



An Chartlann Náisiúnta
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Political Matters

SPEAKING POINTS

WELCOME DECLARATION

- The signature of the Joint Declaration, since our last Conference meeting, marks a major milestone in Anglo-Irish relations and in our endeavours to lay this problem to rest.
- The response to the Declaration in both Ireland and Britain has been overwhelmingly positive.
- In this jurisdiction, it enjoys 97% support, according to a recent poll. In the North, 87% of nationalists support it. It also appears to command enormous support in Britain.
- Our concern now must be to realise its potential for progress.

CONCERN WITH BRITISH PRESENTATION

- As you know, we have been concerned with some aspects of your presentation.
- We agree on the importance of Unionist endorsement and we ourselves have gone out of our way to encourage this.
- At the same time we must keep in mind that the Declaration is primarily aimed at persuading those who resort to violence to choose the political path.
- That objective was not helped by the overwhelming focus on Unionist concerns by British representatives in the first weeks after the Declaration.

- (It was noticeable that much of the criticism from the nationalist side related less to the Declaration itself, than to the statements made on the British side in presenting it).
- I note with appreciation that your speeches in the House of Commons and to the TCD Association last week sought to adjust the balance.
- We hope you and other Government spokesmen will continue to seek ways of restoring the balance, bearing in mind the difficulties caused on the nationalist side by the initial presentation.

NEED FOR CLEAR THINKING ON CLARIFICATION

- I worry also that the "clarification" issue may also be serving Sinn Fein propaganda purposes.
- We agree with you and have repeatedly put on record that there can be no question of re-negotiation or drastic re-interpretation of the Declaration.
- However it should be possible to distinguish, in a commonsense way, between these unacceptable areas and clarification in the proper sense of that word.
- I believe it is in the interest of both Governments to make clear our position and to be seen to do so on any point of genuine perplexity or doubt. This will only strengthen our hand in relation to any unacceptable demands which go beyond that.

UNIONIST REACTION

- Among Unionists, the reactions have been mixed. I think we would both agree that the DUP's rejection of the Declaration was unfortunately all too predictable.
- Apart from the fact that protest is the very lifeblood of the DUP, Dr. Paisley has clearly embarked on the European election campaign.
- The reaction of Jim Molyneaux and his colleagues in the UUP has been on the whole more encouraging. He has been cautiously supportive of the Declaration - in the sense that he has not denounced it and is adopting, for the moment, a "wait-and-see" policy.
- While his good faith in all of this has not gone entirely unchallenged, I think he is playing a generally helpful and positive role at present, and that is greatly to be welcomed.
- He has, of course, permitted himself the odd broadside against the Irish Government. He recently claimed that we have reneged on the Declaration (on the grounds that our position on clarification would involve discussion with Sinn Fein prior to a cessation of violence).
- We chose not to respond. No doubt Mr. Molyneaux feels a need to protect his flank from Dr. Paisley and, possibly, from some elements within his own party.

SINN FEIN REACTION

- We have had a variety of preliminary reactions from Sinn Fein spokespersons, which have generally been evasive or negative, but no formal or definitive response.

- The Taoiseach also received a letter from Adams, and is currently considering what the response should be.
- The signs are that an intense debate is underway within the Republican movement on how to respond and that Sinn Fein will try to buy time in order to ease the pressure on themselves.
- The Taoiseach and I believe that a period of time is required for the Republican movement to absorb fully the contents of the Declaration, in the hope they may make the major adjustment in their thinking which is called for.
- Without jumping to either negative or positive conclusions for the moment, I believe the two Governments should exercise patience and psychology and avoid over-negative reactions, which only enable Sinn Fein to take refuge in the old stereotypes.
- Sinn Fein do not fear isolation as such. On the contrary, all their systems are geared to cope with that and it tends to solidify their base in the ghettos.
- The Declaration attempts to do something more ambitious: it seeks, in language which Sinn Fein followers can relate to, to refute the reasons being proffered to justify the armed struggle and to show there is a sincere attempt to build a meaningful political alternative.
- It would be wrong if their followers felt that the two Governments had jumped too hastily to a negative conclusion about their intentions. Indeed, I think there is much to be gained from showing beyond all doubt that that is not the case.

