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RECORD OF PLENARY DISCUSSIONS BETWEEN THE PRIME MINISTER AND THE  
IRISH PRIME MINISTER, THE TAOISEACH, HELD AT DUBLIN CASTLE ON  
MONDAY 8 DECEMBER 1980

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Present:

The Prime Minister	Mr. Charles Haughey, TD
The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary	Mr. B. Lenihan, TD
The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland	Mr. M. O'Kennedy, TD
The Chancellor of the Exchequer	Mr. D. Nally
Mr. L. Figg, C.M.G.	Mr. T. O'Sullivan
Sir Kenneth Stowe, KCB, CVO	Mr. A. O'Rourke
Sir Kenneth Couzens KCB	Mr. D. Neligan
The Lord Bridges CMG	Mr. F. Dunlop
Mr. M. O'D.B. Alexander	Mr. W. Kirwan
Mr. G.G.H. Walden	Mr. M. Horgan
Mr. B. Ingham	Mr. S. Whelan
Mr. L.B. Smith	Mr. M. Burke

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The Taoiseach began by saying that he had had a most interesting tete-a-tete with the Prime Minister. It was important for him to have an outline of British economic policy for the next 12 months without which he could not easily formulate his own policies. The Prime Minister asked who would be responsible for the joint studies. The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland said there were a number of areas where the two Governments needed to cooperate and urgent studies had to be put in hand. Some of this activity already took place in the meetings of the Anglo-Irish Economic Steering Group. There might be advantage in a Ministerial input to these meetings. There were areas in which the two countries were rivals, e.g. the attraction of inward investment.

The Taoiseach said that he had agreed with the Prime Minister on the need to combat violence, which was a major problem for both countries. The burden of security expenditure was, in per capita terms, heavier on the Republic than on the UK. They had both been satisfied with cross-border cooperation in the security area. He hoped that Mr. Atkins' statement of 4 December would form the basis

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on which a solution to the H-Block situation could be brought forward. This was a dangerous issue which could interfere with security cooperation. The Prime Minister said that she also hoped that the statement would serve to terminate the strike. It contained a complete list of what was available to the strikers if they conformed. This material had never been brought together in one document before. The British Government had been concerned for some months about the situation and had been considering a change in the rules on civilian clothes. In view of the imminent hunger strike it had been agreed that for humanitarian reasons a decision should be made quickly. This had not elicited from the prisoners the sort of response which had been hoped for. There was no possibility of further concessions. The Government would never grant political status. She hoped that the full statement of the Government's position would have some effect on those on hunger strike. But there would be no surrender to violence which was the negation of democracy.

The Taoiseach said he had asked for details of the legislation which set up the enterprise zone in Belfast. The Chancellor of the Exchequer said that it was in some ways similar to the Shannon concept.

The Prime Minister said that she had not realised that the Republic burned oil on a large scale to generate electricity. The Taoiseach said he hoped that the Prime Minister would do two things:-

- (a) take a direct personal interest in the cross-border studies; and
- (b) put a political impulse behind the feasibility study for the Wales/Wexford electricity link.

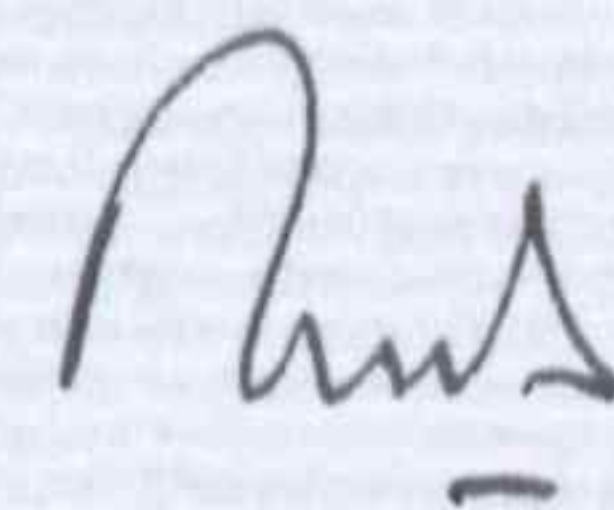
Mr. Atkins said he thought it was important that the North/South interconnector should be re-established. The Taoiseach agreed but said that he was really interested in the Wales/Wexford electricity link. Would HMG be prepared to share in the cost of a feasibility study? It was explained that a feasibility study was being produced by the respective Departments of Energy. The Taoiseach said that

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he hoped that more could be done about the cross-border studies. He had met those concerned with the Derry/Donegal and Erne catchment area studies: they were dissatisfied with the lack of impetus on the British side. He would like to be assured that the British Government attached importance to them. Mr. O'Kennedy explained that some of these projects were funded from the non-quota section of the Community's Regional Fund. The Taoiseach summed up by saying that he hoped that more political push could be given to these studies. The Prime Minister agreed.

The Taoiseach said he wished to underline the importance to Ireland of the CAP and the social implication of inadequate incomes for farmers. The Prime Minister said that the discussion at Luxembourg had been bleak. Unemployment was very bad throughout the Community; things were worse than the communique had indicated; everything depended on the price of oil. It was vital to defeat inflation; she was watching developments in the United States with great concern. If the States did not come out of recession we would all be in a bad position.

The Taoiseach said that the Irish Government intended to go ahead with voting reciprocity for British citizens in the Republic, though there were still some technical problems connected with the new British Nationality Act. He hoped that it would be possible for the two Governments to cooperate on the Security Council. Finally, he asked to be kept fully up to date on questions like Poland, on which Ireland had relatively little information.



16 December 1980