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ROINN AN TAOISIGH

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SECRET

NORTHERN IRELAND

Taoiseach,

The meeting yesterday was attended by Sir Robert Armstrong, Cabinet Secretary, Mr. Robert Andrew, Permanent Under-Secretary, NIO, Ambassador Goodison and Mr. David Goodall, F.C.O., on the British side, and, on the Irish side, by Messrs. Donlon, Dorr, Lillis and the undersigned. It began at 10.30 a.m. and continued over lunch until almost 3.00 p.m.

Ambassador Dorr is doing an account of the dialogue. This is a description of the conclusions.

The major difficulty is the nature of the "consultation" or "involvement". What the British would like to do is to develop something which they can say to the Unionists "what this is all about is the other lot! You are not going to be affected". We emphasised the need for a recognition of the Irish identity. They are afraid that if the scheme is radical enough to appeal to the minority the reaction among the Unionists could be unmanageable.

Essentially the operation is still in business. Both sides are now to reflect on the "deeper" approach - without totally excluding the "shallower", though much attraction is not seen in this. Armstrong, in fact, described it as enabling the South to be seen as "Mr. Hurd's poodle".

The legal or judicial aspects were not discussed in detail but both sides seemed to be prepared to contemplate something here, though practical difficulties are seen, including questions as to the numbers of judges, attitudes of the judiciary etc.

On the political side, the eye of the needle has got smaller - after Chequers. What is to happen will not be worked out by generalisations. The British are adamant on the need for the preservation of "sovereignty". They see the nationalist community as requiring someone or some institution it can trust, having an effective say in the processes of Government.

A meeting of the group has been tentatively fixed for Dublin on 21st January, with the objective of coming together with ~~very~~ hard thoughts and possibilities.

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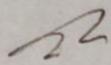
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These thoughts will probably be divided into what might happen if there were a devolved Government and if there were not a devolved Government and would try to get away from words like "consultation" or "involvement" by describing how particular functions of government would be discharged.

I put to Armstrong the possibility that you might be in London in January and could see the Prime Minister if that seemed useful. He said that he would have this considered but thought that the time-scale might be too short. They will have considerable difficulty in clearing things at political level - for the 21st.



18th December, 1984.

cc. Tanaiste
Mr. Sean Donlon, Secretary, Department of Foreign Affairs
Ambassador Dorr
Mr. Michael Lillis, Assistant Secretary, Department of
Foreign Affairs.