

NATIONAL ARCHIVES

IRELAND



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Mr. Murray

I envisage a further inter-Departmental discussion about A, B & C below in the near future.

Inkhouse
26.7.80

Northern Ireland

Meeting with Mr. Michael Moriarty, Assistant Under Secretary, Northern Ireland Office.

1. The meeting took place in the British Embassy residence and was attended by the British Ambassador, Mr. Moriarty, Mr. Staples and Mr. Smith, on the British Side, and by Messrs. Nally, Dorr, O' Hanrahan and Nelligan. The discussions lasted about 3 hours. The main points were:-

- (1) Mr. Moriarty's view that the White Paper discussions were not yet moribund. He considered that the Secretary of State would pursue his dialogue with the four parties concerned, in Northern Ireland, to the very end, in an effort to find out if any form of administration was acceptable or attainable. There was a basic pull in unionism towards devolution: this pull was being counter-acted by certain elements, particularly POWELL, who saw the solution in further integration. It was indicated to Mr. Moriarty, that the Government here was not dismissive of the White Paper proposals, but saw them, simply, as inadequate to the problem. The most valuable part of the White Paper was its framework and background, rather than the specific proposals. The Paper had gone along way towards recognising the legitimacy of Irish aspirations and the possibility, however remote, in the eyes of the Papers authors, of their being attained, by consent;
- (2) That a meeting with the British Prime Minister might not be on, at the end of September, or, might not even be desirable, in view of the possibility of the White Paper discussions being still in progress then. In reply it was stressed that there was no need for the Paper discussions to be concluded before the Taoiseach's meeting the Prime Minister. The two series of talks could go on in parallel. There was also the likelihood of a meeting between the Foreign Minister and the Northern Secretary, before the Prime ministerial meeting. The question of a meeting of officials, early in September, to discuss ways of giving

A 1

substance to these other meetings was discussed. It would be necessary that the Prime ministerial, meeting, in particular, should be well prepared so that the conclusions were not "thin".

B. Possible ways of achieving this are to be considered further by both sides. It was stressed, in particular, that in any changes, or any move forward, there must be balance - in other words, there could be no suggestion of movement on the part of the Irish side alone, unmatched by some change or movement on the British side;

(3) The British side emphasised that there were two target groups which needed attention. The first is British Back-Bench Conservative opinion, which held strongly to the view, even now, that once terrorism was quelled the problem would be ended. The second group was the majority in Northern Ireland, whose support, for change, was essential. The negative effect of continual repetition of the present guarantee was stressed - and, in particular, the licence this gave to the unionists to tell even the British Government that they were not interested or would not participate in any initiative to improve the present situation. The existence of a broader dimension beyond Northern Ireland was hardly taken into account;

(4) The question was raised of whether existing forms of co-operation, which went on between the two countries, could be elevated and given a higher political profile, as to demonstrate to both majority and minority in Northern Ireland just how full and fruitful these forms of co-operation between the two countries are. C 1 This question is to be considered further at a official level.

In general, the point was made by the British that there should not be any assumption that among unionists or among conservative opinion in the U.K. unity was seen as a logical or natural conclusion to the present conflict. There was still a very large selling job to be done, on this point, not least to the Prime Minister herself. The need was also stressed of extreme care in the way any suggestion for a conference was put forward.

24th July, 1980.

(Copies to Mrssrs. Ó hAnnracháin, Kirwan and Neligan)