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Mr. Murray
3.5.82

Mr. Murray
Mr. Hain
For information
30/4/82

Note on meeting with members of the SDLP

Executive at Dungannon, 24 April 1982

Mr. Hain
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SDLP file

Mr. Hain
30/4

I was invited to Dungannon by arrangement between the Taoiseach and Mr John Hume, where the Executive Meeting of the SDLP was held on 24 April 1982.

18/3/11

A full report on my discussions with various members of the SDLP has been given orally to the Taoiseach. The following note summarises certain points of interest which arose in discussions.

I had lunch with Mr Hume and Mr Mallon, at which there was some discussions of the use of plastic bullets. British Conservative MEP's with Christian Democrat support had succeeded in bringing forward a motion on Youth Employment and putting back a motion on plastic bullets in the European Parliament. The motion would be, however, taken up again at an early date and Mr Hume agreed that now was the time to go all-out for the banning of plastic bullets.

Mr Hume also said that the aim of the meeting, not to reach any decision on holding elections, would be as discussed with the Taoiseach. There was a disagreement between Mr Hume and Mr Mallon, as to whether the understanding had been that I would sit in at the meeting as an observer or merely meet the delegates, and whether there were precedents was disputed between them. Since there was a division of opinion on the subject, I did not press the matter.

A short statement was made after the meeting as attached in an appendix. This was to be followed by a somewhat longer statement,

which has also now been made by the party leader, in which a strong line has been adopted and in which extensive use has been made of material supplied in a paper given to the SDLP on the Taoiseach's instructions. The strategy is to try and stop the Prior initiative, if at all possible.

Two particular feelings were communicated to me after the meeting, the need to formulate a positive alternative strategy to the Prior initiative, and frustration at the lack of political progress after 12 years (the feeling of being back at square one). The Anglo-Irish approach, on which it was agreed the pass had been sold by the Coalition, was being actively sabotaged by Prior, and felt to be difficult to breathe much life into. Some reference was made by Mr Mallon and Mr Feely to a previous SDLP idea of setting up cross-border economic commissions and to updating this. There was disagreement as to how far the Irish Government should go in spelling out its terms for a united Ireland. It was also felt that the Irish Government should try and create a more positive role for representatives of the Nationalist Community with or without the agreement of the British Government.

Martin Mansergh
30/4/82