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Title: Memorandum by Dermot Nally, Assistant Secretary, Department of the Taoiseach, reporting on a telephone conversation with Maurice Hayes, Assistant to the Chairman of the Northern Ireland Constitutional Convention, on progress of its work.

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ROINN AN TAOISIGH



NORTHERN IRELAND

NOTE:-

Mr. Maurice Hayes, Assistant to the Chairman of the Northern Ireland Constitutional Convention, 'phoned this morning to, as he said, let us know how things were going. He said that at present the atmosphere was a little bit sour but not really too bad. He had the impression that the SDLP were over-reacting - in fact they might even be described as being a bit hysterical. Purely in their own interests, it did not seem that they would be able to sustain public interest in debates on procedural points for long. They were possibly feeling a bit bruised as a result of the Convention Election but this should not lead them to under-estimating their strength in the Convention. According to Mr. Hayes, they are far better than they appear to think themselves.

At the same time, Mr. Hayes said that in the business committee they hadn't done quite as well as they might have, basically because they did not appear to have done their homework. On the record, the Unionists look very reasonable in their work in this committee. There were respectable Parliamentary precedents for most of the changes which had been made in the rules. Mr. Hayes said that these could be oppressive, if used in that way, but the Chairman of the Convention was no fool. ~~As Chairman~~ he would not tolerate unfair practices. Mr. Hayes said that he thought the SDLP would be extremely foolish to break on the question of the rules.

He said also that the Chairman had the right to present the draft report of the Convention and that this, of course, would be prepared by him or in his office. The Chairman intended to have the SDLP in again before the Convention meets.

I thanked Mr. Hayes for his 'phone call and said that a great deal of what he had been saying could very usefully be conveyed to the SDLP, if it were done discreetly. Mr. Hayes did not demur. He said that he was not without hope for the future of the Convention - the Chairman was certainly no fool and would not allow unfair practices to be operated. The draft report which he would present would have considerable moral backing.

I then 'phoned Mr. Donlon, Department of Foreign Affairs, and we agreed that it would be useful to convey to Mr. Hume that it might be useful ^{if} he were to make discreet contact with Mr. Hayes on the points about the Chairman's presenting a report (which would be written into the records of the procedure of the Convention) and his intentions of enforcing fair procedures. Mr. Donlon will do this.

[Handwritten signature]

21st May 1975

- 1. Taoiseach *ll 21/5.*
- 2. Secretan *21/5*

To see please.

[Handwritten signature]

*Mr. Hayes or Hume
to see, in Mr. Donlon's
File To see, w.
2 blair
for Convention file
under 21/5/75
w.k.
23/5/75*