- On the other hand, I agree the political initiative must never be ceded to Sinn Fein and I have sought to keep their role in perspective in my public statements on the issue.
- You will have noted the Taoiseach's comment in the Dail last Wednesday that a point could come after the process of explanation is exhausted, and if a positive response shows no sign of coming, when the two Governments would have no choice but to pursue alternative avenues of political progress in order to arrive at a political settlement, involving the constitutional parties.
- We must of course keep our options open for the future.

PROSPECTS FOR POLITICAL TALKS

- Michael Ancram will no doubt wish to brief us on his recent round of contacts ...

(On the assumption that a fairly upbeat account is given:)

- There are some encouraging elements in your account.
- Nevertheless, I would be slow to reach too many firm conclusions about the depth of agreement which actually exists. (There may be much agreement about the number of seats on the plane, the colour of the carpet and so forth, but unless there is agreement about the wings and the engine the plane probably won't fly!)
- The Declaration has been a courageous attempt to go to the heart of the problem.
- It is vital that any follow-up related to Talks should firmly keep the focus in the same deep area.

- This may be very difficult for the unionists, but anything on the lines of Molyneaux's apparently minimalist approach would simply suggest to nationalists that this was what really lay behind the Declaration all along. It would undo the potential of the Declaration and lose entirely the momentum towards a deep and lasting solution.
- We have seen many times that a predominantly internal approach will not work. The approach has to be one which addresses in a fully balanced way each of the three relationships and genuinely creates a "new beginning", especially for nationalists.
- I am yet to be persuaded that the Unionist parties are genuinely ready at present to enter talks of that kind.
- The DUP will not even speak to Michael.
- The UUP representatives appear to be more constructive. However, everything Mr. Molyneaux has said, both in public and in private suggests that he envisages low-key talks which will essentially deal with Strand One arrangements and down-play everything else.
- We must also reckon with the likelihood that, as the June elections approach, his position will harden and he will be even less amenable to the negotiation of a comprehensive new agreement.
- I cannot speak for the SDLP but, from everything Mr. Hume has said, I imagine that he would be slow to enter a talks process which he felt had an unbalanced concentration on Strand One arrangements.

(If Mr. Mayhew argues the need for an Irish position or paper on Strand Two issues):

FURTHER OFFICIAL CONTACTS

- I think that we need to prepare very carefully the basis on which new talks should begin, and particularly how we might ensure that the outcome will be a deep accommodation, and not a rowing-back from the Declaration.

- I can agree that officials might discuss the parameters of new Talks, and particularly how we might work out a suitably far-reaching framework in line with the Declaration, which we could then jointly seek to have accepted.

- I would want this work to proceed entirely without publicity for the time being, so as to avoid any interference with our on-going efforts to secure acceptance for the Declaration, or any implication we had written off the hope of a positive response and were already embarked on an alternative.

- We might review progress at our next Conference meeting, when the Republican position may be clearer, if only by default.

POLITICAL MATTERS

Background Note on Recent Developments

Follow-up to Joint Declaration

1. The major issues which have arisen between the two Governments over the period since the Declaration was signed have been: (i) the need to ensure balance in the presentation of the Declaration; (ii) the question of how to respond to Sinn Fein requests for "clarification".
2. In his initial Commons remarks on 15 December, and in many subsequent statements about the Declaration, Prime Minister Major addressed himself almost exclusively to Unionist concerns and was correspondingly belligerent in his attitude towards the Republican community.
3. An attempt to restore the necessary balance was made by the Secretary of State in a speech to the Trinity Graduates Association on 20 January, which emphasized the reassurances which the Declaration contained for the nationalist position.
4. The second issue has been that of clarification. Gerry Adams has been pressing for clarification of the Declaration and has hinted that the Republican response to the Declaration will depend on receiving satisfaction on that score. In an interview on 13 January, he said that "at some point in this process we're going to get a package which I am going to bring to the IRA...whether we do it sooner or later depends on how quickly the British do the sensible thing, to start clarifying the

position". Two days later, he said that "we cannot move beyond the current stalemate while the British Government refuses to clarify what are reasonable requests".

