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RÚNN AN TAOISIGH

Uimhir.....

Mr. Whelan
We may await developments
No doubt we will get a report on the meeting with John Port on 13 Sept.
We can keep it under review in the context of contacts between the Taoiseach and PM Blair
20.9.00

Rosemary Nelson

Note of Discussion with Secretary-General Gallagher

1. We discussed the issues I had raised re A and B, page 2 of the attached report. We agreed

   (1) that it would be overloading or overstraining the relationship between the Taoiseach and Prime Minister Blair for the former to ask the latter to meet the Nelson family. We had already done this in relation to the Finucane family and Mr. Blair had acceded to the request and met the family;

   (2) that when the Minister for Foreign Affairs had said to the family of Rosemary Nelson that a meeting between the family and the Taoiseach would not be a problem in principle, it was left open to the family to pursue the matter further, if they wished to do so. Unless and until they did follow up, there was no basis for our taking any action.

2. I conveyed the above to Mr. Gary Ansbro, Department of Foreign Affairs. He agreed but as to (1) felt that what the Minister intended was that he would ask the Taoiseach to raise with Mr. Blair the issue of the effectiveness of the investigation by Colin Port. Mr. Ansbro felt that Rosemary Nelson's family would build their case gradually, building up to a request for a meeting with the Taoiseach. Referring to the report of the meeting, he stressed that their Minister had underlined the need to assess soon where Port's investigation had got to and how likely it was to achieve results, on the basis that if it is not likely to produce results, the Irish Government position would move to publicly calling for a public inquiry.

3. Mr. Ansbro and I agreed on the need for us, together with the Attorney General, to consider soon the best next steps in the Robert Hamill case. Mr. Ansbro mentioned that his section are now heavily engaged in drawing up Irish Government views on the Criminal Justice Review Group's report in Northern Ireland.

W. Kirwan,
Assistant Secretary,
Northern Ireland Division.
19 September, 2000.

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