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PS/Mr Bloomfield

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Mr A W Stephens  
Mr Chesterton  
Mr M Elliott  
Mr Spence  
Mr Bell  
Mr S Hewitt

DOING BUSINESS WITH MR HAUGHEY

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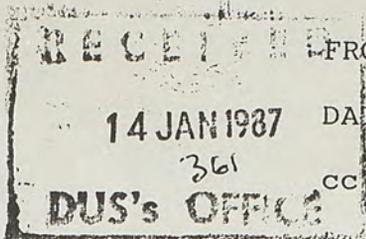
The attached record by Sir David Goodall of a conversation with Bryce Harland puts an interesting gloss on our recent exchanges in PUS's Steering Group.

A J E BRENNAN

16 January 1987

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FROM: SIR D GOODALL

DATE: 13 JANUARY 1987

Mr George, RID

cc: - Private Secretary  
Mr Brennan, NIO  
Mr Fenn, Dublin  
Mr Hall, Assessments  
Staff, Cabinet Office

ANGLO-IRISH AGREEMENT: MR HAUGHEY'S VIEWS

1. The New Zealand High Commissioner told me at lunch today that, when he visited Dublin shortly before Christmas, he had had half an hour's interview with Mr Haughey at which they had discussed the future of the Anglo-Irish Agreement.
2. Mr Harland said that his conversation with Mr Haughey followed a very full briefing by Mr Donlon at the DEA, in which Mr Donlon had convincingly taken the line that, if Mr Haughey became Taoiseach, it would not be in his interests to denounce the Hillsborough Agreement or to render it inoperable: his intention would be to operate it as it stood, while at the same time seeking to press the British side harder on nationalist concerns. Mr Harland had therefore been somewhat surprised to find that Mr Haughey had taken a robustly hostile view of the Agreement, which (he said) had brought benefits to no-one except the British Government. Mr Haughey had declared that "the Agreement must go". The paramount objective was to get the British out of Northern Ireland, and the Agreement did nothing to promote this objective. Mr Harland demurred somewhat at this, and asked Mr Haughey point blank whether he would denounce the Agreement. Mr Haughey rejected this suggestion: the Agreement had been concluded by a legitimately elected Irish Government and it would not be consonant with the practice of civilised states to renege on a validly concluded international agreement. A Fianna Fail Government would, however, ask for a review of the working of the Conference under Article 11 of the Agreement. By the time that had got under way, Mr Haughey confidently expected that there would have been a general election in the United Kingdom; and that this would produce a hung parliament in which the Ulster unionists would hold the balance. In that situation, it would be in the interests of a Conservative Government in London to abandon the Agreement, the dismantling of which could then be negotiated.
3. Mr Harland said that he thought we ought to be aware of this conversation, which Mr Haughey had presumably intended to reach British ears. He (Mr Harland) wondered how far Mr Haughey was giving a true account of his own intentions. He said that Mr Haughey had gone on to say that, once the Agreement was out of the way, the British Government's aim would be to wash its hands of Northern Ireland altogether. I confined myself to saying that Mr Haughey said different things about the Agreement to different audiences. If he was being honest about his own intentions in his conversation with Mr Harland, I thought his analysis was faulty: a hung parliament with the

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Ulster unionists holding the balance of votes was only one out of a number of possible outcomes of a British General Election, and it was a precarious scenario on which to build one's policy. In any case, it took two to negotiate the dismantling of an Agreement, and the objectives of a British Conservative Government and an Irish Fianna Fail Government in such a negotiation were likely to be widely different. Most fundamentally of all, I thought that Mr Haughey was profoundly mistaken in thinking that a British Government of any complexion would be prepared "to wash its hands of Northern Ireland". Current British impatience with the unionists should not be read as suggesting that British opinion would tolerate handing over a part of the United Kingdom, however recalcitrant, to the tender mercies of a Dublin Government headed by Mr Haughey or anyone else. Mr Harland agreed.

*DB*

David Goodall

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