



# An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

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cc Secretary  
Mr. Nally  
A-I Section  
Amb. London

Mr. Eamonn O Tuathail  
Assistant Secretary  
Department of Foreign Affairs

Dear Assistant Secretary

The Head of the Northern Ireland Civil Service, Mr. Ken Bloomfield, came to dinner on the occasion of the farewell visit by the Secretary last Wednesday at Maryfield. Elliott of the British side also attended. Lillis, Ryan and the undersigned were also present. During the course of the evening Bloomfield made a number of points which may be of interest.

He said that the size of the demonstration on the first anniversary of the signature of the Agreement and the number of those who signed the loyalist petition to the Queen indicated that unionist opposition to the Agreement continued on a widespread scale. He did however believe that the UDA document is an indication that at least in some sections of unionism, cognizance is being taken of the existence of two traditions in Northern Ireland. There is however no indication that unionist politicians are either able or willing at this time to develop imaginative ideas and policies.

He does not believe that there will be any real move towards devolution before the British general election. Devolution is essential and the Agreement taken together with direct rule has failed to fill the political void in Northern Ireland. As soon as possible after the British general election he would hope that an initiative be undertaken which would lead to a devolved legislature and executive. Such a body should have devolved to

it the matters devolved in 1974, and in addition might have some control over local security. What he seemed to have in mind was there would be local control over the RUC but not over the Army. He did not envisage that the Governemnt should lay its cards on the table at the outset of the process but that they could indicate that more rather than less power could be devolved. While the achievement of devolution remains the primary aim of both Governments under the terms of the Agreement he clearly gave the impression that such a devolved system would in effect replace the Agreement in toto. If that is correct then there may be difficulties ahead.

Bloomfield as before was pessimistic about the Northern Ireland economy. He was encouraged by recent orders placed with Shorts and by the way in which Shorts had diversified into the production of parts for aircraft built by other companies. This particular business employed about one third of Shorts work force. He was grateful for the fact that Guinness Peat Aviation have been helpful in this area, but he remained very pessimistic about the ability of Shorts to continue to produce and sell its own aircraft. Another third of its workforce are employed in this section and Bloomfield's view was that the 360 is coming towards the end of its commercial viability for Shorts. He was hopeful that the agreement Shorts has negotiated with Brazil to produce training aricraft may provide the necessary new impetus for Shorts in aircraft building. He spoke highly of Sir Philip Foreman who is due to retire shortly and he wondered if it would be possible for Shorts to get a new Director who would be as successful.

Bloomfield also referred to the plea of guilty tendered by Robinson in the court in Dublin. He shares the view expressed by many unionists that Robinson's position in the unionist community has been damaged as a result. Robinson has always had a reputation for cowardice and that reputation has now been underlined. Bloomfield was delighted that he had been "taken down a peg".

On the working of the Agreement in general, Bloomfield thought that the interaction between the two sides through the Secretariat was working well and considered that the response of the Northern Ireland Office and the Northern Ireland Civil Service to the Secretariat was now much less antagonistic than a year ago. His judgement was that the Agreement had been worked sensitively by the Irish side.

The above is just a very brief resume of what appeared to have been some of the main points mentioned by Bloomfield.

Yours sincerely

*Daithi O Ceallaigh*

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