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Mrs. Burns
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NOTE FOR THE RECORD

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DEPT. OF ENVIRONMENT cc

Minister
To see please
encl 15/9.

- PS/Secretary of State (L&B) - B
- PS/Dr Mawhinney (L&B) - B
- PS/Mr Needham (L&B) - B
- PS/PUS (L&B) - B
- PS/Sir K Bloomfield - B
- Mr Burns - B
- Mr Miles - B
- Mr McConnell
- Mr Kirk - B
- Mr Bell - B
- Mr Daniell

MEETING WITH EDDIE McGRADY SDLP

I had a meeting with Eddie McGrady, SDLP, in Downpatrick on 13 September. In discussing the prospects for political progress, the following points of interest emerged. McGrady was clearly relieved that the SDLP/Sinn Fein talks had come to an end. He made clear that he had never had any faith in this exercise and had refused to be part of the SDLP team for the talks. In his view there had never been any prospect of persuading Sinn Fein to abandon the armed struggle. Sinn Fein's lack of sincerity had been demonstrated by the fact that the violence had escalated while the talks were going on. He was also dismissive of the suggestion of a potential split in the Sinn Fein movement between political and military wings.

2. In contrast to Seamus Mallon (my minute of 6 September) McGrady believes that the only conceivable way in which progress can be made in the immediate future is through talks between the Northern Ireland political parties about devolution, since he is under no illusions (unlike some of his colleagues) that the unionists can be persuaded to talk to Dublin. McGrady feels moreover, that it is for the SDLP to take the initiative and said that he was doing his best to persuade his executive of this. He was hopeful that there might be a development in this area in the next few weeks though this might be no more than an offer of "talks about talks" with unionist

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leaders. He does not expect any dramatic progress as a result of any such initiative, however, as he does not think the unionists are interested in talking about political progress at present.

3. McGrady spoke very strongly about the Government's decision to go ahead with the declaration of non-violence for local elections. He considers this decision to be completely misguided and is convinced that no good will come of it. He even hinted that the SDLP might contemplate refusing to sign the declaration, though I don't think this suggestion was meant to be taken very seriously. He said that he had been tasked to write to Mr Needham or the Secretary of State in the near future to record the SDLP'S opposition.

E.C. Hallett

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Political Affairs Division
14 September 1988

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