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RELATIONS WITH NORTHERN IRELAND

Speaking Notes

Lemass/O'Neill Meetings 1965

The better understanding between the Republic and Northern Ireland, especially since the Lemass/O'Neill meetings at the beginning of 1965, is very gratifying and we hope will be continued.

Alleged religious discrimination in Northern Ireland

2. [If the Taoiseach mentions it.] These matters are the direct responsibility of Captain O'Neill's Government but Mr. Wilson is having periodic confidential talks with him.

Possible Lynch/O'Neill Meeting

3. [If the Taoiseach mentions it.] Mr. Lenihan's speech on 12 December may make it difficult for Captain O'Neill to agree to an early meeting.

Partition

4. [If the Taoiseach brings up the question.] Under the Ireland Act of 1949 the status of Northern Ireland cannot be altered without the consent of the Northern Ireland Parliament. We would always be ready to consider any proposals for the future status of Ireland which command the support of both the Parliament of Northern Ireland and of the Government of the Republic.

I.R.A.

5. We are glad that the I.R.A. has not caused trouble across the border of late and that the campaign of violence in Northern Ireland which they were reported to have been planning for last Easter did not materialise. We hope that the Republican authorities will continue to do what they can to prevent the I.R.A. engaging in activities harmful to North/South relations.

/Economic

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Economic

6. [There are no economic points which the Prime Minister need raise. If the Taoiseach refers to the prospects for increased co-operation between the North and South in the economic field, the Prime Minister might speak as follows.] In drawing up the Free Trade Area Agreement, both sides acknowledged the special trading relationship existing between North and South. We should naturally like to see an increase in trade in both directions across the border but this would be greatly helped if you could see your way to widening the scope of the tariff concessions for goods of Northern Irish origin which you have already put into effect. I understand that your officials are now considering specific proposals from Belfast. We hope that progress can be made.

7. [If the Taoiseach raises the question of discrimination.] This will no doubt be the object of further exchanges between our officials. I am sure you recognise that it would be politically impossible for the North to abandon its present practices before the South did so,

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CONFIDENTIALBACKGROUND NOTESLemass/O'Neill Meetings 1965

Improved relations between North and South were given especial impetus by the historic meetings between Mr. Lemass and Captain O'Neill in January and February, 1965. Though these meetings had no direct bearing on the question of partition, they have led to growing cross-border understanding and to co-operation in fields of common interest such as tourism and electricity.

Alleged Religious Discrimination in Northern Ireland

2. We understand that Mr. Lynch may raise the question of alleged religious discrimination in Northern Ireland, with particular reference to electoral law there. On this specific question, the Northern Ireland Government have recently announced their intention of abolishing the university seats in Stormont and the business vote for Stormont elections, and also of setting up a Commission to review Stormont constituency boundaries. Their present proposals do not affect local authority electoral law. On 12 December, Mr. Lenihan the Republican Minister of Justice, in the course of a speech at a symposium on North-South relations organised by the Dublin branch of Fianna Fail, made an outspoken attack on the Northern Ireland administration in which he said "Every effort should be made to expose continually the iniquities in regard to voting, housing, local administration and jobs, which clearly exist under the Stormont administration". This statement has caused great resentment in Northern Ireland and in the Northern Ireland House of Commons on 13 December Captain O'Neill described it as a "deliberate and unwarranted intrusion into our domestic affairs".

Possible Lynch/O'Neill Meeting

3. Mr. Lynch had said that he hoped to meet Captain O'Neill who, in turn, said that a meeting was "on the cards". We had understood that such a meeting was likely to be arranged before

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too long, depending on the existence of a favourable political atmosphere. Mr. Lenihan's statement has soured the atmosphere and from Captain O'Neill's point of view, an early meeting between the two would be impossible unless Mr. Lenihan's statement were repudiated by Mr. Lynch. We had understood that the Government of the Irish Republic well appreciated the difficulties facing Captain O'Neill and saw him as a moderating influence. Mr. Lenihan's speech, however, does not seem calculated to ease Captain O'Neill's position or to improve cross-border understanding.

