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Reinart Genta

23rd August, 1971.

The following agreed statement has been issued today by the Government Information Bureau on behalf of the Department of the Taoiseach:

The Taoiseach received this afternoon the elected leaders of the Northern Opposition whom he had invited to meet him to discuss the present situation in Northern Ireland. The deputation consisted of Messrs. G. Fitt, M.P., J. Carron, M.P., I. Cooper, M.P., J. A. Currie, M.P., P. J. Devlin, M.P., T. C. Gormley, M.P., J. Hume, M.P., M. J. Keogh, M.P., R. H. O'Connor, M.P., P. M. O'Hanlon, M.P., J. O'Reilly, M.P. and Senators J. G. Lennon, P. F. McGill, P. F. Mallon, P. J. O'Hare and P. G. Wilson.

The Taoiseach was accompanied at the meeting by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Dr. P. J. Hillery, T.D., the Minister for Labour and Minister for Social Welfare, Mr. Joseph Brennan, T.D., the Minister for Finance and Minister for the Gaeltacht, Mr. George Colley, T.D., and the Minister for Education, Mr. Pádraig Faulkner, T.D.

It was agreed that all should work toward the objective of obtaining equality of treatment for everyone in Northern Ireland irrespective of political views or religion and that in stating this immediate objective there is no departure from the intention of the great majority of Irish people to achieve the unification of Ireland.

It was also agreed that this objective should be pursued by non-violent political means.

The current situation in the North was examined in depth and it was agreed to have regular consultations.

The Taoiseach indicated that the Government acknowledge the role of the elected Northern Opposition members as the principal representative body of the non-unionist community.