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F. 2.ROINN AN TAOISIGH

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Taoiseach (on return),

At the request of Mr. Edward McAteer, M.P., the Leader of the Nationalist Party in the Six Counties, I saw him here on Thursday afternoon last, the 2nd instant. He had earlier that day, again at his own request, been received by Mr. J. Brennan, the Minister for Social Welfare. Both requests came through the Private Secretary to the Secretary of the Department of External Affairs (our long-established contact with the Six-County Nationalists) without any precise indication of the subject matter to be discussed - although this was pretty obvious from the recent Press-cuttings in this folder, commencing with the report on the speech delivered by the former Taoiseach, Mr. Lemass, at the New Ireland Society of Queen's University, Belfast, on the 23rd ultimo.

Mr. McAteer said that the main purpose of his present contacts with us was - not to make any protests but - to express his concern at the widening gulf that seems to exist between the South and Nationalists in the Six Counties and to suggest some practical measures by which this situation could be remedied. He was not thinking in terms of the establishment of any formal machinery for this purpose but, rather, of informal contacts. He would be greatly disturbed if the members of the Government shared some of the views which Mr. Lemass is reported to have expressed in his recent speech.

The specific measures suggested by Mr. McAteer were:

- (1) conducted tours for members of Stormont (Unionists as well as Nationalists) of such places as Bord na Móna undertakings and the Shannon Industrial Estate;
- (2) occasional (but not very frequent) meetings between you and Mr. McAteer - in regard to which he suggested that you should have taken the initiative. On this latter point, I suggested - as a purely personal view - that, having regard to your respective positions, the initiative might more appropriately have come from him; he conceded that I might have a debating point there but still felt that the initiative should have come from you, "as the bigger man"; and
- (3) that Ministers visiting their opposite numbers in Belfast might, on occasion, make contact with Mr. McAteer and his colleagues.

Mr. McAteer said that the Nationalists feel that they are now nobody's children. They see Press reports of exchanges of visits by Ministers on both sides of the Border and Press speculation on the prospects of your meeting Captain T.O'Neill, the Six-County Prime Minister, but they see no reports of contacts between their Leaders and the Government here. On this I ventured to express the view that contacts between the Nationalists and ourselves - in so far as they are necessary at all - might be taken for granted and are hardly news, whereas contacts between us and the Unionists are, of their nature, very definitely news.

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ROINN AN TAOISIGH

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Mr. McAteer, who stayed with me for about half-an-hour and was most cordial, said that he would like the views that he had expressed to me to be brought before the Government. I promised him that I would convey his request to you on your return to Dublin.



3 Samhain 1967.

Returned, 31.1.68.