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MEETING WITH DR BRIAN MAWHINNEY MP - 2 DECEMBER 1981

Present:

Secretary of State
Mr F Sylvester MP
Mr S W Boys Smith

Dr Mawhinney

Dr Mawhinney called at the Secretary of State's invitation to give an account of his discussion with the Taoiseach on 28 November.

Dr Mawhinney said he and Mr Michael Mates MP had been invited by the Taoiseach to a discussion. Senator Dooce, the Ambassador and the Ambassador's Press Officer were also present. They had discussed security, political affairs and economic and educational co-operation.

Security

Dr Mawhinney said that the Taoiseach had not reacted with any warmth to a proposal from Mr Mates that there should be a "mutual security zone" established on the border where the agencies of both Governments could operate and could interrogate suspects. Nor had the Taoiseach been ready to talk about extradition. Dr Mawhinney had noted from the discussion that the Taoiseach seemed at a political level to be ill-disposed towards joint interrogation sessions, but he had given the impression he was constrained by what the Garda were willing to do. The Taoiseach had referred in

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a general way to the good state of cross border security co-operation and had made no comment when Dr Mawhinney referred to the helpful nature of the Irish Attorney General's remarks on extradition at the British-Irish Association meeting the preceding day; the Ambassador, however, evidently thought that the Attorney General had gone a good deal too far. The Taoiseach had enquired about the likelihood of making progress with an All Ireland Court, pointing out that the Republic was ready to accept that two of the three judges should be from the North. Dr Mawhinney did not however feel from what was said that the Irish Government would press hard on the Court.

Political Affairs

The Taoiseach had talked of the impossibility of both independence for Northern Ireland and of integration. He had made clear that devolution was the right way forward and had taken without comment Dr Mawhinney's suggestion that for the time being devolution should be presented as an end in itself rather than as a step towards more fundamental change. The Taoiseach had indicated that Dr Mawhinney's plan for progressive devolution was attractive. He felt that the plan met many of the necessary criteria in that it was easily understood; was as close as possible to democratic procedures as they were normally perceived; and allowed progress to be made at a pace which suited the circumstances of the day. In the Taoiseach's view the SDLP would be ready to go along with a scheme for devolved government on the lines Dr Mawhinney had already sketched out. The Taoiseach expected that they would negotiate very hard but wanted Dr Mawhinney to understand that discussions would in his view be genuine negotiations and not obstructive. Dr Mawhinney also formed the view that the Taoiseach would be ready to help bring the SDLP along should that be necessary. The Taoiseach had been cool about institutionalising Parliamentary links between the Republic and the UK, suggesting that it would be right to pursue this theme only when Northern Ireland had its own assembly. Finally, the Taoiseach had indicated that he hoped progress could be made towards establishing a devolved assembly within the next few months, and that it could be functioning before the end of 1982.

Economic and Educational Co-operation

The Taoiseach had said that he saw little scope for significant economic co-operation, bearing in mind particularly that the Republic and Northern Ireland were in competition in many respects. He had recognised, however, the value of co-operation on such matters as energy and tourism and had wondered whether there could be greater harmonisation of the two fiscal systems. The Taoiseach had pointed out that the Republic was short of higher educational facilities, particularly in the sciences and technology. Dr Mawhinney felt that were the NUU to be able to provide courses of that kind the

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Government of the Republic might react favourably to a co-operative venture. In conclusion, Senator Dooge had referred to what he understood to be difficulties about surveying the stretch of the Belfast/Dublin road which crossed the border, and had hoped that they could be resolved.

S.W. Boys Smith.

S W BOYS SMITH
2 December 1981