

GRS 290

UNCLASSIFIED

FM DUBLIN 051420Z JUNE 1981

TO PRIORITY F C O

TELEGRAM NUMBER 186 OF 05 JUNE

AND TO PRIORITY N I O (BELFAST)

F C O PLEASE PASS SAVING INFO WASHINGTON

POSSIBLE POLITICAL INITIATIVE IN NORTHERN IRELAND.

1. AT A PRESS CONFERENCE IN DUBLIN ON THE AFTERNOON OF 3 JUNE, THE TAOISEACH WAS ASKED A NUMBER OF QUESTIONS ABOUT MR ATKINS' REMARK IN HIS INTERVIEW ON "PANORAMA" ON 1 JUNE TO THE EFFECT THAT A NEW POLITICAL INITIATIVE IN NORTHERN IRELAND WAS POSSIBLE.

2. NO TEXT HAS BEEN ISSUED HERE, BUT BASED ON A JOURNALIST'S TAPE RECORDING. THE EXCHANGES WERE AS FOLLOWS:

MARY HOLLAND (SUNDAY TRIBUNE):

MR HUMPHREY ATKINS HAS HINTED AT THE POSSIBILITY OF A NEW INTERNAL POLITICAL INITIATIVE IN NORTHERN IRELAND. HOW DO YOU THINK IT WOULD AFFECT THE JOINT STUDIES?

TAOISEACH:

I THINK IT WOULD BE A TOTALLY INEFFECTIVE OPERATION. I JUST SAW SOME NEWSPAPER REFERENCES. I WOULD REGARD IT AS TOTALLY INEFFECTUAL AND IN MY VIEW AN IDLE, USELESS EXERCISE.

MARY HOLLAND:

HAS THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT CONSULTED YOU ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY?

TAOISEACH:

NO, WE HAVE HAD NO INDICATION WHATSOEVER. THE POSITION AS FAR AS I AM CONCERNED IF THAT THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT, LIKE OURSELVES, IS TOTALLY COMMITTED TO THE POLITICAL INITIATIVE AT THE DUBLIN SUMMIT.

/DICK WALSH

DICK WALSH (IRISH TIMES):

IF MR ATKINS WENT AHEAD WITH SUCH AN INITIATIVE, WOULD YOU REGARD IT AS A SNUB TO YOUR POLICY IN RELATION TO MRS THATCHER?

TAOISEACH:

I DON' T KNOW. I HAVE ONLY NEWSPAPER REPORTS TO GO ON AT THE MOMENT. BUT I WOULD NOT REGARD IT AS VERY SIGNIFICANT. IN FACT, I WOULD REGARD IT AS A VERY FOOLISH EXERCISE WHICH WOULD GET NOWHERE JUST AS THE LAST EXERCISE GOT NOWHERE - JUST A WASTE OF TIME.

3. SURPRISINGLY, ALTHOUGH THE LONDON TIMES AND THE DAILY TELEGRAPH FEATURED THE STORY PROMINENTLY, THE IRISH PAPERS ONLY GAVE A VERY BRIEF SUMMARY.

FIGG

[REPEATED AS REQUESTED]

NORTHERN IRELAND LIMITED

RID
NAD
INFORMATION DEPT
WED
MAED
NEWS DEPT
SECURITY DEPT
FUSD
PS
PS/LPS
PS/MR HURD

PS/MR RIDLEY
PS/MR BLAKER
PS/PUS
SIR A ACLAND
CHIEF CLERK
MR ADAMS
MR BULLARD
MR FERGUSSON
LORD N G LENNOX
MR BRAITHEWAITE

ADDITIONAL DISTRIBUTION
NORTHERN IRELAND

[NOT ADVANCED]