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**Title:** Letter from Donal O’Sullivan, Ambassador of Ireland to the UK, to Hugh J McCann, Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs, concerning his recent meetings with William Whitelaw, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, and Edward Heath, British Prime Minister. Topics discussed at the meetings included talks at official level about a Council of Ireland, the new Northern Assembly and Executive, the drafting of the White Paper on Northern Ireland, and efforts being made by the Taoiseach, Jack Lynch, to combat IRA [Irish Republican Army] activities,

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*Mr Denton*  
*you may wish to see [unclear] 3/9/73*

*Mr Swift-*

*3/9/73*  
*Miss [unclear] 3/9/73*

Personal and Confidential

January 15th, 1973.

Dear Secretary

I called on the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland on Friday afternoon last. This meeting had been arranged by Lord Windlesham whom I had met a few days earlier. Mr. Whitelaw had with him his Principal Private Secretary as well as Sir Stewart Crawford of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Mr. Philip Woodfield, Deputy Head of the Northern Ireland Office. With officials present, Mr. Whitelaw is a good deal more cautious than he would otherwise be.

I took the same line with him as I did in my earlier talk with Lord Windlesham. I mentioned the conversations we are having at official level about the Council of Ireland and said we were quite disappointed at the rather negative attitude displayed at the meeting on New Year's Day. His reaction to this was that he "knows more than anyone else as to how much the Protestants will take". There would be no point in providing initially for a Council which they would refuse to work. It is much better to make a modest start, leaving open the possibility for development.

It seemed to me strange, I said, that his main concern was about the Protestant reaction. It was of equal importance, to my mind, that the overall solution should be acceptable to the minority. It should also be one which could command the support and goodwill of Dublin.

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Mr. Whitelaw readily accepted these points and said he would particularly welcome any views we wish to offer on the decision-making process in the new Assembly and on the composition of its Executive. Reverting to the question of the Council, he felt that it could, from the beginning, do very useful work on matters of common interest, mainly in the economic and social spheres. This could be achieved with a modest Council at the start. The important thing, in his view, is to ensure that the Council will build up confidence between North and South. With the growth of confidence, the Council would be bound to develop in a natural way and we can feel assured that its development will receive every encouragement from the Government here. Because of the reserved powers which Westminster will have to retain in relation to the North, it will need to have some form of involvement in the Council but this need not give it the character of an Anglo-Irish Council.

Mr. Whitelaw could not be budged on whether elections to the Assembly in the North will be based on P.R. A decision on this has yet to be taken. One of the great uncertainties is the type of representation an election will produce. Politics in the North are now so fragmented that an election could produce quite weird results. Mr. Whitelaw said he particularly wants to see "a proper and adequate representation from the minority side in the Assembly". If the election produces this result, it will be so much easier to give the minority a rightful place in the Executive. The minority should lose no time in organising themselves for the election. This is a point which he has stressed privately



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to some of <sup>these</sup> ~~the~~ political leaders and to the Cardinal. He feels very strongly about this as he has genuine doubts as to how far the SDLP can be regarded as representing the minority.

On the timing of the White Paper, he was also vague. He thought it should not be rushed. However, it will have to appear before the end of March. I recalled that the Prime Minister had indicated at his last meeting with the Taoiseach, and in a subsequent talk with me, his intention to give meaningful expression to the "Irish dimension". It seemed to me, and I stressed that I had no instructions in the matter, that another meeting between the two leaders was desirable before the White Paper took final shape. Mr. Whitelaw made no comment on this. However, Sir Stewart Crawford brought the point up in a separate talk I had with him afterwards. He asked "is the Taoiseach likely to be in London around St. Patrick's Day"? I said I thought not but, in any event, if he were to influence the contents of the White Paper, it would obviously be too late then to do so. Sir Stewart's question would seem to indicate that the issue of the White Paper is likely to succeed the ~~local elections~~ *plebiscite*.

Mr. Whitelaw asked me to convey his warmest appreciation to the Taoiseach for what he is doing in relation to the IRA. I undertook to do so and added that I hoped he would not mind my saying that there should be here a corresponding sense of obligation to the Taoiseach in relation to his wishes on the overall solution. He said he would take particular note of this and convey it to the Prime Minister.

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As it happened, I was able to have a private talk with the Prime Minister at a Fanfare for Europe party in the Italian Embassy last night. He was not aware that I had seen Mr. Whitelaw on Friday. I went over the whole ground with the Prime Minister laying particular stress on our disappointment at the way in which their thoughts about the Council are evolving. He said he was aware of this as he had seen a report of the New Year's Day meeting. As soon as he gets the present economic talks out of the way, he will give his personal attention to the White Paper. He said it is still only at the preliminary drafting stage. While again indicating that I had no instructions in the matter, I sounded him on the possibility of a fairly early meeting with the Taoiseach. I thought this desirable in view of Sir Stewart's question. The Prime Minister was completely on-coming. If the Taoiseach should want another meeting fairly soon, there will be no problem. The Prime Minister will be in America for two days at the beginning of February. He will be reasonably free for the rest of next month and will be quite prepared, if required, to make himself available for a full talk on the whole question. I said I would report to the Taoiseach on this.

The rest of my conversation with the Prime Minister was on the economic situation here and on the Common Market.

Yours sincerely

BONAL O'SULLIVAN

Ambassador

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