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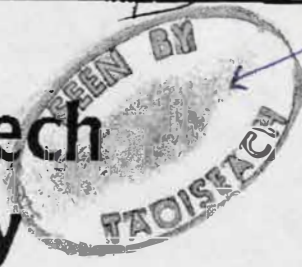
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Handwritten notes and signatures in the top right corner.

● Taisiach  
In its context,  
this is of some  
encouragement - but one  
wonders was it aimed at over-shadowing the

Speech  
by



PST, PSS, S/S Ó hUiginn,  
Counsellors A-I, Section,  
Messrs Teahon, Donlon &  
Dalton, Ambassadors  
London & Washington, Joint  
Secretary

2/4

Alliance  
Party

**David Trimble MP**

conference the same day and tailored to  
appeal to those who might swing between  
the Ulster Unionists and the Alliance Party  
to the

h.v.

**Annual General Meeting**

26.3.97

Handwritten signature and notes.

2-4-97

of the  
**Ulster Unionist Council**

in the  
**Europa Hotel**

**Saturday 22 March 1997**

**Not for publication or reference to content  
before 12 noon 22 March 1997**

For several years now the Ulster Unionist Party has had two broad strategic objectives.

The first is Repairing the Damage done to the Union .

Over the last quarter century the Union has been damaged by the imposition in 1972 of direct rule and then in 1985 by the Anglo-Irish diktat. These measures have diminished our status as British citizens. They treat us in a different and unequal manner from that of our fellow citizens else-where in the Union. The democratic deficit is deepened by the Diktat that enables Dublin to exercise power in Northern Ireland without accountability.

Over the last twenty-five years the Ulster Unionist Party has tried to repair the damage done to the Union by calling for democratic accountability and for the replacement of the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

Our second objective is Building a Stronger. Broader Union .

Filling the democratic deficit will itself strengthen the Union. But we also want to strengthen the Union by broadening the base of support for the Union. This is why we have emphasised that the Union has the support of the greater number. It has that support because the Union is best for all, it is our future together .

The extent of our success in gradually achieving these objectives has not been fully recognised. Of course the main causes of the damage to the Union are still there. There is much unfinished business. But much has been done.

We were responsible for achieving fair representation for Ulster in Parliament. Opposed by nationalists at the time: now they share in the fruits of our work.

In this Parliament, first we revived the Northern Ireland Parliamentary committee created at our instance in 1977, but which government had allowed to lapse in the mid eighties.

Then three years ago we achieved the creation of the Northern Ireland Select Committee. Opposed by nationalists at the time: now they share in the fruits of our work.

In 1994 the Northern Ireland Committee we had revived was renamed the Northern Ireland Grand Committee without any change in its functions which were limited to infrequent debates.

Now we have had the reforms made to the work of the Welsh and Scottish Grand Committees extended to the Northern Ireland Grand Committee with the object of making its work as close to the Scottish Grand Committee as possible - a good example and, perhaps, a precedent for the future.

As a result, the Grand Committee will be able to meet in Ulster and, in addition to debates, take questions and statements from Northern Ireland Office Ministers and other Ministers who exercise functions relating to Northern Ireland. Last year the people of Scotland saw the Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Exchequer answering questions before the Scottish Grand Committee in Scotland.

When the same thing happens in Northern Ireland in the next Parliament, the progress in filling the democratic deficit, that the Ulster Unionist Party has achieved for the benefit of all the people of Northern Ireland, will be seen.

Opposed by nationalists this week, but no doubt they will again be content to share in the fruits of our work

The Grand Committee will also have a function with regard to Bills relating exclusively to Northern Ireland. At present there are very few such Bills. Most of our legislation is enacted by unamendable Orders in Council. But this new procedure will give us our foot in the door. In the next Parliament we will use this foothold to continue chipping away at Orders in Council.

Each of these are modest steps, but they add up. We are slicing away at direct rule. And we are doing it at both ends. For in addition to the changes at Westminster, we have achieved changes here in Northern Ireland.

The principal change is in local government. As a result of our efforts, local councils were, in 1992, given the power to promote local economic development. Then in 1995 they were given the power to spend up to 5 pence in the pound on economic development.

