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Box

15 November 1995

Mr Sean O hUiginn
Second Secretary
Anglo Irish Division
Department of Foreign Affairs

Dear Second Secretary

Anniversary of signature of Anglo-Irish Agreement

For the record, today's tenth anniversary of the signature of the Anglo-Irish Agreement has passed off here without incident.

Public and, indeed, media interest in the event has been noticeably subdued. This in itself reflects the extent to which the Agreement and the intergovernmental cooperation which it enshrined have become assimilated within the political culture of Northern Ireland over the intervening decade.

A sole protester, the indefatigable Cedric Wilson, arrived outside the gates of Maryfield shortly after noon to put up some posters. The RUC staff inside the gate summoned reinforcements with a view to persuading him to leave but, by the time the latter arrived some ten minutes later, Wilson was gone. The blinding rain with which he had to contend may have dampened his ardour.

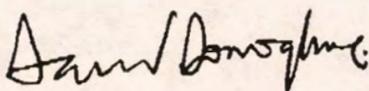
The principal Unionist protest action would appear to have been the joint press conference held in London today by David Trimble, Ian Paisley and Bob McCartney. We have no reports of any other activities organised on the ground here in Northern Ireland.

The media treatment of the anniversary, as you will have seen, has been fairly low-key, certainly by the standards of earlier anniversaries.

Today's News Letter editorial pays scant attention to the event. In contrast to its almost daily fulminations against the "Anglo-Eire diktat" in the early years of the Agreement, the focus today is on criticism of nationalist reluctance to enter an Assembly. This afternoon's Belfast Telegraph editorial contains a familiar complaint that the Agreement has brought Unionists and nationalists no closer. It suggests, however, that Unionists no longer see it as an immediate threat to their position and it grudgingly recognises the value of the Conference and Secretariat framework as a means of promoting agreement between the two Governments.

The Irish News has a strongly supportive editorial and has also been running interviews with Tom King and Peter Barry this week. BBC Northern Ireland and UTV have had interviews with Garret FitzGerald and others.

Yours sincerely



David Donoghue
Joint Secretary