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DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

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27.9.72

21) September 1972

Dear O'Dowd

I enclose herewith copy of a record of the second day of the Darlington talks received from Mr. Peter Evans of the British Embassy.

Yours sincerely

H. J. O'Dowd Esq.
Department of the Taoiseach

H. J. O'Dowd
29.9.72
Riordan
Riordan's letter

H. J. O'Dowd
29.9.72

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RECORD OF THE SECOND DAY OF THE DARLINGTON TALKS

The second day's meeting returned to the theme of committees, and their structure and powers. No delegate shifted his position. Mr O'Neill and Mr Simpson pointed out the many difficulties that could arise, the former reiterating the importance of leaving divisive subjects to Westminster, and building a tradition of cooperation in government by developing committees with executive powers for non-divisive subjects. Mr Faulkner remained adamant for a two tier system, with executive ministers and advisory committees, emphasising the "parliamentary democracy" aspect. Mr O'Neill described the Unionist proposals as giving the shadow and not the substance of power. This period of discussion again showed the alliance party and N.I.L.P. ranged against the Unionists. Mr Simpson, who had fluffed his case on the choice of chairman at one stage in the Monday session, was pilloried by Mr Faulkner: this did not alter the outcome and has doubtless increased the gulf between the Unionists and the others. Though Mr Faulkner scored debating points, the discussion brought out that the Unionist proposals amounted to the re-importation of Stormont. The Secretary of State summed up by recording the fundamental disagreement between the Unionist call for an executive of ministers, and the other two parties who wanted an executive of committee chairmen.

The meeting then considered local government. Some mild anxiety was expressed about the implementation of the reforms, the problems of maintaining a check on appointments, etc., but argument (especially when Mr Faulkner spoke) tended to reflect the terms of the previous discussion on committee powers, and points were made in so far as they underlined the arguments that had been deployed on committee powers. The Secretary of State summed up by saying that all three parties were agreed that the local government machinery required some sort of regional assembly as a foundation.

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The afternoon session began with two procedural wrangles that provided the only real heat of the day. The Secretary of State proposed that today's discussion on security should avoid the controversial problem of where control should lie, which could be considered on Wednesday, and instead concentrate in "secret session" on problems that would face any administration. Mr Faulkner felt the need to broaden tomorrow's discussion to "control and security generally", on which delegates could express their views to the press. Mr O'Neill and Mr Simpson accepted the Secretary of State's proposal, the latter proposing that all three delegates should stand beside the Secretary of State before the TV cameras this evening when he explained why none of them was prepared to comment on their discussion. Mr Faulkner ducked so embarrassing a situation straight away, and all compromised on an agreed statement. All recognised that tomorrow's discussion will be broad enough to cover Mr Faulkner's request.

Mr O'Neill then asked whether, in the changed circumstances of the secret session, he could bring one of his advisers (he had Mr Oliver Napier in mind) to the table to speak. This re-opened the procedural squabble of Monday. Mr Faulkner insisted on the rules laid down in the letter of invitation: Mr O'Neill sought an adjournment: and after a short interval discussion was resumed, without concession by Mr Faulkner, and in a somewhat sour atmosphere. In the absence of competing stories this incident may figure in tomorrow's press. Mr O'Neill and Mr Napier will see the Secretary of State later this evening.

The discussion itself was curiously low key. The Secretary of State made it absolutely clear that if he was attacked on his record, he would defend himself with the utmost vigour, and possibly for that reason (and no doubt because complaints often go better in the press than they do when they can be answered in debate) Mr Faulkner avoided

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contentious issues. Detailed questions included police morale and recruitment, the protection of Security Forces' families, ways of increasing R.U.C. "acceptibility", etc. No one liked local police forces that were genuinely separate, though all approved of local recruitment. Mr O'Neill asked whether there were any grounds for hoping that I.R.A. offenders would be more severely dealt with in the Republic. The Secretary of State said some action had been taken: but, as everyone knew, more could be done, and possibly in some areas the writ of the Republic's Government just did not run. Mr Faulkner did not pursue this point, which seemed to exercise the Alliance Party and the N.I.L.P. rather more.

Tomorrow's meeting will continue with the discussion on control of security, the relationship with Westminster and the relationship with the Republic.

BRITISH EMBASSY
DUBLIN

28 September 1972