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**Reference Code:** 2003/17/272

**Title:** Text of a speech made by the Taoiseach, John [Jack] Lynch TD, at the Cork North West Constituency Annual Dinner, in which he discussed the Green Paper on the future of Northern Ireland and the potential role of the North in the context of a united Ireland.

**Creation Date(s):** 3 November, 1972

**Level of description:** Item

**Extent and medium:** 2 pages

**Creator(s):** Department of Foreign Affairs

**Access Conditions:** Open

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3rd November 1972

Text of speech made by the Taoiseach, Mr. J. Lynch, T.D., at  
Cork North West Constituency Annual Dinner, Imperial Hotel,  
Cork, on 3rd November, 1972.

The Green Paper on the future of Northern Ireland represents a welcome and constructive contribution to public discussion of the problem. As the toll of senseless killings, savage brutality, violence and destruction continues to mount, it becomes increasingly clear that major changes in attitudes, behaviour and institutions are needed, both North and South, in order to bring stable and lasting peace.

The Green Paper opens with the words "The British Government have a clear objective in Northern Ireland. It is to deliver its people from the violence and fear in which they live today and to set them free to realise their great potential to the full". We - Government, Opposition and the overwhelming majority of the people in the South - fully share that objective. We also want to see an end to division, hatred and bloodshed among Irishmen. We want to see not only the people of Northern Ireland realising "their great potential to the full" but all the people of Ireland within the North, and North and South, working together and realising an even greater potential.

One essential part of the search for peace is the need to find a political structure which can command the consent of the separate communities in the North. Since the Green Paper is intended for discussion purposes, it naturally does not point to any single or specific set of political arrangements. It does, however, suggest that some courses of action are more probable than others. It would seem, for example, that the British Government would not favour either the complete integration of Northern Ireland with Britain or attempts to create an independent State in Northern Ireland. These are, again, views which we fully share.

In discussing the various forms which a new assembly might take, the Green Paper also makes clear that Westminster would retain control of security and of finance. In effect, the message of the Paper is that if Northern Ireland remains in the United Kingdom, it would be on the same terms as would apply to citizens in any other part of the United Kingdom.

In contrast with this very limited political power which they could exercise in a United Kingdom context, the people of Northern Ireland could have a very powerful and positive role in an Irish context.

The Green Paper repeats the suggestion put forward from several sources that some form of all-Ireland Council be established. Such a Council could be an important bridge towards greater understanding and mutual respect among all people, and hence towards true Irish unity.

In its initial stages, the Council may well be a body which would deal with economic and social matters of common interest.

As both parts of the country will be adjusting to membership of the EEC over the coming years, there will clearly be much useful work for such a Council. With the experience gained through this common approach to common problems, it could then be possible for the Council to acquire wider functions as may be agreed. Since the Council would represent both communities, North and South, and since decisions would require the separate agreement of each, this could be a method by which the Northern majority would have



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the opportunity to participate effectively in decision-making in a wholly Irish context while, at the same time, having effective safeguards that their views would not be overruled.

It is not inappropriate or naively optimistic to speak in this way, even though at the present time there is little evidence that the Northern majority are interested in methods of developing closer links with the South. Sooner or later these problems must be faced and resolved. It is my belief that true peace can never come by trying to keep our two communities separated from each other. The negative approach of apparent indifference and apathy is doomed to failure.

Equally, true peace cannot come from attempts by any one community to coerce another into expressing a loyalty which it does not feel.

Peace, to be stable and lasting, must spring from concern and commitment. It must be based on a framework which can accommodate and give full expression to the complex and diverse heritage which history has bequeathed to our people. We must find ways to live and work with one another which do not intrude on personal values, traditions and loyalties. It is because I am so convinced that the solution ultimately lies in a wholly Irish context that I ask our fellow-Irishmen in the North to examine closely the question of their future development.

Many of the barriers to closer North/South links will be disappearing in the coming years. Given the EEC timetables, by 1980 there will be no customs border between us. There will be the same tax system. There will be similar social services. Agriculture will have a common support system. We will be operating the same system of regional development. In short, the many economic and social differences which exist at present, will have largely disappeared.

In the Constitutional field, we have begun the process of change which is aimed to dispel any fear of what is described as 'Rome Rule'. I have many times indicated our willingness to adapt our Constitution to the changed circumstances of a new Ireland. It will be clear from my remarks about a Council of Ireland that there are ways in which the Northern community could effectively participate in this process.

When all of these economic, social and religious aspects are stripped away there remains the basic political issue. Do the people of Ulster wish to have a small political voice in a United Kingdom context, or do they wish to have a positive and major role in the affairs of Ireland? Our views are clear. We believe they are a vital part of our society and that we are the poorer, North and South, as a result of the artificial barriers between us. We believe that together we can create a political structure which fully respects the loyalties and traditions of all our people and which guarantees peace and progress for all our people.

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