Compare this to the controversy about the Labour Party's proposal to allow a Scottish Parliament to vary income tax in Scotland by up to 3 pence in the pound and you will see how potentially significant the change is.

Compare also the change that has come over our councils in the last few years. See how the atmosphere has changed and how positive co-operation has developed. This is no accident. It is the direct result of councillors being able to get their teeth into something. Something on which they can work together and produce positive results.

This proves our contention that the best way to proceed is not to attempt to solve everything at one go, held back by the nonsense that nothing is agreed until everything is agreed. But by the more normal method of finding something on which there can be agreement - agreeing that, and then building on what is agreed, and on the mutual confidence that comes from an agreement that is satisfactory to the parties concerned.

There is still much to be done.

There are additional functions which should be added to local councils.

We have still to crack the big problem. Creating a new Northern Ireland Assembly.

But we have succeeded in bringing the Northern Ireland Forum into existence. We saw it as the body that would make the case for a democratic regional authority. And it has done good work.

But it has been hampered by the refusal of the NIO to accord it the recognition it deserves, by the behaviour of some parties and by the nationalist boycott. This last action is

shortsighted. By aligning themselves with the abstentionism of Sinn Fein, the SDLP have done nothing to enhance their credibility as democrats.

So much for their desire for dialogue!

We will continue in dialogue in the talks. As in 1992 the talks have defects in their design. But we cannot neglect any opportunity that holds out the possibility of replacing the Diktat with a solid stable basis for the future; nor can we leave the Unionist viewpoint unrepresented.

As in 1992 our approach is positive. Despite the talks being deadlocked, we have put forward proposals for their relaunch in a more positive context.

The irony is that we are deadlocked on process. On substance, there exists, below the surface, the basis for an outcome that is achievable. An outcome which would enable people in Northern Ireland to live and work together in a way with which they would be comfortable.

I think most people sense this opportunity. They sense that we can move forward positively. Yes, there are elements that want to go back. There are the unreconstructed militarists of Sinn Fein/IRA who failed the challenge of peace and democracy when it was presented to them. There are some loyalist paramilitaries who want to follow Sinn Fein.

But listen to Monsignor Dennis Faul, writing on 9 March 1997.

"The people want peace, they are going to have peace in spite of the IRA, [they] are now saying to the IRA, 'We don't want you, we don't need you. You are the chief obstacle to peace and reconciliation with our Protestant neighbours, and our future prosperity. Please stop or we will make you stop. There is no problem here that requires violence to solve it.'"

I believe that an acceptable outcome to our problems can be found. Reconciliation is possible. Our future prosperity can be assured.

Let me sketch the outline of what I think is an acceptable outcome. There are four elements.

*Fair enough* First, an Assembly based on proportionality. Proportionality in elections, proportionality in committee membership, proportionality in chairmanships. Parties will have their fair share of the places and proceedings as of right.

This is how the European Parliament works. It does work there and it can work here. This is the challenge. Can we make the simple concept of proportionality work here. We in the Ulster Unionist Party have shown that we can. Are others prepared to try? Will they turn their rhetoric into practice?

Secondly, Westminster. The Assembly will be limited. There will be no equivalent of a tartan tax. Taxation and expenditure decisions will remain in Westminster. So all major policy issues would be determined there. This should reassure those who fear that an assembly would act unreasonably. It also underlines the need for effective participation at Westminster and the continuing relevance of the reforms we have secured there.

Thirdly, a Bill of Rights to guarantee fairness. Following the proposals of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe this could be extended to cover issues of identity and group rights. These have worked in the Sud Tirol and are working for the peoples of Hungary, Romania, Slovakia and the Caucasus, overcoming divisions much greater than ours.

*Anthony  
Alcock  
input*

Why should these possibilities be excluded because of the insularity of those who will not look at the wider Europe of nations co-operating together without the cumbersome supranational institutions of the EU?

Fourthly, the replacement of the failed Anglo-Irish Agreement by a genuinely British-Irish Agreement covering the totality of relationships within these islands.

It would provide a framework within which there could be an appropriate cross frontier relationship, based on pragmatic considerations of mutual benefit and not on a political agenda. This could meet the nationalist sense of place but by locating the relationship within the context of the islands as a whole it would not threaten the British identity. It would, unlike the present arrangements, correspond to real needs and enjoy real support.

