



**An Chartlann Náisiúnta**  
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*Disincent*  
This notes gives a sense of  
Unionist views expressed yesterday.  
JH 31/8/94

cc PST (27)  
PSS  
Mr Attorney  
Dr M Mansell  
Mr T Dalton

Contacts to Mr. Reg Empey, Dr. John Dunlop  
and the Moderator of the Presbyterian Church

SEEN BY

SEP 1994

TAOISEACH

1. I spoke informally to some unionist contacts today in view of suggestions that the unionist community was deeply unsettled by the prospect of an IRA ceasefire.
2. I spoke in the morning to Reg Empey. He said he and his colleagues were deeply perturbed at developments. He picked out three points of particular concern:
  - The silence "from our Government here" (i. e. British).
  - The leaks which had taken place in the media, and in particular the Sam Smith article in the Sunday Independent.
  - The third factor he picked on was the plethora of television coverage of the 25th anniversary of the Troubles, which, in the main, he saw as one-sided in favour of the nationalist thesis.
3. I explained to him that we were still uncertain about the situation, although hopeful. I stressed the Government had maintained an unswerving commitment to the principles of the Joint Declaration and to the need for a total cessation of violence. We had some hope that that position was bearing fruit.
4. The second point I asked him to emphasise to his colleague was that if our hopes were confirmed, there were no secret agreements or side-understandings underpinning that position. For better or for worse, the Government had been absolutely consistent in what it said to unionist and

nationalist alike. The positions taken in private contacts were completely faithful to the positions which the Taoiseach and Tanaiste had put on the public record.

5. I spoke also to Dr. John Dunlop. He too emphasised the panicky state of the unionist community. He criticised the Taoiseach's weekend speech on a number of counts, including its reference to the injustices of the Stormont days and the need for action by the British Government. I repeated the assurances I had given to Mr. Empey. I pointed out to him that the key consideration in our perspective was the cessation of violence. Once Sinn Fein made the commitment to an exclusively peaceful path, we had to respect their right to shape their politics as they saw fit, including in directions distasteful to us or the unionist community. I assured Dr. Dunlop that we were fully conscious of the fears on the unionist community and would do our best to allay them. It would also be very helpful if people of good-will like himself joined in that effort, particularly to dispel unfounded fears.
  
6. Later, probably as a result of contacts from Dr. Dunlop, I had a call from the Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, Dr. McCaughey. (Dr. McCaughey is of the conservative tendency in the Church). The Moderator explained the great concern felt by the apparent cooperation between the SDLP, the Irish Government, Sinn Fein and the US, backing a nationalist agenda. He sought assurances particularly on two points:
  - (a) that there was no undermining of the constitutional position of Northern Ireland; and
  - (b) that our stance was there would be no negotiation with terrorists until they had fully renounced violence.

7. I assured him of the commitment of the Government to all of the principles in the Joint Declaration. The Government had stood firm on the question of a total cessation of violence and were hopeful that that was about to bear fruit. The consent principle was sacrosanct, and therefore I assured the moderator there was no question of undermining the constitutional position of Northern Ireland.
  
8. He pressed however for reassurances that we were not addressing the Government of Ireland Act. I said we saw two distinct exercises: One was to persuade violent people that they should now adopt an exclusively political path. In doing so we would naturally be anxious to show that the political path was dignified and meaningful, but we would do so without any infringement whatsoever of fundamental principles. A second exercise was the process of accommodation between the two traditions in Ireland and the two communities in Northern Ireland. That involved everything being on the table and, we believed, constitutional change on all sides. That exercise would be greatly enhanced by success in the first process, but did not depend on it. I did not think it was right to telescope the two processes.
  
9. The Moderator said the general suspicion was that something had occurred between the Joint Declaration and the prospective announcement, to change Sinn Fein attitudes. He referred worriedly to the Cork Examiner article which had been given prominence in Northern Ireland. I suggested the alternative explanation was that the Joint Declaration offered a dignified way out of violence for those engaged in it, but that option had attracted much debate and scrutiny within their ranks. If that process was now to produce a decision that the opportunity should be availed of, that was a very important historical opportunity, not just for nationalists, but even more so perhaps for the unionist

community. It was important that everyone cooperate to the utmost extent to avail of it. I told the Moderator that it was likely that the Taoiseach or Tanaiste would contact him when matters became clearer. In the meantime, I offered to stay in touch with him and invited him to ring me as often as he felt useful.



Sean O hUiginn  
30 August, 1994