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Reference Code: 2006/133/435

Title: Letter to the Lester Wolff, Chairman,
Sub-Committee on Future Foreign Policy,
Committee on International Relations, United
States of America House of Representatives
from Dr Garrett FitzGerald, TD, Minister for
Foreign Affairs with reference to the Sub-
Committee's hearings on Northern Ireland;
document included as briefing material for visit
by Taoiseach, Liam Cosgrave, TD, to the
United States of America, 16-22 March 1976

Creation Date(s): 10 October 1975

Extent and medium: 2 pages

Creator(s): Department of the Taoiseach

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Attach. to Paper No. 47 (con)

AMBASÁID NA hÉIREANN
EMBASSY OF IRELAND
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20008

October 10, 1975

The Honorable Lester Wolff
Chairman
Sub-Committee on Future Foreign Policy
Committee on International Relations
U.S. House of Representatives
WASHINGTON D.C. 20515.

Dear Mr. Wolff:

It was good of you to suggest calling on me and I was glad to have an opportunity to give you an indication of my Government's views on the question of hearings in your Sub-Committee on Northern Ireland.

I think it might be useful if I set out in writing the fundamental points in our attitude on this important question.

1. The question of holding hearings is one for decision by the Congress.
2. The timing of hearings is also, of course, a question for decision by the Congress, which, in settling on a date, will, I know, wish to take full account of the political situation on the ground in Northern Ireland. We are now at a very delicate stage in negotiations between the political representatives of the two communities in Northern Ireland, against a background of intense inter-communal strife. In the light of propaganda (however misleading) being disseminated about the purpose of these proposed Congressional hearings by the supporters of the Provisional IRA in the United States, their convening at this time might, despite the best efforts of your Sub-Committee to maintain impartiality, be seen by Loyalist politicians and their supporters in Northern Ireland as an attempt by the Provisionals to mobilize American influence against their interest. This could well lead to a renewed hardening of attitudes on the part of those Loyalist politicians who have recently shown some willingness to compromise, and to an intensification of the continuing campaign of assassinations of Catholics by Loyalist extremists which could escalate to a civil war situation. As I mentioned to you, the immediate and over-riding concern of my Government, to which everything else must take second place, is to prevent civil war in Northern Ireland.



AMBASÁID NA hÉIREANN

EMBASSY OF IRELAND

WASHINGTON, D. C. 20008

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3. As my officials and I have repeatedly stated, it is my Government's firm view that, if hearings are held on Northern Ireland in the U.S. Congress, the witnesses should be confined to those whom the people of Ireland have authorised to speak for them, that is, those people democratically elected to the Dail and Seanad (the two Houses of Parliament in the Republic of Ireland) and the Constitutional Convention in Northern Ireland, or those whom they may nominate to speak for them. The electoral system now being used to return members to these assemblies is proportionally representative. In the case of the Dail and the Northern Convention, voters express their preferences as between candidates in geographical constituencies of from three to eight seats, thus giving representation even to local minorities in each of over fifty areas throughout Ireland - one of the most democratic systems of free elections in existence.

4. The democratic Government and the people of the Republic could not, as I told you, accept that it would be appropriate for the Congress of another country to call as witnesses on the affairs of Ireland, persons speaking for groups which the Irish people have overwhelmingly rejected in free elections, all the more so where the groups concerned are political organs of revolutionary bodies carrying out campaigns of violence against their fellow-countrymen. I believe that, in the event that a committee of the parliament of which I am a member, were to call as witnesses spokesmen for political groups representing revolutionary organisations in the United States which use violence to further their political purposes, the Government, Congress and people of your country would, very understandably, see such a procedure as an unfriendly act.

Yours sincerely,

Garret FitzGerald
Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ireland.