*If is  
more  
than  
that*

These are just the outlines of an acceptable outcome. The details have still to be settled. But most people know in their heart that at the end of the day this is where we will be.

Some die-hard republicans, north and south, may still cherish illusions. But the people for whom Father Faul speaks know better.

He has spoken of their desire to seek peace and co-operation with their neighbours. I think nationalists for whom he speaks would find the broad outline I have sketched a basis for building for the future.

Can we not find a way of moving to what I have sketched?

Can we leave behind the procedural morass? Can we leave behind too those who cling to the familiarities of fighting as if it were a comfort blanket?

This is the time to turn away from that. Let us instead focus on building for our future together.

We all know that it would be a prosperous future, with all our people at ease with each other, enjoying the benefits of the Union and of a civilised relationship with the people of the rest of the island.

But there are some afraid of the challenge of building.

During the elections there will be constant cries of "sell out".

You will be told that this will be the destiny day: that the final sell out of Ulster is at hand: that the Ulster Unionist party is weakly going along with this betrayal.

But have we not heard this at every election?

Yes the election is important. But what is a realistic and responsible response to the possible risks and possible rewards of this moment.

Remember the Ulster Hall antics, the Carson Trail, the road to Clontibret, wandering up and down hills waving bits of paper.

For thirty years these slogans and pantomimes have delivered nothing.

It will be said that we are traitors. We were told that my predecessor, Mr Molyneux was a judas.

How dare anyone describe Jim Molyneux as a judas.

A man who fought for Ulster in war and peace - who has striven for twenty years to strengthen our position in the affairs of the nation, and, as we have recounted today who actually delivered, not empty slogans but positive results.

The same methods have been applied to myself and my colleagues.

John Taylor has been attacked. A man who undeterred by IRA bullets continues to fight the Ulster cause.

Ken Maginnis has been attacked. A man who like many here was in the frontline in the UDR and has survived numerous IRA assassination bids.

Martin Smyth has been attacked. A man who led Orangeism for 25 years giving steady leadership in the worst of times.

Has there been one senior member of this party who has escaped this vitrol.

The attacks have all been false. I repudiate them. Further, I repudiate that style of behaviour.

The enemy is not fellow unionists, however misguided. It is militant violent republicanism.

I disagree with the McCartneys and Paisleys.

Their actions and attitudes have been counter-productive. They have let nationalists off the hook: they have driven London into the arms of Dublin.

We must warn against supporting them. But we must avoid uncharitable conduct towards them. We should not adopt their tactic of personal denigration.

Our job is to promote the Union at home and abroad. Unfortunately the methods of those who denigrate us continue to do damage to the Union at home, in the rest of the United Kingdom and elsewhere.

The reasonable case we present is being obscured by aggressive, loudmouth unionists. This is not in the interests of the Union. It is not what the Unionist people want.

They want firm, positive, pro-active, inclusive unionism. That is what this party has stood for, has delivered and will continue to deliver.

The Ulster Unionist party has come through many dark days and turbulent times. Through the bombs and bullets and the back door deals by governments more anxious to appease terrorism than do their duty, we have stood our ground, we have kept our heads. That is why we are today and will be tomorrow, the largest party in Northern Ireland.

We have kept our eyes on our objectives. We have not resorted to the defeatist politics upon which others have built careers.

The Ulster Unionist Party which I am proud to lead is the bastion of Unionism which the pan nationalist front cannot divide or undermine.

In this election and beyond, we have much work to do, much more to reclaim for the people of Northern Ireland.

Old fashioned territorial nationalism is bankrupt - the defeatist's days are numbered - they are the past.

Our Party is confident. Our Party is positive. Our Party is ready to face the future and lead Ulster and Unionism into the next millennium.

Colleagues, go from here today, tell the people, right across Northern Ireland, from Portavogie to Castlederg, from Kilkeel to Portstewart, from Belcoo to Ballycastle, that the Ulster Unionist Party is the only Party to vote for in May.

And tell them - we need their votes. We need every unionist vote from every corner. We must send the message, loud and clear, to all in government, and elsewhere, that the Ulster Unionist Party is the force to be reckoned with.

Fellow unionists, together, we can build on our achievements.

Together, we can build our future.

Together we must build our future.

Together we will.