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3rd October, 1969.

You will recall the conversation we had on the telephone on 23rd September about my issue that day of a statement in reply to remarks which Mr. Lynch had made on the Northern Ireland situation. You told me that you felt you should have been consulted about such a statement before it was made and that indeed it had been accepted at the last Downing Street meeting that there should be such consultation.

Frankly, we had not realised that we had entered into such an obligation. We had taken the meaning of paragraph 2 in the joint Declaration to be that the United Kingdom Government would take full responsibility for all international aspects of the North-South relationship whether in dealing with third countries or with international organisations such as the United Nations or the Council of Europe. On your side, however, you appear to have intended it to convey something a good deal wider, and if this is so one can appreciate the danger of undesirable misunderstanding.

The particular statement which gave occasion to your conversation with me had, in fact, been shown in draft to Oliver Wright who did indeed suggest one or two changes which were incorporated in the released text. The statement as a whole was meant to be as helpful and constructive as possible within the limits of our political realities and was, I think, accepted as such, not least by responsible press and other opinion in the Irish Republic.

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However, I thought it essential to mention this discussion to my colleagues at a Cabinet Meeting since any practice in a matter of this sort must obviously be applied to all Ministers. The unanimous view of my colleagues, which they asked me to communicate to you, was that an absolute requirement to "clear" in advance all statements touching on North-South relations would raise the gravest difficulties.

The principal objects of the Unionist Party, as indicated in the Constitution and Rules of the Ulster Unionist Council, are "to maintain Northern Ireland as an integral part of the United Kingdom" and "to uphold and defend the Constitution and Parliament of Northern Ireland". Like our predecessors we have always taken the view that these objects require us, when Ministers in the Irish Republic make unacceptable statements about the constitutional position of Northern Ireland, to state clearly the position consistently upheld by our own electorate. We have never sought to rush unprovoked into this contentious field. If unacceptable statements had not so often been made from Dublin, we could happily have concentrated our attention upon other things.

Because this is such a fundamental issue in our politics, we have often felt the need to act swiftly though not, I hope, hastily. Even if we did not, the question would certainly be raised at political meetings open to the public and we could not evade the issue. Moreover, if Ministers were not prepared to deal with these questions, the vacuum would eventually be filled by statements from other and far less responsible quarters. I would not like to see a situation in which Mr. William Craig or others of that ilk were allowed to

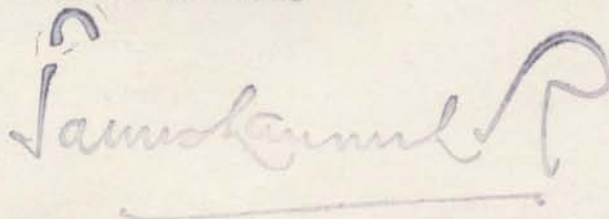
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become the principal proponents of the constitutional integrity of Northern Ireland.

I can assure you that as far as possible we will try to let you know in advance what we would propose to say and give the fullest weight to any considerations you or your colleagues may wish to put before us in that context. I do hope, however, that you would not seek to inhibit us from issuing a swift reply in cases where we consider this really essential but where there is no time for proper consultation. I can assure you that we would not wish in any statements we may make to complicate the task of Her Majesty's Government in the international setting. All of us appreciate enormously the way in which the Republic's interventions at the United Nations have been handled. We are absolutely confident that we can rely upon your Government to assert Northern Ireland's position overseas whenever and wherever this seems appropriate.

Perhaps this is a matter we can profitably discuss when you come to Belfast next week.



The Rt. Hon. James Callaghan, M.P.,
Secretary of State for the Home
Department,
Whitehall,
LONDON, S.W.1.

SPEECHES BY NORTHERN IRELAND MINISTERS RELATING TO THE IRISH REPUBLIC*Extract from meeting on 10th Oct 1969 between Jim Tol and others
- one Cabinet of Northern Ireland*

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The Prime Minister stressed the need for the Northern Ireland Government to have freedom to reply and to reply quickly to any speech or attack on Northern Ireland emanating from the Government in the Irish Republic. If this were not done, it would open the door to right wing elements, who would foment trouble, and the Government would tend to lose ground among its own supporters.

The Home Secretary indicated that the difficulty arose out of the fact that the United Kingdom Government was responsible for foreign affairs. Delicate negotiations and lobbying at the United Nations could easily be upset by an ill-considered speech. This was no reflection on the Northern Ireland Prime Minister's most recent speech on the subject which was unexceptionable, but Ministers at Westminster were subject to restriction when they spoke about foreign affairs and the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary was anxious that Northern Ireland Ministers adopt the same practice in relation to the Irish Republic. Prior clearance with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office could easily be arranged through Mr. Oliver Wright. It was appreciated that difficulties arose about replies to questions and restraint and self-discipline were required in that context.

The Prime Minister asked his colleagues to ensure that any speeches relating to the Irish Republic were cleared with the Cabinet Offices, who in turn would if need be clear them with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office through the agency of Mr. Oliver Wright.

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