s): 26 July, 1972

Level of description: Item

Extent and medium: 2 pages

Creator(s): Department of the Taoiseach

Access Conditions: Open

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July 26th 1972

CONFIDENTIAL

Dear Assistant Secretary

At a Reception last evening in the home of Lord Jellicoe, Leader of the House of Lords and Minister in charge of the Civil Service Department, I had a brief talk on the North with Sir Denis Greenhill, Permanent Secretary, Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

Sir Denis expressed himself as hopeful that at last there is now a prospect of some real progress towards solving the problem. The debate in the House of Commons on Monday was a great help to Mr. Whitelaw in that it revealed a strong feeling on both sides of the House that, following the events in Belfast on Friday afternoon, a serious effort has to be made to tackle the Provisional IRA. The Secretary of State had gone out of his way to be conciliatory towards the Provisionals by agreeing to meet them. That effort had failed. As Mr. Whitelaw indicated to the House any further discussion with them is out of the question. Because of their outrageous behaviour on Friday a different tactic is required but every effort will be made to deal with them on the basis of creating a minimum of inconvenience and of hostility from the minority.

At the same time Mr. Whitelaw will have to keep a close eye on the UDA. If they act up they will have to be given the same treatment. Their decision to oppose the Vanguard move for a rent and rates stoppage is a hopeful sign and there have been other indications of a private nature in recent days that the UDA can now be persuaded to calm down.

The most encouraging development of all is the decision of

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the SDLP to come into talks. It will be for them, as the elected representatives of the minority, to make their requirements "clearly and forcefully" known and their wishes will not be ignored.

I strongly emphasised to Sir Denis that any attempt at a solution which did not take fully into account the interest and influence of Dublin at political level could run the risk of failure. It was, therefore, necessary to involve the Dublin Government at least, and maybe the political parties too, in the working out of any arrangement. This point had, I said, been forcefully put to Mr. Whitelaw by my Minister at their recent meeting and I myself had been urging this in all my contacts. Sir Denis told me that he himself fully shared this view. He went on to say that if at any time it was felt that we were not being kept adequately in the picture he would like to be told. He continued by saying this "Anyhow it is now on the cards that the Taoiseach will be receiving an interesting communication fairly soon". That, he added, was for my own ears and he would not be drawn.

Yours sincerely

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