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On May 25, the Taoiseach had a meeting with prominent Democrats of the United States Congress in the Speaker's office on Capitol Hill in Washington, DC. The meeting began at 8:30 a.m. and was followed by a ten-minute press conference at 9:20 a.m. Speaker O'Neill was accompanied by his Legal Counsel, Kirk O'Donnell; Senator Kennedy by his Chief of Staff, Carey Parker; Senator Moynihan by his Press Secretary, Tim Russert. Congressman Eddie Boland of Massachusetts, a close friend of the Speaker's and, until last week, a member of the Ad Hoc Committee on Irish Affairs, also attended. The Taoiseach was accompanied by Assistant Secretary Nally, Mr. Dunlop of the Government Information Services, Assistant Secretary Donlon of the Department of Foreign Affairs, and Ambassador Molloy and Mr. Lillis of the Washington Embassy. Senator Moynihan arrived at 8:50 but his aide was present from the outset.

The Taoiseach expressed thanks to the Speaker and the two Senators for their various initiatives which had cooled support for violence. He said that the evidence at the disposal of the Irish Government confirmed that such support had fallen off considerably.

He said that last year's General Election result in Ireland had reflected a certain amount of public dissatisfaction with the absence of political progress in Northern Ireland and a somewhat excessive

passivity on the part of the previous Government in relation to the situation.

He said that he had met with Prime Minister Callaghan in September of last year and had been reassured by Callaghan's undertaking that British policy continued to support a power-sharing solution in Northern Ireland and that there was no intention to develop a policy of integration of Northern Ireland within the United Kingdom.

The Taoiseach said that remarks he had made during his January 8, 1978 radio interview were identical to statements he had made during the press conference which followed the September, 1977 meeting with Callaghan but, for whatever reason, they had been seriously misinterpreted in Britain. He stressed that Government policy was neither to seek British withdrawal nor to seek a declaration of intent of withdrawal on any particular date but rather to seek an indication from the British Government in some form of support for a policy of ultimate unity by agreement of the Irish people which, in his opinion, was the only way to break down the political attitudes of the Unionists which were currently frozen.

The Taoiseach added that the absence of political progress was disturbing. The SDLP should have and should be seen to have a role in working for a solution. Otherwise the considerable support they have maintained in the community would disappear and the political vacuum might be filled with support for violence as the only option of a community whose political ambitions had been repeatedly frustrated.

The Taoiseach said that he perfectly understood that Prime Minister Callaghan should not undertake a political initiative prior to the General Election. It was, he said, crucial that an incoming British Government of whatever party should be seen to take an initiative which would effectively unfreeze the political stalemate and bring about real progress towards the sharing of power.

Senator Kennedy asked the Taoiseach whether in his view the SDLP should engage in talks, however devoid of substance they might be. The Taoiseach replied that he had consistently encouraged the SDLP to be seen to be engaged in a dialogue as otherwise they might leave it open to Unionists to claim that it was the SDLP and not they themselves who were playing an intransigent role. On the other hand, the SDLP themselves knew best what served their own interest on the ground and it might well be that to be seen to be engaging in talks which were patently insubstantial would harm their political interests more than Unionist criticism.

Senator Kennedy said that Ambassador Jay had said to him that the British Government view was that their policy of continuing to exclude Unionists from a role in self-Government would eventually work to break down their opposition to power-sharing; he wondered how we saw that assertion. The Taoiseach said that he did not detect evidence of political progress or the prospect of it under the present situation. Mr. Donlon, invited by the Taoiseach to comment, said that Unionists who are politically active favoured devolved Government while others were more or less content with rule from London. There was, however, no evidence that Unionists would bend under political pressure or any evidence that the British tactic the Senator had referred to was proving effective. The Taoiseach added that this was precisely why he had made the policy suggestion that the British should join the Irish Government in supporting the policy of unity by consent : this was the only way he could think of which would create a situation whereby the Unionists would have to think of options other than falling back on the British guarantee of their constitutional position which effectively, as was shown in May, 1974, allowed them to feel that, when the crunch came, they need not feel obliged to make any concrete concession.

