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Reference Code:	2005/151/697
Title:	Report by Dermot Nally, Assistant Secretary, Department of the Taoiseach, of visit by Airey Neave, MP, Conservative Party spokesman on Northern Ireland
Creation Date(s):	13 May 1975
Level of description:	Item
Extent and medium:	2 pages
Creator(s):	Department of the Taoiseach
Access Conditions:	Open
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VISIT BY MR. AIREY NEAVE, OPPOSITION SPOKESMAN ON
NORTHERN IRELAND

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13/5NOTE:-

Mr. Neave, accompanied by the British Ambassador, Sir Arthur Galsworthy, called on the Taoiseach at 3.50 p.m. on 12th May, during his one day visit to Dublin. Mr. Nally, Department of the Taoiseach also attended.

There was a general discussion of prospects for the E.E.C. Referendum in the United Kingdom, and Northern Ireland and other matters. Mr. Neave said that, in his view, Mrs. Thatcher was succeeding in winning support. He thought that, after the Referendum on membership of the E.E.C., things would go very well with her. On the Referendum, he said that the scare tactics being used by the critics of membership were not doing their case much good. The main issues were the balance of payments, food prices and sovereignty. In fact, these issues had been debated in the United Kingdom for the past fifteen years. The Taoiseach enquired as to the importance of sovereignty in the campaign.

Mr. Neave said that sovereignty, in this context, was not linked with the Queen and in this sense the issue was not doing the opponents of membership much good. The sovereignty of parliament was, if anything, being undermined by parliament itself. He said that there would be a recess on 23rd May and that parliament would not meet again until after the Referendum.

The Taoiseach enquired as to Mr. Neave's views on the North, after polling in the Convention. Mr. Neave said that he had been there "half a dozen" times. He was gradually informing himself of what was going on. In his view, the position there now was very dangerous. The Taoiseach said that, notwithstanding the Loyalist victory, anything like a return to old Stormont would be disastrous. Integration could be equally dangerous. There were different shades of opinion within the Loyalist Coalition. He had the impression that both sides in the North were being intimidated by extreme elements.

Mr. Neave said that he had the impression that there was more fear of violence now in the North than before. In the areas where he had visited there did not seem to be much sign of visible intimidation. The Taoiseach said that in some areas - like South Armagh, Derry and possibly mid Ulster, there had been very considerable intimidation during the Convention Poll. Mr. Currie and Mr. Hume had been particularly affected by intimidation campaigns.

Mr. Neave said that they did not expect the whole moderate vote to be down quite so much. He was not happy with the release of detainees in the present dangerous situation, particularly considering the persons who were not in

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detention. He had the view that Mr. Rees was reconsidering the position. It was unfortunate that all the Loyalists were out. He said that he was not criticising the releases in themselves - it was simply unfortunate in the overall situation.

The Taoiseach mentioned Mrs. Thatcher and said that he had never had the pleasure of meeting her. Her earlier interest in education had been a bit outside the areas of responsibility where they would normally have met. Mr. Neave said that Mrs. Thatcher was gradually getting to know her opposite numbers in Europe. She had recently visited the President and Mr. Chirac in France. These meetings had been extremely useful. Her parliamentary performance was very good indeed. As a member of the Bar she knew when to sit down and when to get up. Mr. Neave mentioned that he had been in the same Chambers with her and that they had practised at the Bar, together.

The conversation then went on to cover miscellaneous other matters, in the course of which Mr. Neave mentioned his impression that once the uncertainty over the European Community was settled that "things would settle down quite a lot" in the U.K.

Mr. Neave expressed his appreciation of the way in which he had been met in Dublin and that he valued the contacts. He was anxious to keep in touch with developments in the North and Dublin attitudes to them. The meeting concluded at 4.10 p.m.



13th May, 1975.