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Reference Code: 2004/7/302

Title: Letter from Dermot Gallagher in the Embassy of Ireland to the UK in London to Noel Dorr, Counsellor in the Information Section of the Department of Foreign Affairs, concerning his recent meeting with Jon Lander, a Lobby Correspondent for ITN [Independent Television News]. Issues discussed at the meeting included the results of Northern Ireland Assembly elections, the potential for power-sharing arrangements in Northern Ireland, the position of William Whitelaw as Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, and the line that Jim Callaghan, Shadow Foreign Secretary, was going to take on the Northern Ireland Constitution Bill.

Creation Date(s): 13 July, 1973

Level of description: Item

Extent and medium: 2 pages

Creator(s): Department of Foreign Affairs

Access Conditions:

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Handwritten notes:
 To see pl
 19/7

July 13th, 1973

Handwritten notes:
 P.S.M.
 Minister will wish to see
 19/7

Dear Noel

I had lunch and a very full and satisfactory briefing session ^{yesterday} with Jon Lander who, as you know, is one of the Lobby Correspondents for I.T.N. Lander is probably also the leading authority in I.T.N. on Northern Ireland; he travels there quite regularly, his most recent trip being to cover the Assembly elections. Mr. Lander tells me that, unlike most politicians and many journalists, he is rather pessimistic about the results of the Assembly elections. He said that there is now no real possibility of an Executive being formed unless both the SDLP and the Faulknerite Unionists agree to participate in it. He does not see, however, how these two parties can reconcile their differences, specifically on police reform and on a Council of Ireland. He agrees that we have done probably as much as possible to reassure the Unionists about the proposed Council, in particular about the pace at which it should evolve, but, irrespective of this, he feels that the Council will always be seen among the vast majority of Unionists as, in effect, a Trojan Horse. In addition, the continuing violence will always be a complicating factor which, even if an Executive is formed to include both the SDLP and the Faulknerite Unionists, will be bound to put both these parties under intolerable strain at different times. For instance, if the Army over-reacted to some IRA action, then it could well be that pressure would build up in the Catholic community which would put the SDLP in the position of having to reconsider their stand on abstention.

As regards the question of Mr. Whitelaw moving from the Northern Ireland Office, Mr. Lander thought this unlikely unless the Assembly were to succeed. He is not sure, in fact, if the Prime Minister will decide to reshuffle in the autumn, as is generally expected here. I should say, however, that most other journalists would not agree with Mr. Lander on either of these points. Indeed,

Alan Hart of the B.B.C., to whom I was speaking recently, told me that in a private conversation he had with Mr. Whitelaw some time ago, lasting half an hour, he found the Secretary of State close to despair and insistent that he would move from the post in October. He told Mr. Hart that there would be no difficulty in moving if the Assembly got off the ground but, even if it failed, he ~~would~~ probably still go and would say that the situation needed a "fresh mind". An additional factor which Mr. Hart emphasised to me is that, because the Secretary of State spends so much time in Belfast, he has, of necessity, to miss some quite important Cabinet meetings and also Cabinet Committee meetings. He feels, therefore, that his position and future advancement in the Pa^{tr}y may well be affected by a longish stay at the Northern Ireland Office.

unaware
 You will recall that I mentioned to you in my letter of 27th June last, reporting on a conversation with Roger Carroll of The Sun, that the Secretary of State and Merlyn Rees may not have been ^{un}aware of the line Jim Callaghan was going to take during the debate on the Northern Ireland Constitution Bill. Jon Lander does not accept that the above is true but, here again, I should say that his view does not accord with the majority opinion of journalists operating in the House of Commons. Lander did mention to me, however, that he considers, based on conversations with the Secretary of State and on his own knowledge of the Prime Minister, that it is inconceivable that the present leadership of the Conservative Party would ^{over} simply decide on a withdrawal of British troops from Northern Ireland without a political settlement.

Yours sincerely

Dermot Callaghan

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