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Mr. Nally
Ambassador
London



OIFIG AN AIRE GNOTHAÍ EACHTRACHA
OFFICE OF THE MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS

BAILE ATHA CLIATH 2
DUBLIN 2

7 April, 1992.

Handwritten notes:
Mr. Nally
9.4.92
914

The Rt. Hon. Peter Brooke, M. P.,
Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Signature: Peter Brooke

Thank you for your letter dated 1st April 1992.

I am glad that you felt, as I did, that our discussions at the Conference on 6th March were useful and constructive. I want to record also my appreciation of the briefing given to us through the Secretariat on the progress of the inter-party talks on 9th March where, under your chairmanship, the political leaders confirmed their willingness to resume talks on the agreed basis after the election. I am sure this positive outcome must be a source of considerable and well-justified satisfaction to you, as it is to all those interested in advancing political dialogue in relation to Northern Ireland.

As you know from our discussions last month, we share your views on the desirability of holding a Conference very promptly after the general election, in order to facilitate the earliest possible resumption of the talks process. I can agree therefore in general terms with your suggestion for a Conference around 23/24 April, subject to confirmation a little closer to the time.

As I said at our last meeting, I would hope this next Conference could decide on the nature of the arrangements to be made for a new "gap". I found it helpful to have your thoughts on this issue, both as an aid to my own reflections and in preparation for consultations with my Government colleagues, which I hope to have as soon as the immediate pressures associated with the Maastricht protocol permit us to address the issue.

As a preliminary reaction, let me say that I share fully your desire to ensure that the gap provides a reasonable interval for serious negotiations. We are also conscious however that Unionist calls for "suspension" of the Agreement, on the grounds that its operation must be incompatible with political dialogue, have made the nationalist community wary of any abnormally long interval between Conferences which could be interpreted as a collective endorsement of this Unionist position, and very

cautious also about any open-ended arrangement which might leave the pattern of Conferences subordinate to the tactics of one or other of the northern parties. If, as I hope, the negotiations acquire their own momentum I do not believe these issues should prove a major obstacle. It would however be important in the initial stages to find a formula which balances the practical requirements with the need to avoid anything which could add to the concerns I have mentioned. I have some worries that agreement from the outset to extend the gap could fall into this latter category and I agree that it would be helpful if our officials were to meet, as you suggested, to consider these issues in more detail in advance of the discussions at the Conference.

David

David Andrews, T. D.,
Minister for Foreign Affairs.

Peter.

*Very best wishes for success
of the Election.*

*Regards
David.*