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3 December 1986



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Mr. E. O Tuathail
 Assistant Secretary
 Department of Foreign Affairs

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Dear Assistant Secretary

The Permanent Under-Secretary of the Northern Ireland Department of Health and Social Welfare, Maurice Hayes, came to dinner last evening in the Secretariat. He was accompanied by his Under-Secretary, Alan Elliott, and by a member of the British side of the Secretariat. On our side were Messrs. Lillis, Ryan, O'Criodain and the undersigned. The occasion was primarily a social one but there were a number of points made which you may find interesting.

All of those on the British side, and particularly Elliott, bemoaned what they see as a complete lack of positive political leadership in the unionist community. They were particularly critical of the OUP leadership which they saw as weak and unimaginative. They don't see how the political leadership can move at the present time given the mood in the unionist community unless some concession is made which would provide them with an opportunity to alter their present intransigence. They all accepted however that it is most unlikely that there will be any change in the unionist position prior to the general elections in Britain and in our own jurisdiction. Hayes is worried that the general election campaign itself would lead to further polarisation of the communities in Northern Ireland.

Both Hayes and Elliott, during the course of a discussion of the recent biography of Paisley, described Paisley as a dominant factor in unionist politics. Paisley they saw as schizophrenic and Hayes said he consisted of six different people - two human and warm, two evil and two in between. They saw no obvious successor, given his base in both the DUP and the Free Presbyterian Church, but were in no doubt that the particular circumstances of Northern fundamentalism and loyalism would throw up others with similar views. They did not expect that his achievements will disappear when he finally goes.

All three believed that the Minister's statement urging nationalists to consider joining the RUC had been very helpful and had struck the right note across the communities in Northern Ireland.

Hayes had a good deal to say about the political situation in West Belfast. Although Sinn Fein are slightly in decline they are more active than anybody else in West Belfast in looking after the needs of ordinary people. (Hayes is in a good position to see this because of the Department of which he is the head.) The Sinn Fein advice centres continue to operate and the tactic followed by Sinn Fein of listing the legitimate benefits available to people, asking residents in each house whether they have the benefits to which they are entitled, and, in the event that they are not claiming all that they are entitled to, seeking it on their behalf, has been of political benefit to Sinn Fein. Neither the people involved in the advice centres run by the Roman Catholic church nor the SDLP are any way near as effective in this area. He thought that the reason why the church was not as effective is because they have very few young people working for them in contrast to Sinn Fein. He said that no serious attempt is being made by the SDLP in this area.

Hayes said that though he was personally very fond of Joe Hendron he was disappointed in him as a political figure. He described him as weak and said that he does not project himself in a positive way in West Belfast. He was also critical of his non-availability in his role as a GP over weekends and at unsocial hours. He had considerable admiration for Alistair McDonnell whom he said is very active on health issues.

Hayes described himself as a good friend of Eddie McGrady, and if my memory serves me correctly McGrady would describe Hayes in the same way. He said however that he comes across sometimes as a rather cold person and despite all his best efforts he has failed to pick up a certain vote, for example in Castlewellan, which Paddy O'Donoghue, were he a candidate in South Down, would pick up. He went as far as to say that Paddy O'Donoghue would be a better candidate in South Down than McGrady. Though he didn't say so, I suspect that what he had in mind was O'Donoghue's background on nationalist issues, particularly GAA and the Irish language, which would help him gain support in villages such as Castlewellan which are strongly nationalist.

Hayes spoke at some length about a need for better relations between the police and community leaders in nationalist parts of Belfast. He pointed out that traffic wardens and lollipop men and women are accepted by the populace in West Belfast. In so doing they are accepting part of the system of regulation, part of the system of authority. He wondered whether this acceptance could be built upon in some way which would help to lead towards the acceptance of the police in West Belfast. He thought that more women police should be used in West Belfast but he agreed that the Provisionals would probably try to shoot them if they were so used.

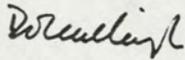
During the course of the evening Elliott seemed to be waking up to the idea that the use of the Agreement to defeat Sinn Fein could perhaps be an important factor in helping unionists to

understand and accept the Agreement. Towards the end of the evening he said that maybe we "didn't have so many horns as people might think".

One interesting historical point made by Hayes, who was the Secretary to the Convention in the mid '70s, was that agreement had been reached between Craig and the SDLP on an acceptable form of devolution, and the Chairman of the Convention, Lord Lowry, had gone so far as to draft the heads of an agreement. The massacre at Tullyvalen intervened and agreement was impossible.

Hayes asked specifically to be remembered to the Secretary of whom he spoke warmly. Elliott, a near contemporary of yours at Trinity, would like to resume contact.

Yours sincerely



Daithi O Ceallaigh