Partition

4. This remains, of course, the outstanding issue between North and South.

5. The Ireland Act, 1949, states "It is hereby declared that Northern Ireland remains part of His Majesty's dominions and of the United Kingdom and it is hereby affirmed that in no event will Northern Ireland or any part thereof cease to be part of His Majesty's dominions and of the United Kingdom without the consent of the Parliament of Northern Ireland".

6. In a statement in the House of Commons in 1957, the then Under-Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations (Mr. Alport) said that H.M.G. would always be ready to consider sympathetically any proposals for the future status of Ireland which command the support of both the Parliament of Northern Ireland and the Government of the Irish Republic.

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7. In reply to a supplementary question in the House of Commons on 6 May, 1965, the Prime Minister stated that he stood by the pledge embodied in the Ireland Act.

8. The British Ambassador in Dublin, in February this year, took an opportunity to re-affirm the British position to the Republican authorities.

9. It would be impossible to exaggerate the importance the Northern Ireland Government and the majority of the people there attach to the guarantee in the Ireland Act.

10. In the Republic, partition remains a fundamental issue and no political leader there can afford to neglect it. From the President down views are frequently expressed about it and about the ways and means of ending it. In his first policy speech on taking office as Taoiseach, Mr. Lynch said: "I intend to promote actively the policy of good relations and open co-operation with Northern Ireland. Our aim is the re-unification of the people North and South, based on agreement, mutual toleration and respect and the assurance to all people of equal opportunity and status".

11. There seems, however, to be a tacit acceptance in the South that there is no immediate prospect of ending partition and an awareness that, apart from historical and religious differences between North and South, Northern Ireland benefits in its economy and social welfare services from the British connection. In the Republic these benefits are often described as a British subsidy. It is almost certainly accepted that the British Government would not take the initiative to end partition.

I.R.A.

12. The I.R.A. remains extremist but is nowadays small and does not enjoy any popular support. It has been quiet of late.

13. It was known to have been planning a campaign of violence in Northern Ireland over the Easter period this year, which marked the 50th anniversary of the 1916 Rising. Special security precautions were taken and the campaign did not materialise.

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14. The movement objects, in particular, to partition and to the Republican Government's policy of friendship and co-operation with Britain. It will take any opportunity, e.g. the Anglo-Irish Free Trade Agreement, to proclaim that the Republic has been brought back under British control. It will use violence whenever opportunity occurs. Courtesy calls by HM ships at Irish Republic ports are at present in suspense after incidents in 1964 and 1965 when they were fired on by the I.R.A. This is in line with the Irish Government's policy to deny the I.R.A. opportunities for mischief-making in the hope that thereby, and bereft of sensational publicity, the movement will wither away. But this will no doubt be a long process.

Economic

15. The Irish willingness to enter into closer trade relations with Britain and to encourage co-operation in economic matters between North and South is certainly related to their ultimate objective of eventual reunification of Ireland. Belfast has reacted cautiously to the conclusion of the Free Trade Agreement, though signature took place with their full consent.

16. The Northern Irish have naturally been concerned to defend their domestic markets from the effects of increased competition from Irish industrial and agricultural products. In 1965, Irish exports to Northern Ireland at £25.3m. were worth very nearly double the value of Northern exports to the South.

17. The Republic has put into effect limited tariff concessions on goods originating in Northern Ireland. Import duties on goods covered by the concessions have been reduced by 20% compared with 10% for the same goods from the rest of Great Britain. Belfast has privately expressed disappointment to the Irish that these concessions have not been more helpful. They probably cover trade worth less than £1m. Following meetings

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between officials from North and South in Dublin last week, the Irish have agreed to consider whether further concessions could be made in products of special interest to the North.

Discriminatory Practices in Government purchasing

18. Both the North and South have complained of discriminatory practices by each other in favour of home producers in relation to certain government housing schemes. Officials have considered whether it might be possible to discontinue discrimination on a mutual basis. It would be politically impossible for the North to abandon their discriminatory practices before the South did so. There is some willingness in the Republic to explore ways and means of abandoning their present discrimination; but the question will need to be pursued further between London and Dublin.

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