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Secretary
Department of Foreign Affairs

Yesterday afternoon I was received on an official call by Dr David Owen, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. I have, of course, met Dr Owen on a number of occasions since taking up my post but this was the formal call that all Ambassadors pay to the Secretary of State. Dr Owen, as you will recall, took up his Ministry at approximately the same time as my arrival here and has been seeing Ambassadors in turn.

Dr. Owen began our talk by saying how much he had enjoyed meeting our Minister in Brussels last week. He hoped very much to deepen this acquaintanceship and would be very happy to see Mr O'Kennedy at any time he was coming to London or passing through it. He was sure that arrangements for the meeting could be made at comparatively short notice and outside regular hours if necessary. I thanked the Secretary of State for his invitation and said I was aware that he had mentioned this matter to the Minister in Brussels who appreciated it greatly and would, I was sure, be very happy to take it up though, of course, when travelling to Brussels he generally flew there direct.

The conversation then turned to the fisheries question. On this the Secretary of State expressed the view that it would be better not to have any clear-cut formulation of Community policy on this in the near future. He would prefer a Community policy to involve, over the next 18 months or two years, in a system of ad hoc decisions so that when the period of some doubt had ended the Community would discover that quietly and unobtrusively a policy had been created. This he felt would be much more acceptable

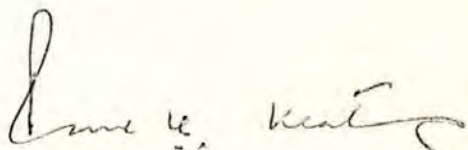
to public opinion than a legalistic framework with general implications which would underline the concessions that individual countries had made and not what they had gained from the compromises of their partners. He said that he felt that a compromise was inevitable and that he hoped to achieve for Britain a 12 mile exclusive zone and a 50 mile band for the other Community countries. He then adverted to the problem of historical rights and said that this was a very imprecise term since the rights originally exercised, or rather the type of fishery methods originally employed, were really different from that used in modern fishery vessels.

The conversation then turned to the ~~North of Ireland~~ and he said that he was very happy not to be deeply involved in this problem himself. He felt that Mr Mason was doing a good job and that some progress was being made. This was, however, a matter which could be discussed by the Taoiseach and Mr Callaghan at their meeting when it takes place. He felt that the date of this meeting was about right since the Taoiseach would wish beforehand to review the developments in the situation in the last few years. They were acting on the basis that the new Government would not greatly alter the policy over the last few years, which they felt had been helpful. I replied that the Government was still considering its policy on the matter and that while possibly they ^{would} show differences in style and emphasis it was unlikely that the general attitude of working towards an agreed solution would vary.

Dr. Owen then referred to the new Minister for Justice and said that they had been very happy with the cooperation they had received from his predecessor particularly with regard to the SAS case where he had acted with the utmost correctness and in a constructive way. It can be taken from this, I feel, that the British Government are most anxious to continue the present level of security cooperation and that they find it satisfactory. This will be useful in case we are attacked publicly here for a lack of adequate measures to control the use of our territory by the Provisionals.

I then talked to Dr. Owen about the present crisis with regard to the economy here. He said that the situation was delicate and would be difficult for the next year or so but that he felt confident that Liberal support would continue. Everybody recognised that they must not reach a wage increase position which would lead to roaring inflation and it appeared that the present Government was best able to deal with this problem so that not only for party reasons but for national reasons it was essential that there should not be an election at this time. He was quite confident that there would not be an election before April 1978 and he hoped that the Government would stay in Office until 1979. There were many problems to face and the situation was complex hence something unforeseen could of course jeopardise this forecast. In his conversation Dr Owen referred to the inflation problem and expressed the view that we also had great difficulties in this regard. I said that this was true but that, of course, our present position with regard to growth of inflation was better than the British one and that we were encouraged by the growth in our exports and in the GNP.

Dr Owen is going to America this week-end to discuss with Mr Vance the Rhodesian question. He refused, however, to be drawn on Southern Africa questions and contented himself by saying that he hoped something useful would emerge.



Ambassador