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Title: Note by Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs HJ McCann on discussions between himself, Ambassador of Great Britain to Ireland Arthur Galsworthy, and British Home Office official Philip Woodfield, regarding the difficulties posed by the participation of Ian Paisley in the forthcoming conference on the White Paper on Northern Ireland.

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S E C R E T

At the conclusion of the official talks with the British to-day, the British Ambassador asked that he and Mr. Philip Woodfield should have an opportunity of a word with me privately. They told me that they had learned from Mr. Frank Cooper, Permanent Secretary in the Northern Ireland Office, that Mr. Whitelaw is having great trouble with Mr. Paisley. Mr. Paisley is sticking to his interpretation of paragraph 112 of the White Paper and insisting on participating in the forthcoming Conference.

The Secretary of State is continuing his efforts to get Mr. Paisley's views independently on the Council of Ireland but, although Mr. Paisley accepted a first appointment to meet Mr. Whitelaw, he subsequently indicated that he would not turn up unless he was going to be at the Conference as well. A second attempt to arrange a meeting also proved abortive.

Mr. Whitelaw feels that in this situation he may have to ask Mr. Paisley to address the Conference in person but not to participate. This would mean that Mr. Paisley would be given an opportunity to address the Conference to give his views on a Council of Ireland and should immediately depart without participating in any of the discussions to follow.

Mr. Whitelaw hopes that it won't come to this but he felt that the Taoiseach and the Minister should be informed in the strictest confidence of this possibility. The British do not underestimate Mr. Paisley's capacity for creating trouble. They do not expect the same problem to arise in connection with Mr. Craig.

In our private conversation Mr. Woodfield also referred to the very real worries the British Government have about security in the context of the forthcoming Conference. They are particularly concerned about the security of the representatives coming from the North but they are also concerned about security generally and the possibility that both groups of extremists may do something desperate to try and wreck the Conference or the results thereof. Such action could be taken in Britain, in the North or down here.



29 Samhain 1973