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Visit to Dublin by Dr. John Dunlop on 22 October, 1993

Dr. John Dunlop, a former Moderator of the Presbyterian Church, had a meeting with the Taoiseach in Government Buildings on Friday last. I understand that it took place at the Taoiseach's request. No officials were in attendance though at Dr. Dunlop's request, he met separately Mr. Seán O'hUiginn, Department of Foreign Affairs. The following are the main points to have emerged in casual conversation between Dr. Dunlop and myself:

- Describing the situation in Belfast as tense and uncertain, Dr. Dunlop registered particular concern over the escalation in Loyalist paramilitary violence which he said is being orchestrated and directed by leaders of 'great evil'. He had no idea what political objectives they could possibly hope to achieve. I responded that the existence or otherwise of any political agenda on their part falls very much within the realm of subjective interpretation. It was my personal view that blind sectarian hatred is the primary if not exclusive motivator of the Loyalist paramilitary activists. However, support and active encouragement would appear to be given by a small and select group of professional and politically aware middle-class Unionists. Dr. Dunlop offered the view that 'affording any hearing to such terrorists only encourages them to continue'.

- On the general political situation in Northern Ireland, he said that a solution is impossible if moderate Unionists are not brought on board. Their consent is required and they cannot be forced. I responded that the Government seeks a consensual approach to a resolution of the conflict and coercion does not enter the equation. The reality is that a sustainable peace must have as its foundations political arrangements to which each tradition can generally give their allegiance. These would need to be predominantly perceived by each tradition as fair and equitable. Of necessity, they would have to be the product ^{of it, I think} a two-way process of compromise. In the event of resumed dialogue, neither moderate Unionists nor moderate Nationalists could shirk their responsibilities with regard to compromise if agreement is to be reached. Dr. Dunlop replied that attempts to bring on board extremists on either side are futile. The solution, he said, rests in 'securing agreement between the moderates occupying the middle ground'.

On the Hume/Adams initiative, his only direct reference was that the Unionist community is 'rife with speculation and rumour', in particular with regard to the precise nature of the proposals.

On later accompanying Dr. Dunlop to Iveagh House, he described his meeting with the Taoiseach as a 'good heart-to-heart chat and very worthwhile'. He made no reference to the substance of what transpired or indeed to the topics discussed.

Jerry Collins
29 October, 1993