

NORTH - SOUTH DISCUSSIONS

Note of a meeting held at Iveagh House, Dublin,
on Monday, 8th January, 1968.

For the Irish RepublicFor Northern Ireland

PRESENT: The Taoiseach (Mr. Lynch)
The Tanaiste and Minister for
External Affairs (Mr. Aiken)
The Minister for Finance
(Mr. Haughey)
The Minister for Transport and
Power (Mr. Childers)
The Minister for Agriculture
(Mr. Blaney)
The Minister for Industry and
Commerce (Mr. Colley)

The Prime Minister (Capt. O'Neill)

The Secretary of the Department
of Finance (Dr. Whitaker)
The Secretary of the Government
(Dr. Nolan)
The Secretary of the Department
of External Affairs (Mr. McCann)
The Chef de Protocol

The Secretary, Ministry of Finance
(Sir Cecil Bateman)
The Secretary to the Cabinet
(Mr. H. Black)
The Deputy Secretary to the Cabinet
(Mr. K. P. Bloomfield)
The Private Secretary to the Prime
Minister (Mr. J. Y. Malley)

1. NOMENCLATURE OF NORTHERN IRELAND

This was raised not at the discussions, but at the lunch which preceded them. The Prime Minister, in the course of his reply to the Taoiseach's speech of welcome, said that he would like to speak frankly, in these friendly and confidential surroundings, about a matter which caused a degree of hurt to Northern Ireland. This was the continuing use, in some at least of the Republic's pronouncements, of the term "Six Counties". It would remove an unnecessary irritant to the more friendly relationship which had developed if the proper term "Northern Ireland" could be used.

2. TOURISM

The Minister for Transport and Power said that co-operation between Bord Failte and the Northern Ireland Tourist Board had been excellent, and the new joint brochure was at an advanced stage of co-operation. He was in no doubt that joint promotion of North and South would be beneficial to the British Isles as a whole. The new proposal for jet trans-Atlantic services to be operated by Irish International out of Aldergrove was seen as part of this process. The Prime Minister asked whether any view could yet be formed of the effects of President Johnson's measures to restrict travel outside the Western Hemisphere, but the general conclusion was that it was too early to say, since it was not yet clear how the restrictions would be operated.

/3. ELECTRICITY

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The Minister for Transport and Power expressed satisfaction at the link-up already agreed. At some stage the question of nuclear power would arise for consideration. Costs of nuclear generation were continuing to fall, but the problem was that even the smallest economic type would have a very high generating capacity in relation to total Irish consumption. This was obviously a problem which would have to be settled in the Seventies.

4. AN AIRPORT FOR THE NORTH-WEST

The Minister for Transport and Power said that he felt a fourth major airport in Ireland would be needed, and that this ought to be in the North-West. St. Angelo would be rather too far to the South, but Eglinton or Ballykelly would have attractions not only for the Derry area but for Donegal and adjoining areas of the Republic. The Prime Minister said that obviously the future use of Ballykelly was a matter of intense interest, but with improved road communications into Aldergrove it was by no means certain that a second major airport in Northern Ireland would be economic.

5. ROAD SAFETY

The Prime Minister, observing that much of the future tourist traffic into Ireland would be by car, asked what the position would be in the Republic about measures to control drunken driving. Mr. Blaney replied that legislation was currently before the Dail to bring in breath tests, but at a level of 125 as compared with the English 80. The Minister for Transport and Power, observing that he was the current Chairman of the Conference of European Transport Ministers, said that the adoption of some such scheme was now pretty universal throughout Western Europe. The Taoiseach wondered whether it might not be desirable to adopt a uniform standard throughout Ireland; if so, their people would be glad to enter into consultations about this.

6. CROSS-BORDER ROUTES

The Minister for Finance said that the request referred to by Mr. Faulkner at the Belfast meeting in December had now been presented by H.M. Customs. He would see that it received a favourable consideration.

7. TRADE

The Minister for Industry and Commerce stated that consideration of the further list of possibilities for tariff concessions presented by Mr. Faulkner had been proceeding. Some of these had been ruled out at the stage of internal departmental consideration whereas others had been taken to the further stage of discussion with the relevant industries in the South. Some items had now been cleared, and others might follow. These further concessions would not be earth-shaking but two considerations should be borne

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in mind:- first, that their own industries did not exactly embrace the idea with enthusiasm, and secondly, that these concessions were additions to the measures required by the Anglo-Irish Free Trade Agreement, which in itself represented a carefully-negotiated balance of advantage and disadvantage. The Prime Minister said that of course these difficulties were appreciated, but that any further concessions would be most welcome in the North.

8. FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE

The Prime Minister observed that, to give a lead, he and his colleagues had been abstaining almost entirely from public engagements. It would be helpful to know what view the Republic took of this aspect. The Minister for Agriculture replied that they had taken rather a different line. Provided meetings were purely local and non-social (e.g. political branch meetings) they considered it positively beneficial for Ministers to attend and to take the opportunity to urge compliance with the restrictive and precautionary measures. More generally, however, he did not think the time had arrived for any easement. It was now, when cases were declining in England, that a relaxation might be most dangerous.

9. U.S. INDUSTRIAL INVESTMENT

There was some discussion of the implications of President Johnson's new controls over U.S. direct investment, but general agreement on both sides that it was too early to make an informed assessment.

10. CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

The Taoiseach said that in view of the Northern interest in the Killymoon Hoard, they would be willing to consider proposals for a loan to Belfast almost at once. The Prime Minister expressed appreciation of this attitude. In general Dublin was very much richer in cultural treasures, and people in Northern Ireland would appreciate being able to see these. Perhaps at some time a comprehensive exhibition could be arranged in Belfast of treasures of special Northern interest in the Republic's collections. There was also the question of the Lane pictures. Under the twenty-year agreement with the Trustees of the National Gallery the two halves of the bequest switched between London and Dublin at five-year intervals. It would give great pleasure if they could be exhibited in Belfast en route. The Taoiseach replied that if the Northern Ireland Government wished to raise this in London, it could be made clear that for their part they would be very happy to fall in with such an arrangement.

11. DECIMALISATION

Sir Cecil Bateman asked whether a decision was imminent on the basis of decimalisation in the Republic. In view of the large circulation of Southern coinage in the North, adoption of a different system from the United Kingdom

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could give rise to complications. The Minister for Finance replied that this would soon have to be considered by the Government. Frankly they were in a dilemma, because the 10/- unit clearly seemed to be the best system, and yet the implications of getting out of line with the United Kingdom were awkward. Dr. Whitaker seemed to doubt whether, in the end, they had much choice but to follow Britain; but even if they did not, the problem could be overstated. For instance, whatever they were called, there would still be coins of 2/- or 1/- equivalent, of a comparable size and value.

12. EDUCATION

The Minister for Agriculture expressed the hope that the New University of Ulster and the new Technical College being developed at Letterkenny in County Donegal might be regarded as serving, to some extent, the interests of students on both sides of the Border.

13. ATMOSPHERE OF THE TALKS

It is worthy of note that, not only were the talks friendly and informal to a degree, but there was no hint from the Southern side of any topic which could conceivably have any embarrassing political or constitutional implications. Quite evidently Southern Ministers fully accept the need to approach such talks in a sensible and realistic way.

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