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DÁIL ÉIREANN
BAILE ÁTHA CLIATH. 2.
(Dublin, 2).

June 12 1978

An Taoiseach
Mr Jack Lynch TD
Dail Eircann
Dublin 2

Dear Taoiseach :

I was in Kiltyclogher again on Sunday last and attended a meeting which was attended by at least forty persons. This covered my clinic as well as community' affairs.

I found the people generally in reasonably good spirits, despite the difficulties they have encountered down through the years because of their location and the many drawbacks attached to the area. The most potent one at present is the failure of anyone to interest themselves in their affairs since the blasting by the British army in 1971 and 1974. The blasting in 1971 occasioned considerable damage to the Technical School which is still a ruin. The blasting of 1974 produced a different result and there is no doubt that British army personnel crossed the border into the Republic and warned the adjoining residents that the bridge was going to be blown up and warned all they could to evacuate their homes at around 8.00 am on the morning in question. The people concerned protested that they would have to see the Gardai, but they were informed by British army personnel that the Gardai were already aware of their intentions, as were the Irish military authorities.

Whether or not agreement was reached between the Government of 1974 and the British Army I am unable to confirm, but the local residents - and not the stupid ones - are of the opinion that there was, and the lack of action on the part of the Gardai and the Irish army to prevent the blasting of the bridge certainly lends credence to this suggestion.

Over....

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I have examined the bridge and the houses involved and there is no doubt in my mind that the buttress on the Republic side had been blasted away. The ironic thing about the blowing up of the bridge is that it does not prevent people from crossing from Fermanagh to Leitrim and, to facilitate this, the British army even provided a foot-bridge, however rough and ready.

There is no doubt that an infringement of our sovereignty occurred at the time of the blasting and citizens of our State have suffered and continue to suffer loss, damage, inconvenience and frustration by the failure of the Government to act on their behalf. The local papers have published details of abortive actions taken against Leitrim County Council for malicious injury, many of which have been dismissed. Indeed, a number of people very nearly found themselves in contempt of Court because of their ignorance of the law which provides for malicious injury claims to be lodged within seven days of the event, and to be formally lodged in writing. Everyone concerned, both inside and outside the State, knew that serious malicious damage had occurred and I am surprised that the District Justice acted in the manner that he did.

However, hopefully the tension has eased somewhat since the Minister for Foreign Affairs supplied me with a letter which I had published in the local papers, including the front page of the Leitrim Observer.

There are many claims of which I have no details, but I have been given full information on three claims, one of which borders on the chronic and that is the claim of Mrs Elizabeth Sealy, Kiltyclogher, who had to vacate her home when the blasting took place. Temporary accommodation was provided for her by the County Council and she continues to be harrassed by the Council to find alternative accommodation. [REDACTED] Her home has been seriously damaged and all outbuildings have collapsed.

Over.....

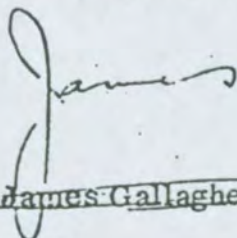
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3.

I would like you, as Taoiseach, to acquaint yourself of the particular problems of Kiltyclogher and would suggest that the Irish Government carry out the necessary repairs to all damaged houses and, subsequently, to take appropriate action against the British Government. This makes sense to me. It restores the credibility of the Government in the eyes of the local populace and gives them protection against any further breaches across the border. Furthermore, it enables them to understand that it is one thing for members of the British army to deal with men of the calibre of the Provisionals, who are an illegal body, and another thing to infringe the sovereignty of another State and cause damage and upset to its citizens. If we wish to remain in power we must not as a Government allow acts of this nature to go unnoticed insofar as compensation is concerned.

I will be in the Dail during the week and will call to see you in the hope that you might spare me a few minutes if you are not too busy.

Yours sincerely



~~James Gallagher TD~~