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Interview given by Mr. Brian Faulkner, Prime Minister of Northern Ireland to RTE's News at One-Thirty on 26th November 1971.

The interview began:

There was, said Mr. Faulkner, no question of his Government accepting unification except within the context of an all-Ireland being an integral part of the United Kingdom. Northern Ireland was as much a part of Britain as Birmingham or Glasgow and there was no question of them accepting a 32-County Republic within the British Commonwealth.

Q. Do you think that if the rather drastic constitutional and legislative changes that Mr. Wilson advocates for the South did come about, that then Unionists might be more sympathetic to the idea of a united Ireland?

A. Mr. Wilson made a very long speech and an awful lot in it, central to it, was this suggestion of a united Ireland, which as I read Mr. Wilson's speech, would have meant Northern Ireland out of the United Kingdom and this is completely out so far as the vast majority of the people of Northern Ireland are concerned. I can't go into the other details.

Q. It is quite possible that the next British Government could be led by Mr. Wilson. Are you worried by that prospect?

A. No. I am absolutely confident that Mr. Wilson leading a government would be responsible in the future as he was responsible in the past. I was present with Mr. Wilson when we signed the Downing Street Declaration of 1969. The one thing that was made very firm in that - one of the many things - was that the border is not an issue; that the Ireland Act of 1949 which says that there shall be no change in the constitutional position of Northern Ireland until the majority of the Members of Parliament in Northern Ireland at Stormont wish it, is maintained. I stand by that and I believe that Mr. Wilson in Government would stand by that. Mr. Wilson made a very long speech yesterday. It had a little for most people in it, I think.

Q. Are you, perhaps, suggesting that Mr. Wilson out of government was perhaps not quite as responsible as he would be in government?

A. Indeed, no. I think that Mr. Wilson was very responsible yesterday because he was indicating that these are matters which ought to be considered; he was not laying anything on the line and saying this is something that must be done and he was very clear, for instance, that there can be no possibility of initiatives of any kind until the violence has come to an end. I thought that was a very realistic attitude to take.

Q. He also suggested that control over security should be transferred from Stormont to Westminster.

A. I have already made my position quite clear on that some weeks ago, that the Government of Northern Ireland must be responsible for the peace, order and good government of the county.

Q. So, if there were a transfer of security to Westminster you would regard that as a kind of direct rule by stealth?

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-2-

A. I said in fact when I made the statement that I have just mentioned to you that it would - I did not use the word stealth - but it would be a sort of sham kind of local devolution in Northern Ireland and I do not like shams.

Q. You would not accept the arrangements, in fact?

A. I think my words were pretty clear, you know.

Q. Are you worried by the breakdown of the bipartisan approach now?

A. I would always hope that the principal political parties at Westminster would be united on their attitudes to Northern Ireland and I don't accept that this bipartisan approach has broken down in its entirety. Mr. Wilson was very clear yesterday that he was firm that violence was the priority - ending the violence was the priority, and that it is of much more importance than the maintenance of a bipartisan policy and that is important to all the people of Northern Ireland. We have got to get rid of the terrorists.
