

NATIONAL ARCHIVES

IRELAND



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Structure of Section on Northern Ireland

1. Introductory remarks, including assertion of the right of Dublin to be involved.
2. Long-term position: the coming together of all the Irish people.
3. Short-term position: support for power-sharing institutions in Northern Ireland. Intensification of north-south economic co-operation.
4. No movement possible without British support for our long-term position.
5. Condemnation of violence and appeal to Provos. to give it up.
6. Expression of appreciation to those in Northern Ireland, Britain and the United States who have so clearly rejected violence.
7. Appeal to unionists to meet us half-way.
8. Appeal to British Government (to say publicly what the Prime Minister has already written in his book "A House Divided").

Draft Section on Northern Ireland

1. When I addressed you at this gathering last year, I said that Fianna Fail in Government would in relation to Northern Ireland follow the lines that we set out in our policy document of October 1975. You may remember that in issuing that document we attached to it extracts from speeches made since 1921 by my predecessors as leaders of the party, Eamon de Valera and Seán Lemass. These extracts showed the consistency of our policy throughout the years. Yet, when in the course of a radio interview on 8 January this year I again stated our policy - the policy on which we were elected last year - the reaction in certain quarters was one of astonishment and dismay. To reiterate what is factual was apparently considered unhelpful. It seems that it is alright for others - including people who rarely set foot in any part of Ireland - to express their views on what's happening on the island of Ireland but we are apparently expected to keep our views to ourselves. What we have to say is even described as "external utterances". I make no apology for giving my views on the way ahead. I make no apology for the consistency of the Fianna Fail approach to the problem and I make no apology for the fact that what I say represents the views of the great majority of the Irish people.

2. I accept of course that there are people on this island and people in Britain who do not share our point of view. There are fundamental differences and conflicting points of view are held with deep and sincere conviction. There are ancestral voices. There are inherited folk memories. Much though we may not like some of these things, we cannot ignore them. As a Northern historian

has recently written "the function of wise constitutions and just reform is to help humanity to achieve a future that is better than the past, but ^{if} they are not to have the opposite effect they must take account of the grain, not cut against it". [A.T.Q. Stewart "The Narrow Ground"]]. The shaping of political institutions on this island must take account of the aspirations of the two traditions on the island. Progress is not possible if one or other of the traditions is ignored and it is therefore in a spirit of constructiveness, of help and of reality that ^{we seek} ~~I speak~~ on the need ~~for~~ an arrangement which will accommodate both traditions with honour and dignity and at the same time bring a permanent, harmonious relationship between Britain and Ireland.

3. We believe that in the long-term the future of Ireland lies in the coming together of all its people. We also believe that the only way in which this can be successfully accomplished and made permanent is to seek it by negotiation, by consent and by agreement freely arrived at. We recognise that to be successful the negotiations must be conducted in an atmosphere which acknowledges and respects all the interests involved and we for our part will not be found wanting. We are not seeking territorial conquest or the victory of one tradition over the other. One man's freedom is another man's captivity. What we are seeking is a just and lasting peace and believe that our long-term approach provides not only the best but the only way forward. In the short-term we recognise the need for interim arrangements in Northern Ireland and we have over the years supported efforts to bring about there the creation of institutions of power-sharing government which will command the respect and support of both sections of the community. In the Northern Ireland situation I recognise that

words and phrases arouse emotions but as I said earlier there is no advantage in avoiding the issue. The only form of government which both sections of the community can respect and support is one based on the principle of power-sharing at every level. In the short-term we also recognise the importance of working with the people of Northern Ireland for the economic betterment of both parts of the country. It is for this reason that since we were returned to office last July we have, in conjunction with the British authorities, intensified efforts to improve north-south economic co-operation.

4. In the light, however, of the developments of recent years - we have had the Northern Ireland Convention, we have had efforts at voluntary coalition and we have had various inter-party talks to bring about devolved government in Northern Ireland; but all without success - we are more convinced than ever that no initiative will succeed until the British Government indicates its support for the principle of the coming together of the Irish people and shows in a practical way its willingness to work with us in the achievement of that objective. In the aftermath of such an indication I believe that real progress would be possible and that a major obstacle on the road to peace would have been removed. I say this not because we strive for party advantage but because I believe that an analysis of the developments which have given rise to the present unhappy situation leads to the inevitable conclusion that the only realistic way forward is the one that faces up to the real nature of the problem. There is no instant, easy blue-print. Mindless slogans, whether of the "no surrender" or of the "Brits out" variety, will get us nowhere.

