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FROM JAMES LEE FOR COI RADIO TECHNICAL SERVICES

TRANSCRIPT OF PRESS CONFERENCE GIVEN BY  
THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND, SIR PATRICK MAYHEW  
AT STORMONT  
ON TUESDAY, 23 MARCH 1993

SIR PATRICK MAYHEW:

I think that what I would like to say to you is that we have had a most businesslike meeting. We had a carefully prepared agenda and we went through it bit by bit. One of the great things about these occasions now that we all know each other well is that no rhetoric or flummery is allowed to get in the way of the business and I think that is a source of great strength so I think we have seen an example today of the value of this process.

I am pleased that we were able to discuss, for example, security matters which of course are at the head and forefront of our anxieties, particularly at this time and I think that it is a measure of the co-operation that exists North and South that the two police chiefs - the Commissioner of the Garda and the Chief Constable of the RUC - are always present on these occasions. There is a very close relationship, a very high degree of co-operation and that is a mark of the determination of both governments to defeat terrorism by all lawful means within their power. We discussed that of course.

We discussed matters of confidence by which we mean securing as high a degree of confidence amongst ordinary people here in the North of whatever side of the community in the way which the security forces go about their dangerous duties and other matters of that nature and in particular we had a very fruitful discussion on the basis of two prepared papers about trade co-operation North and South and tourism, also co-operation in that field about which Robert Atkins would be very glad to speak to you and all in all it was a workmanlike and useful event in a series of these events which take place at regular and quite frequent intervals and I believe to the great advantage of the people of Northern Ireland and also the people of the Republic.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS:

QUESTION:

Sir Patrick, it might be said in the wake of Warrington that your remarks smack of complacency, self-congratulation perhaps. Did you come up with anything today between the two of you which could prevent more Warringtons?

SIR PATRICK MAYHEW:

I have learned that almost anything might be said here adverse to anything that is said by anybody in public life, almost anything might be said, none of that would be said by anybody of any sense

or fairness. There is no complacency and how can there be complacency when terrorists exact this kind of toll?

Our job is to ensure that the security forces are given every assistance from Government North and South that they need in their task of defeating terrorism and that no political or economic or social measures are overlooked that may serve to contract and ultimately to abolish those areas of toleration for terrorism that still exist. That is what this kind of conference is about.

QUESTION:

To crystallise this though, are you any richer in knowledge as a result of the Kilcock (phon) finds?

SIR PATRICK MAYHEW:

There is no doubt that those finds in County Kildare were extremely important. We had a report from the Commissioner, Mr. Culligan (phon) about the scale of the material that was found there. I think it can be said that the means of taking many lives and causing great damage were discovered there and the IRA have been deprived of them as a result of a lot of very hard work and of very dedicated work and the RUC have been foremost in their congratulations to the Garda.

QUESTION:

Sir Patrick, have you given up on the prospect of inter-party talks, particularly talks which would involve the Irish Government, in advance of the local government elections?

SIR PATRICK MAYHEW:

No, I haven't given up. I think that it would be very much in the interests of all parties and of all people in Northern Ireland that talks should resume as soon as practicable. I think so because I was sure it was in the interests of everybody that back in March 1991 the parties did agree and the two governments agreed to work for, as they put, a new beginning in relationships both within Northern Ireland and North/South and East/West, new political relationships. That was the task they set themselves and when those talks came to a conclusion in November last year, everybody signed up to the statement made by the independent Chairman when he said that these objectives are still valid and are still achievable and the parties went on to agree that there should be more talking and that was a very hopeful and a very realistic assessment.

QUESTION:

How do you then react to the statement by Mr. Molyneux at the weekend when he basically said that the talks were dead but also the point that he didn't really subscribe to the formula which was set out last time?

SIR PATRICK MAYHEW:

I don't think that Mr. Molyneux has pulled back from what he signed up to when the talks concluded in the middle of November. I think Mr. Molyneux's speech last Saturday, like all of Mr. Molyneux's speeches, bears very close reading and analysis. I don't believe that the official Unionist Party is unaware of what people who have habitually voted Unionist want to see happen and I am confident that they want to see a resumption of talking because people today right across this community in my experience are really insistent that the politicians look not back but forwards and talk.

QUESTION:

Are you therefore taking Mr. Molyneux's advice which from reading his speech seemed to be that you, as a member of the British Government, should discuss with the Irish Government the removal of Articles 2 and 3?

SIR PATRICK MAYHEW:

You can be quite sure that the questions of Articles 2 and 3 have ranked high in discussions between the governments. Of course they have and they ranked high during the talks that came to an end in November.

