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AN RÚNAÍOCHT ANGLA-ÉIREANNACH

ANGLO-IRISH SECRETARIAT

BÉAL FEIRSTE

BELFAST



21 October, 1992

Mr O'Sullivan
Taoiseach
You will wish to note
McCarthy
Mr O'Sullivan 11/10/92
13-10-92

Mr. Sean O hUiginn
Assistant Secretary
Anglo-Irish Division
Department of Foreign Affairs
Dublin 2.

Dear Assistant Secretary

Taoiseach's speech at Bodinstown

I have written separately about a discussion with my opposite number, Robert Alston, last evening about the Talks and other matters.

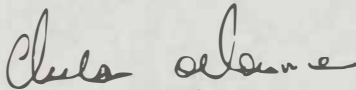
Alston also gave some reasons why the Secretary of State found the Taoiseach's speech "encouraging" as he said to reporters yesterday. Although the British continued to feel that we should substitute "would" for "could" and regretted that the Taoiseach had not taken the opportunity to do so, they found the tone of the speech more oncoming to Unionists and a number of elements interesting, for example:

- References to the 1920/21 period went further than the "meagre" account we had given so far of our reasons for raising the Government of Ireland Act (?). We would not expect them to agree with us but they had noted the exposition of our understanding of the thinking behind the Government of Ireland Act and the Treaty, ie, that they had been based on the concept of the essential unity of Ireland to be re-established as soon as practicable and accepted by the British Government as a desirable long-term aim; and that this balance was subsequently lost and forgotten. (I said I would be interested to know where the British disagreed with this thinking, if they did disagree.)
- They saw the reference to the recognition of "existing constitutional realities" as an advance (towards explicit recognition of Northern Ireland's status within the UK) to be balanced, of course, by an acknowledgement of the value of a future that Nationalists believed would be best for all the people of Ireland.
- The view that the stressing by one community of its links with Britain and by the other of links between the two parts of Ireland, were not necessarily

incompatible objectives depending on the balance between them and the form they took. (The British took this to mean not necessarily incompatible with intermediate East/West and North/South structures or with a step by step approach.)

- Lastly, the suggestion of simultaneous referenda North and South was new. Interestingly, Alston said the British themselves have no objection to the proposal. He made clear that they were fully aware of Unionist anxieties that it might be seen as an exercise in self-determination by the people of the whole island and that, indeed, earlier in his speech the Taoiseach, had said that the element of self-determination of the Irish nation was the most important and was "unassailable". It would need to be made clear that the referenda would require a majority in each jurisdiction. Alston asked if we thought the phrasing of the referendum would need to be the same in each jurisdiction or if we could accept a difference? Some difference might be necessary, in any case, for technical reasons. (This is worth thinking about.)

Yours sincerely



Declan O'Donovan
Joint Secretary