



An Chartlann Náisiúnta
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Meeting of Liaison Group
London, 13 May 1994

*Extract from framework document
revised*
Ma. McGeethy (25)
*No see please, summary report
on basis on Group meeting on
Friday last. The draft is regarded
as well removed
from the "ball-park"
whose accommodation
could be
possible from
our point of
view.*

1. The Irish side was represented by Sean O hUiginn, Fergus Finlay, David Donoghue, Joe Hayes and Sean Farrell.

The British side was represented by Quentin Thomas, Martin Williams, Peter Bell, David Watkins, Jim Daniells, David Brooker and Graham Archer.

SUMMARY

2. - We expressed dismay at the British draft of a joint paper which had been forwarded earlier in the week;

- While we had difficulty with many aspects of the draft, the section on constitutional issues was particularly unbalanced and inadequate;

The draft relied on the profoundly misguided approach of attempting to solve the nationalist problem through the Unionists, rather than the other way round. It failed to address the key points we had made in discussion, notably the political impossibility of a referendum being won in our jurisdiction (or even embarked on) on the basis of proposals which could be represented as "putting the seal on partition".

- In particular, the draft ignored the case we had made for a new status for Northern Ireland, which would not be the optimal solution for either

[Extract on this from British draft - frame work paper attached]

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tradition but to which neither would object.

- The draft was at variance with the spirit of the Joint Declaration and was an extremely unpromising basis for the Group's work. It suggested, in fact, a lack of serious commitment on the British Government's part to the pursuit of a "shared understanding". It had given rise to considerable doubts in the minds of Irish Ministers about the viability of this exercise.
- If agreement between us did not prove possible, an option which might have to be considered would be that each side would place its own ideas in the public domain and let the public judge which approach was the more promising.
- We warned the British that any public disclosure of their draft would risk undermining all the gains which had been made since the Declaration. We therefore underlined the need for this paper to be treated with the greatest circumspection.
- The British contended that their draft was an ambitious and "deep" effort which offered a detailed account of North/South and East/West institutions and which used language in the constitutional area which no other Government in the world would have used in relation to part of its territory.
- They recognized that their proposals for changes to the Irish Constitution might be problematic for the Irish side but asked that the draft be viewed as a whole and that the institutional sections receive particular attention.

- We described the section on North/South institutions as vague and tenuous and emphasized the draft's failure to address the concerns we had expressed both on these and on East/West institutions.

- It was agreed that the next step would have to be a political discussion between the Tanaiste and the Secretary of State (which we had suggested for Dublin the previous evening but which had not been possible owing to the latter's unavailability).

- Such a discussion might be arranged in conjunction with the opening of the Shannon-Erne Waterway, which both Ministers would be performing next Monday (23 May).