



# An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

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SECURE FAX 059  
18 January, 1995

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FOR: Second Secretary O hUigin FROM: Joint Secretary

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UUP unease about Framework Document

- To confirm: You will be aware that from last weekend, there have been noises from within the UUP expressing unease about the framework document. These seemed to derive from an internal UUP meeting addressed by Jim Molyneaux last week. The British say they are sceptical about some of the reports of that meeting. To judge from conversation with Martin Williams, NIO officials do not have a sense of the UUP as a whole going into panic as suggested by some current press comments, but they know a number of Unionists are expressing worry that the framework document may go further than the UUP will be able to accept. Martin Williams reminded me that his side believe they are taking risks with Unionist opinion but he would not disagree that at least some of the noises had to do with lack of consultation by Molyneaux within the party, jostling for the eventual succession and a desire to pressure the Government by reminding them of the UUP's votes in the Commons.
- There was a further curious story in today's News Letter, "Dublin Eyes Ulster Role" which quotes a "highly placed source" as saying that the District Councils will be "answerable to some sort of joint inter-governmental authority". Wild rumours like this are par for the course, but it may also be that Ministers are not unhappy to see them circulate so that the framework document will seem all the more moderate when it appears. Whatever the case, I am told that Ministers will be advised not to "lift the veil" on the framework document but to stick to their existing line, ie,
  - there is a commitment by both Governments to publication of the document for all to see; there is no secret agreement;
  - the framework document will seek to show where common ground can be found; it will be for discussion with the parties; it will not be imposed;
  - the result of any agreement in the talks process will then be put to the people in referendum.
- I mentioned that in very recent contacts with the UUP, the Department had made efforts to reassure and had not found any serious alarm. In a good many contacts here with "small u" members of the majority over the last six months, we had made the points that the North/South Body

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would be accountable to the Assembly, would work by consensus and would address matters of genuine interest and benefit North and South. I asked nevertheless if the British thought our Ministers could say anything helpful. Williams came back to say they would welcome a reassuring comment from the Taoiseach or Tánaiste on our side to the effect that the framework document will be for discussion and is not intended to be imposed. I said I would recommend that an early opportunity be taken to include the "no imposition" point in remarks by the Tánaiste or Taoiseach. I recalled that the Taoiseach had already said that Unionist consent would be necessary.

4. Although much of the speculation from the Unionist side is wide of the mark, some of it is close. The FT today carries a story (attached for convenience) reporting a senior UUP figure saying Whitehall sources have confided that a new Ulster assembly would not have a veto over the powers of new all-Ireland institutions and that the first tranche of cross-border bodies would be enacted at Westminster over Unionist objections (if necessary). A senior UUP figure is quoted "that is enough to make us panic".
5. Another is reported as saying that although the framework document is not going to be an absolute diktat, it is going to be a representation of British Government policy and that discussion will be on narrow lines only. This is an understandable fear on the Unionist side. The document is intended to encourage debate on the basic issues and to have a strong charge. We have been influenced on our side by the view that it is likely to represent the high water mark of any agreed approach from the Nationalist point of view. On their side, Unionists naturally fear that the British would be very reluctant to depart from it in any serious way and that it might be pitched so high as to make it very difficult for them to negotiate within. If that were to be their reaction, they would be very vulnerable to DUP charges that far from influencing the British by their "understanding" in the Commons, they had facilitated a betrayal of Unionism.
6. I heard after lunch that Mayhew will say something to soothe Unionist unease before tonight's vote in the Commons. The NIO will be advising him to hold to a "procedural" line, as indicated in para 2 above. Mayhew is also likely to be tackled on the document when he takes questions tomorrow. We have asked for advance sight of questions and replies in the usual way.
7. I heard David Dunseath pressing Adams on Radio Ulster this morning as to whether North/South institutions within the current constitutional framework could be acceptable to Sinn Fein. Adams referred to Unionists objecting now as they had always done. He reiterated the longterm goal but said agreement had to be reached and that it was essential to get to talks. The overall impression was that Sinn Fein would be pragmatic.



"Financial Times" (3)

059/3

Wed 18/1/95

# Unionist fears could lead to split with government

What are the Ulster Unionists up to? That question was on many minds at Westminster yesterday following recent warnings by some senior UUP MPs that the government could not take their support for granted.

For about 18 months the nine UUP MPs have helped sustain Mr John Major's grasp on power by siding with him on a number of sensitive issues, in effect swelling the government's increasingly precarious majority.

That understanding appears to be under mounting pressure because of Unionist fears that proposals for all-Ireland institutions are soon to be unveiled by the British and Irish governments.

The first concrete manifestation of the increased strain may come in a Commons vote tonight on access by Spanish and Portuguese fishing vessels to British waters.

The UUP may abstain. This would amount to no more than a warning shot since the vote, on a Labour motion, is unlikely to have lasting consequences.

But a UUP decision to end its understanding with the government would be much more serious for the Conservative party, which technically is a parliamentary minority after the removal of the whip from nine Eurosceptics.

The government would face defeat if the Tory rebels and the UUP sided with the other

## David Owen on why Ulster tensions may spread to a fishing vote

opposition parties. Such a situation would raise serious questions about its ability to govern and could trigger a general election.

Opinion at Westminster is divided over whether Ulster's biggest political party would embark on a course of action that could result in a Labour government, or whether other factors are prompting strong-arm negotiating tactics.

Government aides dismiss the episode as "a storm in a teacup". Relations with UUP leaders have seldom if ever been so good, they say.

According to one aide joint proposals for new north-south bodies have been agreed by the two governments and are accepted by Mr James Molyneux, the UUP leader, who has remained silent about this week's developments.

Others see recent events as part of a succession struggle in the party. Mr Molyneux has given no public indication that he wants to step down but at 74 it is widely accepted that his leadership days are numbered.

Some senior UUP MPs insist, however, that if their suspi-

cions about the UK-Irish proposals are confirmed the party's understanding with the government would be discontinued. The only uncertainty, they say, would be whether this happened before or after publication of the UK-Irish framework document, planned as a basis for all-party talks on a durable settlement for the province.

The most important point at issue appears to be whether a new Ulster assembly would have an effective veto over the powers that new all-Ireland institutions would be given.

According to one senior UUP figure Whitehall sources have confided that this would not be the case and that the first tranche of cross-border bodies would be enacted at Westminster over Unionist objections. "That is enough to make us panic," he said.

The government's position is that the framework document would not be imposed but would have to be approved by Ulster's main constitutional parties and by the province in a referendum.

But some senior UUP MPs believe the party must "blow the whistle" now if there are elements of the document it cannot live with.

According to one the framework will be for discussion along narrow lines only. "Even though it is not going to be an absolute diktat, it is going to be a representation of British government policy," he said.