●. The objective which we seek cannot and will not be attained through violence. Violence succeeds only in diverting attention from the real political issues and will bring us nowhere other than through more of the misery, the horror and the bitterness which we have seen in recent years, not only in Northern Ireland but in the rest of Ireland and in Britain as well. Just as we in Fianna Fail have been consistent in asking Britain to spell out its long-term position we have also been consistent in our rejection and condemnation of the use of force. Eamon de Valera stated in 1939 that "force was not going to be appealed to as a means of solving this particular problem" and that has been a clear and unambiguous position of Fianna Fail since its foundation. We condemn without reservation the current campaign of violence and those involved in it whether on the IRA or loyalist para-military side. I appeal in particular to those engaged in violence in the name of Irish nationalism to step aside and give to those of us who have been given a mandate by the Irish people an opportunity to pursue the policies on which we were elected again so recently and so decisively. You in the IRA have had a long run and, as all of us must face reality, you too must at some stage face up to the stark reality that you are now no nearer to achieving your objective than you were when you embarked on your current campaign eight years and two thousand lives ago. You have caused more lives to be lost than were lost in our War of Independence or Civil War. You have, through the barbarity of some of your actions, brought shame on the good name of Ireland and the Republican ideal. You have ignored the most basic of human rights, the right to life and you have hardened attitudes and contributed the delay in the achievement

of the goal to which we all aspire.

6. The validity of our cause has over the years been strengthened by the rejection of violence. In Northern Ireland itself the minority has, since the beginning of the current troubles, overwhelmingly and repeatedly shown at various elections its rejection of violence and by so doing, at times in the face of ^{threat} ~~sweat~~ and intimidation, has set an example to people everywhere of what can be achieved by following the constitutional political way forward. Though it must sometimes appear that the tunnel is dark and without an end, they have not been diverted. I pay tribute to them and to their leaders and assure them of our continuing support and co-operation. I pay tribute also to our good friends abroad who have sustained us with their support in the recent difficult years. I would like to send greetings and express appreciation to the Irish community in Britain which despite the occasional ill-informed ^{and} ~~in~~provocative taunts has continued, in calmness and dignity, to play its traditional constructive role ^{not only in Britain but also} ~~in the country of adoption.~~ ~~Their role~~ in the promotion of friendship between the peoples of Britain and of Ireland, ~~has been a decisive one and I thank them for it.~~ I greet also our friends in America whose interest over the years in the old country has been such an important one. Shortly after we came to office last year we were happy to welcome President Carter's interest and initiative in relation to Northern Ireland and it gives me pleasure to acknowledge here to-day the support given to us on this and on so many others issues by political leaders in the United States such as the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Tip O'Neill, the Governor of New York, Hugh Carey, Senators Ted Kennedy and Pat Moynihan and the many other

true friends of Ireland in American political life. With their help and that of the U.S. administration we look forward to continuing our efforts to achieve peace and to eliminating whatever support remains in the United States for violence in Ireland through such organisations as NORAID and the Irish National Caucus.

7. ^{In} ~~It~~ looking forward to the continuing support of our friends abroad, we realise that our efforts must primarily be directed within these islands. I ask those of the unionist tradition and to their political leaders in particular to listen carefully to what we say and not to be misled by slogans and misrepresentations of our policy. There are differences between us and we have nothing to gain by concealing these differences. Equally however, we have nothing to gain by ignoring one another and I ask you to join with us in finding the peaceful and honourable way ahead. Your viewpoint will be given its full recognition and we will, as far as possible, try and meet you at least half-way on all aspects of our discussions. We ask in turn that you recognise our position and give us the opportunity to build ^{political institutions in} an Ireland to which everyone of whatever tradition and in whatever part can have confidence and loyalty.

8. To the British Government, I repeat the message which has gone out to you before and since the foundation of Fianna Fail. Do not turn your back on the long-term interests of the people of Ireland and of harmonious relations between the people of Ireland and Britain. As long as you do, all of us will suffer. We are not asking for something irrational or unreasonable. We are asking for a public recognition of what many of you already privately acknowledge,

namely that the future of Ireland is in the coming together of its people in a compact which recognises how much they have in common. We have the qualities of generosity and courage required to bring this about. We ask that you now show in Ireland the generosity and courage which you have shown at other times and in other places.