

**NATIONAL ARCHIVES****IRELAND**

**Reference Code:** 2004/21/80

**Title:** Note by Garret FitzGerald, Minister for Foreign Affairs, regarding his discussion with John Taylor MP of the Ulster Unionist Party, in which they discussed various constitutional possibilities for Northern Ireland including a continuation of the current power-sharing arrangements, complete integration with Britain, an independent Northern Ireland, and a Council of Ireland.

**Creation Date(s):** 19 July, 1973

**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.

Note by Minister for Foreign Affairs on discussion with Mr. John Taylor on Friday, 19th July, 1973.

John Taylor came to lunch at 1.00 and stayed until 3.00.

He said that he did not expect the Executive to work, although he hoped all would come to the Assembly and use it as a Conference Table. Faulkner could not rely on a number of his members some of whom were already in touch with Taylor's group. At most 13 would stick with Faulkner under pressure. His - Taylor's - supporters on the other hand showed no similar disposition to drift.

His own preference would be for complete integration with Britain - on a basis of partnership - if the Executive fell through. He realised, however, that this would not be 'on'. At the same time he rejected any idea of a unilateral British withdrawal, saying that he did not think even Labour - who had brought in the Army in 1969 - would pull it out now and that the great bulk of Tory MPs would favour maintaining the Army in Northern Ireland. I challenged this view.

His next preference after integration would be an independent Northern Ireland, endorsed by both the Republic and Britain. He recognised that the endorsement of both would be necessary and thought ours more important than Britain's. He knew that we and the Northern minority could not accept such a solution unless the rights and security of that minority were guaranteed. He thought there would not be much problem about guaranteeing the rights, but security would be difficult. He envisaged a reciprocal guarantee system, under which Northern Ireland, the Republic and Britain would guarantee each other, so that if disorder broke out in one area and rights were threatened the forces of the other two could intervene.

I said this was not realistic - once the British Army left, nothing would bring it back, and we would not be able to intervene effectively and in any event recognised that such intervention would only make things worse. Only the presence of a military force in Northern Ireland, dedicated to protecting the minority and not liable to be subverted into supporting majority repression could offer the minority the necessary security.

He seemed to accept this reasoning, and we discussed alternatives - agreeing that a joint Irish/British force would be unsatisfactory, but that a UN or EEC force might be acceptable - if we could get it established.

He said that he rejected totally power-sharing in the present context, because



the loyalty of the minority was not applicable in this situation. They would continue to look elsewhere - to the South. No Executive could operate on this basis. I challenged this but he was adamant. At the same time he saw no problem about power-sharing - indeed looked forward to it, in an independent Northern Ireland, believing that the minority would give their loyalty to such a State.

He also rejected a Council of Ireland as proposed at present, but saw no difficulty about a Council of Ireland linking an independent Northern Ireland with the Republic. But such a Council should be inter-parliamentary - enabling parliamentarians in both areas to get together. Any decisions it made should go for approval to the two governments. I suggested that a self-involving Council with a veto for the Northern majority through a blocking mechanism would be more satisfactory for the Northern Protestants, as there would be less likelihood of conflict in decisions between North and South, which could arouse tensions.

We discussed the external relations of such an independent Northern Ireland. He believed it must be a member of the EEC - he regarded this as even more important than keeping a financial link with Britain. I said that it was very doubtful if the Continental EEC countries would be prepared to accept two Irelands, each with a ministerial veto and a Commissioner, as well as parliamentary representation. The EEC countries would in any event be chary of admitting Northern Ireland with its history of violence, but would certainly resist doing so if the voting power of these islands was to be enhanced in this way. He demurred at this, but nonetheless saw the difficulty. He said it would be better to have dual representation, as this would give 'us' (viz. Ireland as a whole) a larger voice. Nevertheless he did not seem to reject totally the idea of a sharing of external relations, including EEC representation, by the two Irelands he proposed, although he clearly saw difficulties here.

He said Craig might be willing to see me, Paisley not. Craig was more important than people thought, although his position had been greatly weakened vis-a-vis Paisley. He seemed to regard Paisley as dangerous - and very tough.

I said at the end that the fact that I had discussed his alternative solution with him as a theoretical possibility should not be taken as indicating that I regarded it as acceptable. We would continue to seek a solution through the Constitution Bill and hoped we would find it. He agreed that there was a chance of this though he thought it improbable.

I had the impression that his present view is the result of much thought, perhaps during his illness, and is very firmly held. While flexible on such matters as the need for a neutral military force in the North, and perhaps even joint external relations, he seems inflexible in his rejection of power-sharing within the present system, and in supporting his own solution of negotiating independence, accepted by us as well as Britain. He remarked towards the end that he could accept the idea of a united Ireland, but that this would be likely to come more quickly through his path than through mine.