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Title: Letter from The Reverend AJ Weir, Clerk of Assembly and General Secretary of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, to Liam Cosgrave, Taoiseach, attaching a set of Resolutions on the Northern Ireland situation and the actions of the Irish government in relation to the North, which were adopted at sessions of The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland.

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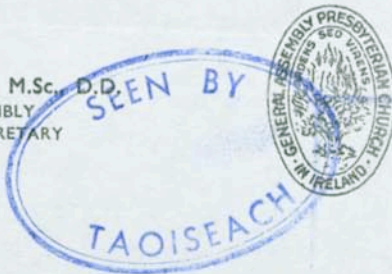
Department of the Taoiseach

Dep. Weir

The Presbyterian Church in Ireland

THE REV. A. J. WEIR, M.Sc., D.D.,
CLERK OF ASSEMBLY
AND GENERAL SECRETARY

CHURCH HOUSE
BELFAST, BT1 6DW



10 MMH1974

5th June, 1974.

Dear Mr. Cosgrave,

The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, composed of all ministers of our Church and a representative of every congregation both in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, had an extended discussion on the current situation in this island during sessions held on June, 4th and 5th. In the course of over five years the enclosed Resolutions were adopted which I have the honour to submit for your consideration.

To acknowledge with thanks for letter of 26/74 and in return the contents of which he has noted with particular attention.

Yours sincerely,

Liam Cosgrave, Esq., T.D.,
Taoiseach,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
DUBLIN, 2.

11/6

to Kelly

Will my ack no ledger be sufficient - here?
10/6/74

The Presbyterian Church in Ireland

RESOLUTIONS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

ADOPTED 4th - 5th JUNE, 1974

THE NORTHERN IRELAND SITUATION:

1. That the General Assembly call upon all Church members to be on guard against becoming hardened to continuing violence and bitterness in Northern Ireland: but rather to keep alive their sympathy for the suffering and sorrowing, to defend the weak and stand by those who have been bereft of livelihood or of relatives on whom they depend; and to persevere in work for understanding, reconciliation and co-operation throughout our land.

2. That the General Assembly affirm that, to provide a framework for order, stability and peaceful development in Northern Ireland it is essential that there should be a sharing of responsibility and power between different sections of the community, and that intimidation of every kind be utterly condemned. The following considerations should also be borne in mind:-

(i) More regard must be paid outside the Province to the hopes and fears of the majority as well as the minority here. If special political requirements are made, these must have adequate support among those directly affected by them and not just be imposed nationally by majorities not governed by the same requirements. At the same time those in Northern Ireland must accept that they cannot live in isolation from the wider political and economic world.

(ii) The different sections of the Northern Ireland community should refrain from invoking their associations with the people either of Great Britain or of the Irish Republic as being in any way a substitute for seeking first to live in partnership together with one another.

(iii) The aim of positively involving different religious, political and social sections of the Community in practical responsibility for government in accordance with democratic practice, for security and economic progress should still be sought in one form or another.

(iv) Accusations of extremism, bigotry, sectarianism, disloyalty and rebellion, even when made with some foundation, though all too easily and widely used, have also too often obscured and misrepresented the real situation and the character of a host of men and women. Politicians and commentators on the Northern Ireland situation, with their own counter-prejudices, only add to apprehensions and impair the delicate balance of relationships by provocative and misconceived pronouncements.

(v) The effects of five years bitter confrontation and terrorism, of bombings, shootings, burnings, intimidating threats and insults, self-styled armies and para-military associations, mass strikes and physical obstruction, must be seen not only for what they have already done, both to individuals and the whole community, but also for the still greater evils to which they lead directly on, politically, economically, socially and religiously.

(vi) Democratic government cannot be exercised nor human rights defended by coercion for any length of time. While recognising the widespread support for the recent strike, we must condemn the fascist manifestations which it took on a number of occasions. As a Church in the non-conforming tradition we must ever defend the right of individuals to act according to conscience. Democratic opposition, too, must be constructive, seeking always for wider agreement and co-operation with those of different viewpoints and traditions. Inflexibility of attitude on either side is dangerous: the need is for discussion, consensus and consent, involving not only elected representatives but also community leaders and unofficial groups.

(vii) Christians are called to seek a better way of truth and mercy, honesty and patience, justice and compassion, of looking after not only their own interests but also those of others, in public as in private life. More Christians need to hear this call and offer themselves in public service and political endeavour at this time of such great stress and need in the community.

3. That the General Assembly again pay tribute to the security forces, members of the British Army, the U.D.R., the R.U.C., and their reserves, men of the Fire Services and all who continue to expose themselves to danger for the safety of the public. They pay tribute also to groups of public spirited citizens at local levels working for better community relations and to the men and women of Northern Ireland generally, for the bravery and restraint with which they have carried on so long in face of so much murder and destruction.

4. That Presbyteries be encouraged to undertake the initiation of dialogue with bodies in their area who are involved in the Northern Ireland Problem.

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND:

5. That the General Assembly welcome the formation of the "All-Party Committee on Irish Relations" set up by the Dail, with its avowed aim, "to contribute to a peaceful settlement of the Northern Ireland situation", in the hope that this may lead to an urgent radical reappraisal of traditional attitudes and policies, not only among politicians but also the people.

6. That the General Assembly affirm that any sort of Irish reconciliation must aim at creating a genuinely plural rather than uniform society, within the area of the Republic as well as of Northern Ireland. It should be fully recognised that there are Ulster-Scottish and Anglo-Irish as well as Gaelic-Nationalist strands in the heritage of the whole island; and that whatever diminishes these is a threat to mutual respect and partnership.

7. That the General Assembly would welcome clearer recognition that the present Constitution of the Republic of Ireland applies only to Southern Ireland; and that wider territorial claims, which have contributed significantly to distrust and violence in our land, should not receive the sanction such a document may seem to give.

8. That the General Assembly protest against constitutional and legal enactments in the Republic whose operation leads to injustices and inequalities such as have occurred over divorce, remarriage and inheritance, adoption, education and family planning.

The following Resolution was also adopted:

That the General Assembly protest strongly at the action of the B.B.C. last night in interviewing on T.V. David O'Connell, one of the leaders of the I.R.A. and thus giving that organisation free publicity.

This action is the more reprehensible as the interview was filmed in Dublin where the Irish Government, quite properly, does not permit R.T.E. to use such material.

5th June, 1974.