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File.

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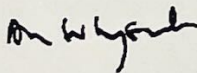
Date: 16 September, 1996

cc Mr Leach (B&L)  
Mrs Evans, HOLAB  
Mr Steele  
Mr Watkins  
Mr Hill (B&L)  
Mr Lavery  
Mrs McNally  
PS/Secretary of State  
(B&L)(pers)

MR CARTER, HOLAB (FAX)

**TALKS: STATEMENT BY REV WILLIAM MCCREA**

1. I attach a statement by the Rev Wm. McCrea MP. By way of background, Mr McCrea appeared on a public platform in support of Billy Wright, who had been threatened with 'summary justice' by the Combined Loyalist Military Command if he did not leave Northern Ireland. In view of Mr Wright's antecedents (he was reputedly the leader of a terrorist unit, and has made comments in defence of terrorist killings), the Alliance Party has alleged in the multi-party talks that Mr McCrea's support amounted to a breach of the Mitchell principles (with which, since last week, you will be very familiar). You will see that Mr McCrea now threatens that if the Alliance Party persists with its allegations he will sue them.
2. I do not see that any action arises immediately for the NIO. But it would be interesting to know whether the talks attract any degree of privilege in the law of defamation (none is of course specifically conferred by statute); and whether, if an action were to proceed, our records of the talks might be liable to discovery (potentially a worrying state of affairs).



A J Whysall

TALKS: STATEMENT BY REV WILLIAM MCCREA

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70. cc. Circulated for advice.  
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I wish to make the following statement regarding various publications and comments made in respect of me in the last few days.

I have consulted my solicitors regarding an article in the Sunday World, 8th September 1996, and the remarks contained therein. The Sunday World have been requested to print an appropriate apology and to pay damages. If no satisfactory response is received legal proceedings will be issued forthwith.

I have also consulted my solicitors regarding the remarks made by Mr Billy Hutchinson in the UTV "Counterpoint" programme broadcast on the 12th of September 1996 alleging that I have tried to have him killed.

In so far as the suggestion by the Alliance Party that my role in attending a rally in Portadown constitutes a breach of the Mitchell principles is concerned, the Alliance Party are advised that no banners in support of the UVF were displayed on the platform and that if they persist in making such allegations appropriate legal proceedings will be issued against them also.

Finally, since these matters are now Sub-Judice I will make no further statements nor answer any questions in respect of them.

**Statement by the MP for Mid-Ulster Dr. William McGrea**