

NATIONAL ARCHIVES

IRELAND



Reference Code:	2014/105/827
Creation Date(s):	3 December 1984
Extent and medium:	2 pages
Creator(s):	Department of the Taoiseach
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IRISH EMBASSY, LONDON.

17 Grosvenor Place
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SECRET

3 December 1984

Dear Assistant Secretary,

I met Mr. Nicholas Scott, MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State in the NIO, at a party over the weekend. In the course of a brief conversation he made the following points:

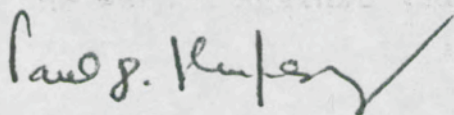
- He had been sufficiently upset by the handling of the Summit on the British side to consider resigning. I said that it would be unfortunate if the only member of the present NIO Ministerial team with a long experience of the problems were to depart. He told me that he will not be in the NIO for more than another year.
- One of the reasons for what happened was that they were unable to obtain the Prime Minister's attention until less than a week before the Summit.
- He warned against underestimating the new Secretary of State. He would find him better to work with than we imagined.
- It was his intention as the Minister responsible to seek the repeal of the Flags and Emblems Act. He did not anticipate opposition on a scale sufficient to prevent him achieving his objective.
- I made the point that the recent flexibility shown by the Unionist parties was a direct consequence of the challenge presented by the Forum Report: therefore, the

Prime Minister's dismissal of the Report had let them off the hook. Scott agreed and went on to say that at present nothing positive was likely to emerge from any further talks between the parties in Northern Ireland. The way forward lay in developing proposals in an Anglo-Irish framework. He drew my attention to the answer given by the Prime Minister in Hansard of 23 November to a written question from Harold McCusker MP. The question was whether the statement by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Mr. Prior, in the Commons on 2 July continued to represent the Government's policy towards the Report of the New Ireland Forum. The Prime Minister had answered with a simple "yes". Scott said that we should note the implications of that reply. (I have since found out from the NIO that McCusker's question was put down on Wednesday 21 November, two days after the Summit: it raises some interesting questions).

- Scott said Ministers found NIO civil servants negative in their advice and excessively preoccupied with what the Unionists might do.

As we parted, he expressed interest in remaining in contact on a more regular basis.

Yours sincerely,



Paul D. Dempsey
Minister

Mr. Michael Lillis
Assistant Secretary
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