The Taoiseach said that there were a number of difficulties about the Irish Constitution and statute laws which were repeatedly pointed to by Unionists as features in our situation which repelled Unionists. He instanced the provision about divorce in the Constitution and the position about the availability of contraceptives. He added that he personally doubted very strongly whether, if the legal or Constitutional measures were taken to liberalize the situation, these 'gestures' would conciliate Unionist opinion. Speaker O'Neill commented that all this seemed like nit-picking on the Unionists' part and the Taoiseach agreed. The Taoiseach said that some time ago he had had a discussion about this matter with a leading Unionist politician. The latter had stated that, while the election of President Childers, a Protestant, had not won any ground for the Republic in terms of Unionist opinion; a defeat for Mr. Childers would have been seen as a confirmation of Unionist suspicions.

Senator Moynihan remarked that he was continually amazed at the failure of British Liberal politicians to face the Irish problem. It was surprising that British socialism which was concerned with so many liberal issues had never come to grips with this one. The Taoiseach remarked that the Irish Government had great difficulty in getting its policy across to the British people. Our statements seemed to go continually either misrepresented or unreported.

Senator Moynihan asked the Taoiseach to comment on the significance of President Carter's policy statement of August 30 last year. The Taoiseach replied that the statement was significant in that it was the first time that a United States Administration had commented on the problem and moreover that the reference in the statement to the desirability that a political solution should be accepted by both sections of the community and supported by the British and Irish Governments was particularly helpful to us because it underpinned our right to be seen to have a role in dealing with the problem of Northern Ireland. He stated that he well recalled former Prime Minister Heath telling him that Northern Ireland was none of our business and the attitude of the British Foreign Secretary to our own Foreign Minister that he would discuss Northern Ireland only on the basis that it was none of our Government's business. He explained that the situation had improved very considerably under Heath with two invitations to himself as Irish Prime Minister to participate in talks on the problem.

Speaker O'Neill said that every British MP visiting him had indicated a desire for British withdrawal and he wondered whether such comments reflected British opinion or were simply intended

to gratify O'Neill given his ancestry. The Taoiseach said that they did indeed reflect British opinion. There were exceptions such as Airey Neave and possibly Mrs. Thatcher.

Speaker O'Neill asked what would happen should a date be set for British withdrawal. The Taoiseach said that both sides would build up towards a violent conflict in which the Unionists, who are already well armed, would inflict considerable losses on the minority. Senator Kennedy stated that, in his opinion, such a scenario would lead to genocide.

Congressman Boland wondered whether there was any connection between terrorists in other parts of Europe, such as the Red Brigade, and the IRA. The Taoiseach replied that he thought there was not, although the growing climate of terrorism was obviously of great concern throughout Western Europe.

Senator Kennedy requested a confidential assessment of the performance of Mason. The Taoiseach replied that some of Mason's statements had caused concern : Mason had imputed to him, the Taoiseach, remarks that he had not made, e.g., on his January 8 radio interview. Mason had moreover denied that figures provided by the British to the Irish Government that no more than two per cent of violent incidents in Northern Ireland related to the Border, i.e., might have originated South of the Border. He had moreover

made dangerous statements such a suggestion that the persons responsible for the La Mon massacre were hiding in the Republic, without heed to the real danger that such statements might lead to violent retaliation against innocent people in the Republic. Mason had misrepresented the Irish Government's position on extradition which was identical with that of most European Governments. At the Taoiseach's invitation, Messrs. Nally and Donlon provided figures indicating that, while 25 to 30 per cent of those in custody in the Republic for crimes related to the Northern Ireland problem came from Northern Ireland, only two per cent of persons in a similar category in Northern Ireland jails came from the South.

Senator Moynihan commented that Mr. Mason would, if given the job of decolonizing India, proceed with it effectively; it was astonishing that he could be so ineffective in relation to Northern Ireland.

to the economy, the Taoiseach stated that we were making considerable progress and that our GDP per head which in 1965 had been only 75 per cent that of Northern Ireland had now reached and even surpassed the level in Northern Ireland. As such, the argument that a form of unity would be materially unattractive to Unionists had been overtaken by events.

The Taoiseach said that the Irish Government was particularly happy that a very large volume of new investment in Ireland was American in source. He said that the Government hoped this pattern would continue and indeed expand. He added that there was concern about the policy proposal to end deferral and, while he was not clear as to how far those at the meeting could help him on this issue, he would welcome any help that they could provide.