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Burning of British Embassy:

Compensation

Mr. O Foghlú,

Please see letter under dated the 8th February, 1972, on behalf of the occupiers of No. 38 Merrion Square - the premises next to the British Embassy (No. 39).

Two questions arise here, viz:

- (1) should compensation to the British come out of the Exchequer or from Rates, and
- (2) if compensation is being paid from the Exchequer, should it cover only the British Embassy or should it also cover the adjoining premises?

The Taoiseach's statement in the Dáil does not cover these aspects. I have spoken to Messrs. J. Molloy and M. Flynn, Foreign Affairs, and to Mr. B. Scully of Finance. The position is not very clear yet but Foreign Affairs consider it to be a matter primarily for Finance. The Minister has to reply to P.Q. No. 35 on today's Order Paper -

"To ask the Minister for Finance if the cost of the damages caused to certain premises in Merrion Square by events on 2nd February, 1972 will be met out of central funds rather than out of rates levied by Dublin Corporation". -
D. Thornley.

Mr. Scully advises that his Minister proposes to answer only in relation to the British Embassy and to say that compensation for this will be paid out of the Exchequer. In view of the claim for £75,000 now received I am not sure that the Finance approach is the best - it is only prolonging indefinitely the question of how other compensation should be paid.

A reply to the letter under is submitted; copies to be sent to Finance, Foreign Affairs and Local Government, with a request to Finance for material for a more detailed reply.

I understand that the costs of the blowing up of Nelson's Pillar were processed under the Malicious Injury Code and dealt with directly by Dublin Corporation which was, in turn, recouped out of the Exchequer.

DN.

10th February, 1972.