Mr. Spring made a very important speech a fortnight ago in which he set out the position of the Irish Government so far as Articles 2 and 3 are concerned and I found what he said then extremely



encouraging, as I said in the House of Commons only the other day. I won't attempt to put a gloss upon what was a very carefully constructed speech but I thought it was much the most forward and helpful statement by a responsible Irish Minister that we have ever had and it would be a thousand pities if we neglected an opportunity to build upon that.

QUESTION:

Sir Patrick, given the concerns that were raised by Mr. Spring about the Caterham Three case this morning and the widespread appeals that have been made to you, are you going to refer those cases back to the Court of Appeal?

SIR PATRICK MAYHEW:

You will have to wait for a little before you get the answer to that question I am afraid.

QUESTION:

For how long?

SIR PATRICK MAYHEW:

Until I have sufficient time to come to a conclusion you will be surprised to hear! But from time to time, there are very understandable campaigns because people feel strongly about a particular case urging me as Secretary of State here or the Home Secretary in England to refer a case to the Court of Appeal for it to be reconsidered and Parliament has said that we have that power

and it is one that has to be exercised really almost judicially. You can't say: "Well, there is an awful lot of noise going on and therefore I'm going to ask the Court of Appeal to consider the case!" Equally, you can't be influenced by whether a particular murder was particularly horrible as undoubtedly the murder of the corporals was. You have to look at it according to consistent principles and those are that there must be some new material, whether it is new evidence or some other consideration, of a substantial character not previously before the courts which give rise to the possibility that a conviction was unsafe.

QUESTION:

Has any such new material been placed before you?

SIR PATRICK MAYHEW:

I shall be able to tell you what view I have formed of that in a short time but not now.

QUESTION:

Secretary of State, what do you think of Gordon Wilson's offer to talk directly to the IRA? Do you think that would make any difference, Mr. Wilson speaking face to face to these people and appealing to them to stop?

SIR PATRICK MAYHEW:

I will tell you what I think about that. I think first of all that Mr. Gordon Wilson is a most remarkable and wonderful man. I



am sure he is the best judge of whom he should speak to. He is somebody who carries a tremendous amount of admiration north and south of the border and if he believe that there is a prospect of influencing the Provisional IRA, then he is the best judge of that.

I personally believe that there must come a time when the sheer weight of the evil of what they do comes home even to the hardest of those hearts and therefore if Mr. Wilson thinks that this is a good thing to do, then he certainly won't find me attempting to discourage him.

QUESTION:

Sir Patrick, you say every time you go out you get the pulse of the people who want these talks to recommence. If the Unionists are saying: "We don't want to know you in these circumstances if you are going to involve Dublin!", how do you get around that problem if you are still in bed with Dick Spring?

SIR PATRICK MAYHEW:

I think it is very important to read very carefully what Unionist leaders and other leaders have been saying. I would be very surprised if the leaders of parties who took part in these talks last year have made a really substantial change from the position which they adopted then so we shall have to see. Meanwhile, perhaps public opinion will continue to make itself even more clearly felt. We shall have to see.

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I personally believe that there is great advantage in talks continuing, not necessarily in the same format with a plenary session, with lots of people there. That is not necessarily the right way of going about it and of course it is necessary that we should be talking about putting individual building blocks in place here in Northern Ireland internally. Of course it is important that we should be talking about co-operation North/South and Robert Atkins and Mr. McCreavy were talking about that in terms of trade and tourism this morning. We should be doing that but it is also important that what we came to call Strand 3, the relationship between East and West, ought to be considered with the parties having a say in that so we will have to see how this develops but to go back to about the first question I was asked, I am by no means giving up.

QUESTION:

Secretary of State, Mr. Molyneux actually said at the weekend that once the two governments sort out the question of Articles 2 and 3 then they can return to his....party. ....Articles 2 and 3.

SIR PATRICK MAYHEW:

Mr. Spring has already made, as I have already said, a very important speech about the Irish Government's approach to Articles 2 and 3; he did that a fortnight ago. It may be that there will be some scope for that to be clarified or anxieties or misconceptions about it to be cleared out of the way. I don't

know but I feel sure that if people say: "We would like to know a little bit more about this! What did he mean by that?" from what I know of Mr. Spring, he would be very glad to answer those questions.

QUESTION:

Sir Patrick, the suggestion is that now two Anglo-Irish Conferences have been held in less than two months that the Agreement is, if you like, back on the rails. Is it your opinion that the Anglo-Irish Agreement is now back on the rails?

SIR PATRICK MAYHEW:

I don't think it was ever off the rails. If you remember, there was an agreement back in 1991 that the parties should carry on these talks in a gap which would be agreed between the inter-governmental conferences which take place under the provisions of the Anglo-Irish Agreement. That gap extended from April through to 16 November but the agreement was not off the rails then. That part of it which provides for conferences was temporarily suspended.

QUESTION:

I notice at the end of the communique there is a programme for further work. Does that mean that we will see in the future Anglo-Irish meetings taking place with this regularity?

