

NOTE OF A MEETING BETWEEN THE SECRETARY OF STATE, CARDINAL CONWAY  
AND BISHOP PHILBIN AT STORMONT CASTLE ON TUESDAY 5 DECEMBER 1972.  
(MR TIMOTHY RAISON MP ALSO ATTENDED)

The Secretary of State outlined the reasons for holding these discussions and explained he had no doubt that Her Majesty's Government would wish to devolve powers on a new assembly. The problem however was not deciding which powers to devolve, but on whom (or what form of administration) and how to provide effective participation of the minority. He did not foresee any real difficulty in setting up a Council of Ireland and having it generally accepted.

The Cardinal suggested that the Council of Ireland should have an inbuilt capacity to exercise executive powers by mutual agreement of its members, ie he was anxious that the Council should not be simply a talking shop. He also suggested that further legislation should not be required to give the Council executive powers (this is what was meant by "inbuilt capacity"). The Bishop added that the Council should be an "open ended" institution which could develop freely. The Cardinal said that if the new administration is similar to the previous one then we would be back to square one. He suggested that one way to avoid this was to use the Committee system with the Chairmen being elected otherwise than by simple majority vote.

The Secretary of State said that further discussions would be necessary about the Council (to include the Republic) and that he liked the "open ended" suggestion. There were a couple of areas in which the Cardinal might like to help: (a) perhaps he could use his influence not only in the North but also in the Republic to encourage people to make the Council worthwhile, and (b) persuade influential people in the minority to stand for election to the new assembly. The Secretary of State said he considered the emergence of responsible and influential Catholic figures to be essential. The Cardinal and the Bishop agreed to do what they could along these lines by personal contact and persuasion. The Secretary of State said he would also be grateful if the Cardinal would let him have a list of Catholics he would recommend for appointment to public boards etc and the Cardinal agreed.

The Cardinal then asked if he could leave discussion of the Green Paper and turn to some current problems about which he is extremely concerned.

1. Assassinations - Protestant Backlash.

(a) The total number of Catholics assassinated since 1 January 1972 is 77 (at present averaging about 4 per week). The Cardinal said there may be some doubt as to the sectarian nature of a small number of these deaths but there can be no reasonable doubt that the overwhelming majority of the victims were innocent Catholics.

(b) So far there had been no official recognition of the existence of this campaign. On the contrary, official statements, until very recently, have tended to obscure the statistics and the clear inferences to be drawn from them.

(c) The result is that British public opinion, and world opinion, is as yet virtually unaware of the existence of this campaign.

(d) He suggested strongly that either the Prime Minister or the Secretary of State should at an early date draw clear and explicit attention to this anti-Catholic campaign.

(e) The location of corpses indicate that it is in the areas in which the troops are very thin on the ground that the victims are murdered or dumped.

(f) He strongly suggested that the number of troops should be considerably augmented and that the "saturation" policy should be extended to many areas outside the Catholic ghettos.

As an example of the difficulties being experienced in mixed areas by Catholics the Cardinal referred to the Cregagh Estate (South-East Belfast) where Catholic business premises, homes and people are being constantly attacked, while Army sources openly admit that they are unable to deal effectively with this problem because they have not enough troops. Meanwhile the number of troops in Northern Ireland is being reduced, and the disposition of those we have is 7 battalions in comparatively restricted "Catholic" areas leaving only 3 battalions for the peace line and the rest of Belfast.

The Secretary of State said he would do what he could to meet the Cardinal's request that the existence of the Protestant backlash be publicised. He was doubtful if an increase in troop numbers alone could stop the assassinations and intimidation but assured the Cardinal that the full 18 Battalions will remain. The Secretary of State explained that an increase in the number of troops would probably mean more frequent tours of duty, which in turn might lower morale and adversely affect recruitment.



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The Bishop, in supporting the Cardinal's views about harassment by the Army in Catholic areas, said that military vehicles continued to appear at the entrance to schools and quoted in particular the Holy Child School in West Belfast.

The Secretary of State said he would ask the GOC if this practice could be stopped.

2. Catholics in Public Employment

The Cardinal then turned to the question of the appointment of Catholics to Civil Service and Local Government posts. With the reorganisation of local government he said it would seem important that the minority should be given solid grounds for believing that things have changed. He quoted that of 28 executive appointments made so far in the Conservation, Roads and Planning Divisions of the Ministry of Development only one has been a Catholic. A similar, though less marked, pattern is observable, he suggested, in appointments made in these Divisions at Senior Engineer level and in the Housing Executive. The Cardinal said that the Ministry appears not to have accepted the views of some of its own Technical Officers as to the minimum number of posts necessary for the efficient running of the new service. He suggested the duplication of some executive and senior posts, even where not strictly necessary, in order to create opportunities for minority participation. Instead the reverse policy appears to have been adopted and less than the recommended number of posts have been created. The Cardinal suggested that the Minister responsible for Development should give urgent personal attention to this matter.

The Secretary of State explained the great difficulty in making any spectacular changes in personnel in a short time. Assurances were given, for example, to Local Government officers and these would have to be honoured.

The Cardinal suggested that because of such difficulties a radical decision is required.

A P McMASTER  
6 December 1972

Copies to:-

- Lord Windlesham
- Mr David Howell
- Mr Wm van Straubenzee
- Mr P Mills
- Sir William Nield
- Mr P J Woodfield
- Sir David Holden
- Sir Harold Black
- Mr J T A Howard-Drake
- Mr F A Rowley
- Mr K P Bloomfield

- Mr F F Steele
- Chief Constable
- Deputy Chief Constable
- GOC (2)
- Mr D G Hughes, NIO
- Mr J T Williams, NIO
- Mr K D McDowall
- Mr T M Roberts
- Mr J L L Imrie
- Mr R Stevens (2)

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