

ASST
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FROM: C D KYLE
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NOTE FOR INFORMATION

perceived the unionist side as giving very much away, particularly in relation to the talks process. The Methodist Church continued to believe it was important that all the constitutional arrangements not only continue to condemn violence, but also towards a devolved Government in which all could share.

1. Reverend Cooper referred to having spoken after his meeting with the PIRA representatives. Mr Wilson had become very disillusioned having seen no sign of any softening in PIRA's approach. The Reverend Ritchie expressed a desire that the army should disengage itself from involvement in politics. It was felt that the local political authority. He went on to explain that the very united in seeking to make progress and that their recent

- cc PS/Sec of State (B&L) - B
- PS/PUS (B&L) - B
- PS/Mr Fell - B
- Mr Thomas (B&L) - B
- Mr Williams - B
- Mr Bell - B
- Mr Watkins - B
- Mr Dodds - B
- Mr Maxwell - B
- Mr Quinn - B
- Mr Cooke - B
- Mr D J R Hill - B
- Mr Maccabe - B

LUNCH AT ANGLO IRISH SECRETARIAT WITH THE PRESIDENT OF THE METHODIST CHURCH IN IRELAND

The Irish side of the Secretariat invited the President of the Methodist Church in Ireland, Rev Ritchie, to lunch at Maryfield on 5 May along with Rev Cooper, Secretary of the Methodist Council on Social Welfare. Mr Williams and myself also attended. This invitation completed the Irish side's meetings with the heads of the three Protestant Churches and there was little in this encounter to add to the earlier occasions involving Dr Dunlop of the Presbyterian Church and Archbishop Eames from the Church of Ireland.

2. In general discussion the Methodist clergymen said there appeared to be a sense of betrayal amongst many in the Protestant population, exacerbated by a feeling that the SDLP had very close allies in the Irish Government whereas the Unionists existed without any friends at all. This had led to a feeling of alienation marked by the development of a greater toleration of loyalist paramilitary activity. The clergymen said that they believed that there was a degree of scepticism about the position of John Hume who was

appeared to cast doubt as to whether this was something that was perceived by many on the unionist side as saying a lot but not giving very much away, particularly in relation to the Talks process last year. However, the Methodist Church continued to believe it was important that all the constitutional political parties should, not only continue to condemn violence, but should actively work towards a devolved Government in which all elements of the community could share.

3. Reverend Cooper referred to having spoken with Gordon Wilson after his meeting with the PIRA representatives and recounted that Mr Wilson had become very disillusioned having detected no signs of any softening in PIRA's approach to the armed struggle. The Reverend Ritchie expressed some unease that many capable people were steering clear of involvement in politics and that some were leaving it because it was felt that the local politicians had so little authority. He went on to explain that the four Church Leaders were very united in seeking to make progress and that their recent meeting with Mayor Flynn had been the twelfth occasion since last spring when the four Church Leaders had come together. He explained that within the Methodist Church the Council on Social Welfare had issued a number of public statements encouraging people to work together, without preconditions, and they had also sought to discourage Unionist politicians from adopting a position of intransigence in their approach to political development. They have had discussions within the Unionist community about breaking away from the traditional stance of suggesting a loyalist supremacy, but noted that at the same time there were increasing fears amongst Protestants that the old sense of supremacy was giving way to a feeling of being under seige.

4. This luncheon engagement allowed the Irish side to hear at first hand from Methodist Clergymen of their experiences from within the community. The Irish side will have heard little that was new to them and on the issue of Protestant alienation they again

appeared to cast doubt as to whether this was something real or more
an issue seized upon and encouraged by politicians in the run up to
the Local Government Elections.

[Signed]

C D KYLE

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