

## NATIONAL ARCHIVES

### IRELAND



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*[Signature]*

*M.O.*

11 January 1980

Mr. Frank Murray  
Department of the Taoiseach

Dear Frank

I refer to your letter of 7 January and enclose herewith a note prepared in the section which may be of some assistance to you on the background of the National H Blocks Committee.

The establishment of this Committee represents an attempt by the organisers of the protest to widen their appeal and support, after they had been advised by a number of people, including Fr. Denis Faul, that the manifest domination of the Relatives' Action Committees and the H-Block protest by the Provisionals was a factor which hindered expressions of public sympathy for the prisoners. From contacts in Belfast I feel there is every reason to believe that Provisional Sinn Fein continue to control and manipulate the protest, although the Committee may have attracted a limited number of people who are inspired by humanitarian motives rather than sympathy for the activities of the Provisionals. I have no information on Leo Wilson, beyond the fact that he is PRO for the Committee and has a son 'on the blanket'.

As regards the request for a meeting with An Taoiseach I would feel that a key question is whether the organisers of the protest are likely to be interested in attaining humanitarian or political objectives. Items 3 and 4 of the Committee's demands would amount to a recognition of political status. There is no suggestion from any quarter that the protesters are 'trying to get off the hook'. All indications are that the organisers of the protest are still governed by the motives which led them to begin the 'dirty protest' in the first place, namely the desire to exploit public sympathy for the sufferings of the prisoners to attain recognition of political status. This is borne out by the rejection of improvements e.g. availability of reading matter, which the British have attempted to introduce from time to time. If the conditions of the prisoners are seen by the organisers of the protest as a means to a political end it seems unlikely that there could be any meaningful discussion with them on any basis other than progress towards political status. Any meeting with An Taoiseach would almost certainly be exploited for ulterior political motives, and since I can see no prospective gains which would offset the many obvious disadvantages involved I would feel that such a meeting should not be granted.

Yours sincerely

*S. O. hUiginn*

Sean O hUiginn