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Title: Copy letter by Ambassador of Ireland to Great Britain Donal O'Sullivan to Hugh McCann, Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs, reporting a conversation with Prime Minister Edward Heath, mainly relating to the upcoming general election in the Republic of Ireland.

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17 Grosvenor Place
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February 7th, 1973.

Personal and Confidential

Dear Secretary

I had the opportunity of a brief chat with the Prime Minister before a lunch given today by the Lord Mayor of Liverpool to mark the opening of the Merseyside Development Office. I was in conversation with the Danish and Italian Ambassadors when the Prime Minister joined us. He took me aside for a few moments. The Prime Minister said that he hoped the Taoiseach would understand his motivation for suggesting a postponement of the meeting between them foreshadowed for this month. There could, he said, be embarrassment if the meeting were to take place ahead of the General Election and he referred in this context to certain strong criticisms which he himself had offered of the acceptance by Harold Wilson, prior to the last General Election here, of an invitation to visit the U.S.S.R. immediately following the Election.

The Prime Minister asked me to convey to the Taoiseach his best wishes at this time. He went on to say "your Prime Minister has obviously chosen the best time for the Election from the point of view of the likely result". I replied that while that may understandably be an element in the situation, I believed that the Taoiseach was at least equally motivated by the need to have confirmation of the support of the public for his policies in view of the very important developments which lie ahead.

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The Prime Minister asked if in my view the result of the Election is a foregone conclusion. While indicating that I am in no sense a politician, I said I thought that one should not be over-confident. For one thing we are faced at home with much the same type of inflationary tendency which exists here but perhaps to a lesser degree. More important still is the consideration that the Taoiseach has, with great courage, been giving effect to the new Offences Against the State legislation in recent months. One had to wait and see what effect this would have on public opinion at home especially among the younger voters.

The Prime Minister then adverted to what he described as "the very helpful working relations which I have with your Prime Minister" and said he expects the Taoiseach will be looking for a meeting with him shortly after the Election. I said I thought this is quite likely. He asked me to let the Taoiseach know that he will be prepared to do his best to fall in with the Taoiseach's wishes about a meeting and he hopes that a Friday evening meeting would be convenient to the Taoiseach "as this would enable us to sit down in a leisurely way to talk things over".

One of my partners at lunch was Mr. Christopher Chataway, a Minister in the Department of Trade and Industry, who took the initiative in bringing up with me the Northern problem and I left him in no doubt as to our view that the time has come when the U.D.A. and their associates should be dealt with effectively. He listened with great attention to what I had to say to him, expressed

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himself as being totally out of sympathy with the majority side in the North and said he would take a very early opportunity to have a chat with Mr. Whitelaw particularly on what I had said on the security aspect.

Yours sincerely

DONAL O'SULLIVAN

Ambassador

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