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Mr Murray
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Minister

I had a call from Mr. Corr at the London Embassy to say that Gerry Fitt had been in contact with him ^(around 7 pm. this evening) to let the Embassy know that if tonight's meeting of the SDLP Executive gave him a mandate to seek a widening of the terms of ~~the~~ reference of the British paper to include the Irish dimension he would resign from the party forthwith. He had chosen to come to London rather than to attend the SDLP Executive meeting tonight, regarding their decision to seek the inclusion of the Irish dimension as a foregone conclusion. He proposed to call in press people around ten tomorrow to announce his decision.

While Gerry Fitt has threatened resignation on frequent occasions in the past it is possible that on this occasion he may carry out this threat, probably from a mixture of policy reasons and from personal motives, in that his initial relatively favourable comments on the paper have been criticised and disowned by the party. When I spoke to Dan MacAreavy earlier today to pass on the text of the Government statement he confirmed that the Executive was likely to seek a widening of the terms of reference, but he was under the impression that Gerry Fitt had accepted this and agreed to act accordingly in the Commons.

I told Mr. Corr that insofar as Gerry Fitt's motives in ringing the Embassy might have been to mobilise us in his interest in a difficult internal SDLP situation ~~that~~ he should not be encouraged in any way to think that we might intervene in the matter with other SDLP members.

I have not had an opportunity of passing on this information to anyone in the Irish Embassy Department.
Sean O Higinis

21 November 1979