5. While there has been media speculation that the points of concern to Sinn Fein include self-determination and the question of a "Unionist veto", there has so far been no statement from Sinn Fein of what precisely they wish to have clarified.
6. The British Government has been flatly dismissive, arguing that clarification would be tantamount to re-negotiation of the text. Most recently (21 January), the Prime Minister told the Commons that he had received a letter from Gerry Adams and that, "as the Taoiseach and I have made clear, there can be no question of renegotiation of the Joint Declaration".
7. However, in his speech on the previous evening, the Secretary of State accepted that, in the aftermath of a cessation of violence, clarification could be appropriate on the steps required to get Sinn Fein into talks. (He supported this point with reference to a message passed by the British Government to Sinn Fein on 5 November last).
8. The Irish Government have been more flexible in response to the Sinn Fein request. In his address to the Irish Association on 10 January, the Taoiseach indicated the Government's readiness to provide "continuing clarification to the best of our ability to resolve genuine perplexity". He made clear at the same time that this would be done without putting in question the Declaration's achievements and balance. John Hume has supported the Government's position.

9. In two major speeches during January, the Taoiseach has developed the key themes of the Declaration. In his address to the Irish Association, he emphasized the Declaration's historic nature and importance. He noted, in particular, that it spelled an end to the coercion or attempted coercion of either tradition in Ireland, nationalist or Unionist, and he underlined the link between self-determination and consent.
10. In a speech to the UCD Law Society on 20 January, the Taoiseach dwelled in some detail on the concept of national self-determination and its treatment within the Declaration. Reviewing international expressions of this concept, he again highlighted the link between self-determination and the principle of consent, remarking that self-determination was about "government with the consent of the governed". He also observed that there was no way round the need for agreement and consent and that, in the Declaration, "we have travelled the full distance" on the central principles of self-determination and consent.

Prospects for political talks

11. British Government statements since the Declaration have highlighted the importance of an early resumption of political talks involving the constitutional parties in Northern Ireland. In his Trinity Association speech, for example, the Secretary of State said (with reference to the Ancram round of contacts with the parties) that "the current talks will now be intensified and we shall seek to give them more focus and direction in order to move forward the process of achieving widespread agreement".

12. In a letter to the Tanaiste on 5 January (attached on brief), the Secretary of State suggested that, in addition to being highly desirable in its own right, progress in the Talks would apply extra pressure to the Provisionals. He also remarked that the Declaration underpinned the work which the two Governments had in hand in respect of the Talks. In this connection, he recalled the Taoiseach's Dail comment that he knew of no "fairer statement that has been or could be made by the British Government with regard to nationalist ideals" than what was set out in para 4 of the Declaration.
13. In his reply of 6 January (also on brief), the Tanaiste suggested that the immediate focus should be to encourage a positive response to the Declaration and that for that reason the two Governments should be sensitive, both in terms of timing and presentation, in their discussion of future political developments. He would be anxious to avoid anything which might imply that the Governments were already jumping to negative conclusions about the Sinn Fein response to the Declaration. He looked forward to a full discussion of the points raised by the Secretary of State at the forthcoming Conference.
14. Statements by the Irish Government have kept the focus firmly on the importance of peace as a catalyst for wider political agreement and the need for patience in relation to the timing of a Republican response to the Declaration.
15. This has been balanced, however, by a recognition that the waiting period cannot be open-ended and that (as the Taoiseach indicated in the Dail yesterday) a point may come when, with no sign of a positive response, the two Governments would have to consider alternative strategies and possibly decide to proceed without Sinn Fein.

16. In a RTE interview on 13 September, the Tanaiste noted that there were "a great number of people of goodwill on this island North and South ready to engage in talks and to get on with the political process, even if it meant leaving an empty chair for those who are presently engaged in violence". He suggested that "we should get on with the talks and see what progress can be made".

17. Michael Ancram has been continuing his round of bilateral contacts with the SDLP, Alliance and the UUP (the DUP are still declining to see him). Interviewed on 22 January, he said that these exploratory talks were now "pretty well at an end". Their outcome should enable the British Government to give "focus and direction" to the way in which the talks might be taken forward. Observing that "you don't put people around a table until you have the basis for agreement", he suggested that the next stage of talks might again be on a bilateral basis.

18. Remarks by Jim Molyneux have deepened suspicions about British Government intentions in relation to resumed talks. Molyneux has e.g. praised the Prime Minister for emphasizing the need "to restore democratic accountability to the people of Northern Ireland at whatever level can be managed and in whatever way it can be phased" . He has also claimed that, with agreement among the four constitutional parties, "we could have a workable Assembly up and running by late spring or early autumn".

Anglo-Irish Section
27 January 1994