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PERSONAL AND CONFIDENTIALReport on Discussion between the Taoiseach and the
Prime Minister at a Working Dinner at 10 Downing Street
on 24th November, 1972

While the discussion which lasted more than three hours ranged over a wide and varied field, this report is confined to the Anglo-Irish aspects. The Prime Minister had with him Sir Alec Douglas-Home, Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, The Rt. Hon. Sir Burke Trend, Secretary of the Cabinet and Mr. Robert Armstrong, Principal Private Secretary. The Taoiseach was accompanied by the Ambassador.

In the course of a comprehensive introductory statement, the Taoiseach:-

1. adverted to the disabilities under which the minority in the North have existed for over 50 years;
2. expressed satisfaction with the line taken in the Green Paper, noted that UDI and integration are out and that a return to Stormont, as it was, is not contemplated;
3. warmly welcomed the concept of an "Irish dimension" which he stressed would need to be given meaningful expression;
4. welcomed the idea of a Council of Ireland which, he said, should be strong and have evolutionary responsibilities; *Possibilities*
5. said he was greatly encouraged by the statement in the Green Paper that any solution reached for the

*That if the
United States
would propose*

North must be acceptable to and acceptable ^{ed} by the Republic. Here the Taoiseach laid special emphasis on the fact that the solution reached, in order to be workable, must have the support and goodwill of the Republic. He strongly urged ^{it would have} the setting up ^{in the North} of an assembly with a multi-party executive;

- 6. Again reiterated his objections to the proposed plebiscite and to the stark nature of the two questions proposed. He mentioned the pressure which existed for the holding of a simultaneous plebiscite in the South;
- 7. If the plebiscite goes ahead, the White Paper should precede it.

The Taoiseach then went on to inform the Prime Minister of the circumstances of the arrest of MacStiofain. The arrest and charge of MacStiofain would, undoubtedly, face the Taoiseach with a strong reaction at home.

The Taoiseach adverted to the instruction given to Radio Telefis Eireann ^{to} desist from interviewing members of the IRA. Because of the flouting of this instruction in the case of MacStiofain, the Telefis Eireann Authorities had been sacked that evening and ^{the} new Authority appointed. This action, too, was bound to bring serious attacks on the Government. New legislation to facilitate the apprehension of members ^{of the IRA} is to be introduced ^{illegal organisations}

*subject to
certain
provisions
being put
on the part
of the Government
to*
In the Bill on Monday. This legislation, if approved, will place the onus of proof on the IRA and it will, no doubt, give rise to an outcry on the grounds that it is uncharacteristic of democratic legislation and it may ^{be secured}

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indeed by challenged as unconstitutional.

Here the Taoiseach firmly underlined his determination not to be deflected from his resolve to deal with the IRA because of the trouble he is likely to face from these developments. He mentioned the Special Court and said that out of some 130 cases tried before it, there have been 103 convictions. He spoke of the difficulties with which the Government is being faced in finding accommodation for all these prisoners.

The Taoiseach finally dealt in considerable detail with the recent allegations by a large group of priests in the North that people in the Catholic ghettos continued to be subjected to harassment and brutality by the armed forces.

The Prime Minister, in reply, welcomed the opportunity for a ^{talk} chat at this time with the Taoiseach. He was glad to see that there is a considerable meeting of minds between them on many of the issues to be faced. The British Government now wants to move ahead rapidly but they have yet to clear their minds on the precise content and timing of the White Paper. There are arguments for and against the issue of it in advance of the plebiscite. They are already firmly committed to holding the plebiscite as soon as the legislative and other procedures permit but the timing will, naturally, take full account of the security situation. Here the Taoiseach again urged that the White Paper should issue first.

On the Council of Ireland, the Prime Minister agreed that he could see it having important functions in the economic and social spheres especially in the context of the Common Market. There could be "consultation, discussion and

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contact" with Dublin on the scope of the Council but he could not agree to "negotiation" on it. The Prime Minister agreed later to a significant advance on this position.

The Prime Minister expressed appreciation of the efforts being made by the Taoiseach to deal with the IRA. He regarded the apprehension of MacStiofáin as an important step. He wished the Taoiseach well with the new legislative proposals and added that similar legislation may be what is needed in the North. The Taoiseach expressed himself as disturbed at the tendency at this end to continue to blame him for not doing more about the IRA and the Prime Minister indicated understanding.

The Prime Minister showed considerable interest in the action taken in relation to Telefís Éireann. This led to a general discussion on the problems which governments face with television and radio services. The Prime Minister admitted that he has his problems too and would wish at times to be able to take the same forthright action against the EBC.

The Prime Minister consulted his papers on the complaints by the priests about harassment and brutality. According to the evidence available to him, these complaints are greatly exaggerated. The matter will continue to be looked into in the greatest detail. Every encouragement should be given to those who have complaints to report them in the proper quarters. The Taoiseach could feel assured that all complaints will be fully and impartially investigated and appropriate consequential action taken. It seemed a bit ludicrous, however, for Father Wilson to see Mr. Whitelaw recently and to miss the opportunity

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of putting these complaints before him.

In the course of further discussion the Taoiseach again urged the need for an Assembly in the North with a multi-party executive. Furthermore, discrimination must be finally outlawed so that the two communities can at last learn to live and work together.

Reunification will continue to be the ideal of the overwhelming majority of the Irish people. It is an ideal for which there must be full scope for ~~legislation~~ ^{legitimate expression} expressed by the minority in the North.

Expression should be given to the concept of an Irish dimension by the setting up of a strong Council of Ireland which should have real evolutionary ^{responsibilities} responsibilities. The Taoiseach regretted that the Prime Minister could not agree to negotiations about the scope and functions of the Council. The Taoiseach then asked whether the Prime Minister could not at any rate agree to early meetings between officials on both sides in order to contribute towards a suitable proposal. The Prime Minister indicated that he would agree to this.

With great candour and considerable force the Taoiseach, in a concluding statement, appealed to the Prime Minister to make the most of the present opportunities and to avoid repeating the mistakes of the past. If correct and courageous decisions are not taken now trouble will erupt again. The restoration of peace then could prove a much more difficult matter. It was vitally essential in his view that the new Assembly in the North should give the minority a voice in the running of the area and that the minority should have a place in its executive. It was no less important that the Council of Ireland should be

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a strong one and should have built into it the possibility of evolution. If the right structures are now proposed the Taoiseach indicated that he will be prepared to accept and support them. He will also be prepared to consider the possibility of handling the security problem on an all Ireland basis.

The Prime Minister said he welcomed this very frank statement by the Taoiseach. He would take particular note of what was said and he again repeated that there was a good deal of common ground between them. They should keep in close touch in the months ahead and he was always ready to talk to the Taoiseach.

The discussion ended with a brief exchange of views on what might be said to the press.

The atmosphere throughout was most cordial.

D.O.
27/11/72