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*Mr O'Keefe. Bar 24/6
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Meeting with the Rev. R.F.G. Holmes 14 June 1983

I had lunch with the Rev. Holmes in Belfast on 14 June. Mr. Holmes is the President of the Union Theological College in Belfast. He has written a biography of Cooke and has also written a paper on Ulster Presbyterians and Irish Nationalism.

Mr. Holmes said that he was very dissatisfied by the debate in the Presbyterian Assembly on the New Ireland Forum and on the appeal to the Queen. He thought that the Forum debate had been very badly handled by Terence McCaughey. He had however, been heartened by the debate on Thursday in which the Assembly had decided to continue to permit Presbyterian clergymen to be present at Roman Catholic services. My impression is that Mr. Holmes is ecumenical by nature and politically probably closer to the Alliance party rather than to the Unionists.

He was very mistrustful of successive British Governments. He thinks that they may at some stage withdraw without having ensured that the left stable institutions behind them. The way forward at present is to try to change people gradually so that bigger steps in terms of allegiance can be taken at a later date. He will consider the possibility of making a submission to the New Ireland Forum (In my view if he decided not to make a particular presentation to the Forum he should be encouraged to submit his paper on Ulster Presbyterians and Irish Nationalism.

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D. O Ceallaigh 21 Jun 83