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CONFIDENTIAL

PSM

John Hume rang me from Brussels at lunchtime to-day in reply to attempts of mine to contact him yesterday to obtain details of the recent SDLP dinner with Mason.

He said that, in summary, Mason's purpose was to attempt to relaunch his interim devolution plan. He ^{had} began with a very hard-line reaffirmation, directed apparently at Hume, that Northern Ireland was a United Kingdom problem which neither Dublin nor America could solve. Hume countered this by enquiring whether the irrelevance of Dublin also extended to security co-operation.

Mason again attempted to interest the SDLP in the 5-point plan. The SDLP guests present reiterated their views that this plan was not of interest to them. They agreed, in response to an invitation from Mason, to spell out their views to come back later with their own ideas - including the wider basis of the Irish dimension.

Mason confirmed that the commitment to introduce legislation for extra Northern Ireland seats at the next session would be met and that this would be in the Queen's speech. The SDLP pressed for this to be associated with the introduction of PR for Westminster elections in Northern Ireland. Hume got the impression that Mason and the Northern Ireland Office officials present were not hostile to the idea and that there might be some hope that agreement might be reached on support for an amendment by Gerry Fitt to this effect. Our conversation was necessarily guarded on the telephone. However, I will be meeting John Hume and a number of the SDLP in Northern Ireland over the weekend and I shall report in more detail on this later.

Seán O hUiginn

Seán O hUiginn

20/9/78

c.c. PSS
Ambassador, London
Mr. D. Nally
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