

NATIONAL ARCHIVES**IRELAND**

Reference Code: 2000/6/657

Title: Speech by the Taoiseach, Jack Lynch, regarding events in Northern Ireland, given at the annual dinner of the Cavan Comhairle Cheantair of Fianna Fáil.

Creation Date(s): 1 May, 1969

Level of description: Item

Extent and medium: 3 pages

Creator(s): Department of the Taoiseach

Access Conditions: Open

Copyright: National Archives, Ireland. May only be reproduced with the written permission of the Director of the National Archives.

RA17/69

Coip do S.9361^m

The Taoiseach, Mr. J. Lynch, speaking at
Annual Dinner of Cavan Comhairle Cheantair,
Fianna Fáil, at Kingscourt, Thursday, 1st
May, 1969, said:-

I have watched recent developments in Derry and other parts of the Six Counties with anxiety and concern.

In recent years all Irishmen of goodwill, of all classes, creeds and political persuasions welcomed every sign of the erosion of bitterness, every indication of the acceptance of the principle of equal political and social rights for all our Six-County brethren and every step that was taken towards economic cooperation in the common interests of all the people of this island. The outgoing Prime Minister, Captain O'Neill, desired sincerely, I believe, to set Stormont policy on the road to basic reform. We hoped and prayed that with the growth of goodwill and the recognition of our common interests we were beginning to progress towards what Lord Craigavon himself foresaw when he said - 'In this island we cannot live always separated from one another. We are too small to be apart or for the border to be there for all time. The change will come, not in my time', he declared "but it will come".

- 2 -

There have been in recent months, however, ominous signs that the extremist opponents of any progress towards reform, that the defenders of die-hard and anachronistic Unionism have tried to obstruct by any and every means all attempts at reform. I have watched, with anxiety and restraint, the renewed deployment of British troops in the Six County area knowing that their coming to that part of Irish territory goes to the root of the whole problem and could be the cause of further aggravation of an already highly inflammable situation. I have watched with the gravest anxiety the further strengthening of the partisan armed force of B Specials whose activities have clearly been seen to be far more destructive of peace and harmony than they were protective of law and order. It is my earnest hope that all this does not finally result in a situation far more grave and more serious in its consequences than has already been experienced.

A new leader has taken over in Stormont. Major Chichester-Clark has declared that his Government are committed to and will pursue the reforms initiated by his predecessor. I hope that this commitment will be clearly seen to be sincere and unequivocal. Let us hope that the Stormont Government will now proceed with a greater sense of urgency than before until all

- 3 -

the wrongs that are at the root of the present strife and tension have been put right.

I have said these things at this juncture because it is my duty to do so. As head of the Irish Government freely and democratically elected by the Irish people, I yield to no one in my duty to speak out on behalf of all Irishmen in defence of right and justice.

My concentration at this juncture on fundamental political and social rights in no way derogates from the right of the Irish people as a whole to the unity of Ireland.

Let us, at this point, dedicate ourselves anew to the reunification of minds and hearts, North and South; let us eliminate once and for all the memory of past bitterness and the causes of present dissensions, not only until all our Northern brethren enjoy the basic freedoms, social and political, that are the right of all free men but until all Irishmen shall live together in peace and harmony and in unity for their common welfare.