SIR PATRICK MAYHEW:

Oh yes, I am certain of that and if you look at the list of things that are going to be discussed I think it is very important that that should be the case. I think that when you look at things like inland fisheries, you look at transport for example and many others that are listed at the end, it is perfectly clear that there are areas of mutual interest north and south where the people on either side of the border are going to benefit from co-operation and it would be a very sad day if we were to say: "No! There is a border between these two parts of this island and we are not even going to examine whether we can co-operate with each other!"

I personally believe this and have often said so: that if we can put in place arrangements, agreements, whatever you like to call them, which provide for co-operation between north and south in specific individual areas, it may very well be that the time will come when people say: "That has not been so frightening after all and here we are, we are still in the United Kingdom, we look like remaining in the United Kingdom for the foreseeable future because the majority wish, it doesn't seem likely to change and yet it really is possible to build co-operative ideas and arrangements north and south to the benefit of both of us!" That seems to be something that isn't really anything to be frightened of but something to be welcomed and that is what we are proposing to do.

SIR PATRICK MAYHEW - PRESS CONFERENCE - STORMONT - 23 MARCH 1993

QUESTION:

Would there be any loss of sovereignty in that co-operation between north and south?

SIR PATRICK MAYHEW:

None at all. Let us ask Robert what he has to say about it.

MR. ROBERT ATKINS:

To take one particular example. The Secretary of State talks about possible activity on the trade and tourism front but I think people are aware that some time next year the Erne(phon)-Shannon Canal is going to be open and that is clearly an example where cross-border co-operation in terms of the way it is run, the way it is managed, could work effectively and that is certainly one of the things that we talked about today. For example, also on the tourism front, there hasn't been, there ought to be and Mr. McCreavy and I agreed that we will try and do our best to ensure that there is going to be a Northern Ireland guide kit from the tourism point of view. Tourism after all is going to be the biggest industry by the turn of the century in Europe and in the circumstances what we can offer there can go a long way towards covering the particular points the Secretary of State raised and ensuring that the communities on both sides not just on economic grounds but on commerce grounds can gain something from it. To build upon trade, tourism, commercial activity which has been quite significant even during the recession is something which Government and the Irish Government are determined is going to



happen to a greater and more visible degree than has even been the case up to now.

QUESTION:

Is it precisely.... cross-border basis which is encouraging people like Peter Robinson to say: "Get mad with Mayhew! "?

SIR PATRICK MAYHEW:

There are quite enough people who are mad in that sense in Northern Ireland without needing encouragement from Mr. Robinson. I think that there are a number of politicians who might better direct their advice to diminishing areas of high feeling and encourage people just to look at the issues on their merits. Leave out the epithets, don't trade in adjectives like "evil" and "wicked" and then whine when somebody comes back and sometimes questions what you have been doing. Let us leave the epithets out and concentrate on what the people want which is a forward look by people of undoubted political talent towards a day when we can live in this part of the United Kingdom notwithstanding a divided community in harmony and in co-operation and in confidence.

QUESTION:

It is difficult, Secretary of State, to understand how you can have the hope that talks might start before the local government elections. What has changed to give you that idea?



SIR PATRICK MAYHEW:

What I was asked was had I given up the hope of that happening before the elections. We will have to see. It is all speculation, isn't it? But the elections are not very far ahead and after that we have if not before really got to get down to this question of how and on what basis we can resume conversations and dialogue between the two governments and the parties. That is what people want. I am certain that is what the people want and if politicians are in any doubt about it, then I do urge people to write to them and let them know what they think.

QUESTION:

You seem, Sir Patrick, to be trying to go over the heads of people who have .... in Northern Ireland and saying they are behind the real people. How can you say that? These people were elected by a considerable majority?

SIR PATRICK MAYHEW:

Part of my job is to get out and talk to people and hear what people are saying and to try to reflect what I am told. Who can tell who is right? I believe that the people want talks to resume. They tell it me whatever part I go to, whether it is traditional Unionist areas or whether it is areas who have voted for the SDLP over many years. That is what they tell me. I don't think this is a question of going over people's heads, of going behind people's backs, doing anything of that kind. I think it is a question of doing what I am actually asked to do which is to be

in contact and in touch with the people for whom I have a very heavy responsibility.

People are very versatile I find, you know, when it comes to being critical. If you don't get out and about you are told: "Well nobody knows who you are, you never dare show yourself!" If you express opinions and you haven't consulted people on what the criticism is. "You are terribly arrogant! Of course you don't pay any attention to what people say!" If on the other hand I pay attention to what people say to me when I get out and about then I am told: "Actually, you are going over the heads of people who are elected representatives!" I am very philosophic about this kind of thing. I just get on and try to do what I think is right...

(END OF TRANSCRIPT)