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Title: Note of a meeting held between Taoiseach Jack Lynch, Minister for Foreign Affairs Patrick Hillery, and John Hume and Paddy Devlin of the Social Democratic and Labour Party, regarding the proposed plebiscite on the constitutional future of Northern Ireland.

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The Taoiseach and the Minister for Foreign Affairs received Messrs. J. Hume and P. Devlin in Leinster House this evening. The undersigned was in attendance.

The Northern MPs said that the present Protestant attacks on Catholic areas in the North, which, in many cases, give evidence of organized planning, are an earnest of what will happen on the day of the plebiscite in the North. The British Army is not reacting quickly enough to Protestant action and when they eventually came on the scene in Lenadoon last night they faced their guns against the Catholics - not against the aggressors. It had been demonstrated on numerous occasions previously that British Army confrontation with the Protestants caused the withdrawal from the scene of all but a very small percentage of the Protestants. Most Protestants still shunned violent conflict with the Army and consequently mere Army presence could be expected to reduce Protestant offensive operations to small and manageable proportions.

The forecast Protestant violence at the plebiscite would be widespread and deadly and more than double the present Army strength would be required to give any kind of protection to Catholic voters. For Catholics to do anything but to boycott the plebiscite would seem, at this stage, to be inviting wholesale killings. The lives of all the Catholics living outside the ghettos would be at risk. On the other hand, a boycott would result in large scale personation and would bring the Protestant vote to well over 50% of the electorate.

The SDLP were concerned also at the possibility of influencing the British Labour Party to rephrase the second proposed ^{plebiscite} question - at the very least, in a way which would make it difficult for the Alliance Party and

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NUM supporters to vote "No" to it. There was general agreement that the vote should not be sought for eventual unity but for interim arrangements leading towards unity on terms acceptable to the majority in Northern Ireland. It was agreed that the Government would promote that line in British government and opposition circles and it was understood that the S.D.L.P. would try to influence the British Labour Party in the same direction. It was also agreed that Mr. Hume would get in touch with the undersigned on Friday night next for the text of the suggested second question.

The S.D.L.P. representatives were of opinion that a plebiscite campaign would bring Mr. Brian Faulkner back as Protestant leader. They agreed that British thinking may be based on the idea that they can more easily dispose of the N.I. problem by issuing the promised White Paper in the atmosphere of euphoria engendered by a resounding Protestant success at the plebiscite.

The S.D.L.P. representatives expressed the hope that the Government would work to ensure that the referendum to be held in the 26-Counties counties on the 7th prox. would show a high "Yes" vote and that the opposition of right-wing Catholics and of those who were scared of involvement with the 6-Counties would not defeat, or greatly reduce the majority of, "Yes" voters in an apathetic small poll.

Mr. P. Devlin gave it as his opinion that Mr. Whitelaw's domination of the administration in the North had waned - General Tuzo and Lord Carrington were in command as far as security went. He confirmed Mr. Whitelaw's backing down on the withdrawal of troops from Casement Park - which had already been reported by Mr. Conaty.


7 Samhain, 1972