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NOTE OF A MEETING BETWEEN THE SECRETARY OF STATE AND REV DR IAN PAISLEY
HELD AT STORMONT CASTLE ON TUESDAY, 4 DECEMBER, 1973, AT 2 45 PM

Present: Secretary of State

Mr van Straubenzee
Mr Cooper
Mr Reid
Mr Abbott

Dr Paisley

Dr Paisley told the Secretary of State that he spoke for Mr Craig who had been unable to attend the meeting. He had come to ask whether Her Majesty's Government would honour paragraph 112 of the White Paper of March 1973 and extend invitations to Mr Craig, Mr West and himself to the forthcoming tripartite conference. If no such invitations were received he would seriously consider never again coming to Stormont Castle to talk to the Secretary of State. He asked in what ways the Government had changed its thinking on paragraph 112. Should the phrase, 'leaders of the elected representatives of Northern Ireland Opinion' now read, 'the Executive-designate'? The Government should explain what parts of the White Paper they stood by. He and his colleagues wished to put their views to the conference: they were not prepared to put them to the Secretary of State for him to present on their behalf. If an invitation were not issued, the opposition would be driven into obstructing and destroying the Assembly.

The Secretary of State explained first that the White Paper was not an act: indeed the Constitution Act had not been a precise copy of it. Dr Paisley had consistently opposed the White Paper and it would seem, therefore, that no progress would be made by his taking part in the conference. The issue of pursuing the three objectives set out in the White Paper complimented that part of paragraph 112 which touched on invitations and consequently the issue of invitations had to be read in that light. If Dr Paisley was totally opposed to the White Paper, and the objectives which it contained, it appeared inconsistent for him to agree to paragraph 112.

Dr Paisley replied that irrespective of his reaction to the White Paper, it was the Government's duty to honour paragraph 112. It was Her Majesty's Government, not he, who had written the White Paper.

In response to a further question, the Secretary of State accepted that Dr Paisley and Mr Craig were leaders of elected representatives.

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Mr Cooper asked Dr Paisley whether it could be said that the Executive were the leaders of the elected representatives. Dr Paisley said that he had no idea that such a meaning would be placed on the expression in question. If so, he should have been told. The Secretary of State pointed out that the expression was capable of such an interpretation.

Dr Paisley asked once more whether Mr Craig, Mr West and he would be invited to the talks. As the Secretary of State raised a point in dealing with Dr Paisley's question, Dr Paisley left the meeting, thus bringing it to a somewhat inconclusive end.

N.C. ABBOTT

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5 December 1973

Copies to:-
Mr van Straubenzee
Mr Howell
Mr Mills
Lord Belstead
Mr Cooper
Sir David Holden
Mr Woodfield
Sir Harold Black
Mr Smith
Mr Bloomfield
Mr Howard-Drake
Mr Payne
Mr Trevelyan
Mr J Allan
Mr Jordan
Mr Goddard
Mr Marsh
Mr D G Allen
Mr Hughes
Mr Williams
Mr Roberts
Mr Stevens (2)
Mr Seaman

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