

## NATIONAL ARCHIVES

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STATEMENT BY THE TAOISEACH, MR. J. LYNCH, T.D., IN DÁIL ÉIREANN ON 12th OCTOBER, 1977, ABOUT DISCUSSIONS WITH THE BRITISH PRIME MINISTER, MR. CALLAGHAN, IN LONDON, ON 28th SEPTEMBER, 1977.

As Deputies know, I met the British Prime Minister, Mr. Callaghan, at 10, Downing Street, London, on 28th September. The Prime Minister was accompanied by Mr. Mason, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, and Mr. Judd, Minister of State at the Foreign Office. I was accompanied by the Minister for Foreign Affairs.

I sought the meeting following the General Election last summer, so that we could have exploratory talks on subjects of common interest to our countries, including Northern Ireland, the European Community and bilateral relations generally.

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The meeting lasted six hours and covered a wide range of subjects. At its conclusion, an agreed Communique was issued, copies of which I have arranged to lay before the House. I do not intend here to go over ground covered by the Communique, nor indeed would it be proper for me to go in detail into what we discussed. I would like, however, to put before the House, some of the main points which emerged..

On Northern Ireland, there has, in the recent past, been what I may describe as the appearance of greater integration with the United Kingdom. Rumours of a pact, or understanding, with certain groups in the <sup>House of</sup> Commons and the establishment of the Speaker's Conference last July "to consider and make recommendations on the number of Parliamentary Constituencies that there should be in Northern Ireland" are among the indicators which lent some colour to this belief.

I obtained a firm assurance from the Prime Minister that there was not a scintilla of a move towards integration.

He was emphatic in his view that the British people would not,

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in fact, agree to such a move. I was also happy to receive from the Prime Minister the further assurance that it was and remained the policy of the British Government to have devolved government with power-sharing in Northern Ireland and that there would be no devolved government without power-sharing.

In relation to the long-term approach I made clear my view to the Prime Minister that in the interests of all the people of Ireland and of Anglo-Irish relations generally there was a need to encourage the people of Ireland to come together by consent, by negotiation and under agreed structures.

Our discussion naturally led to our talking about the operation of direct rule. The main point I made was that however direct rule operated, it would, if continued over a long period, lead inevitably to a worsening of the situation in Northern Ireland. The immediate consequences of a political vacuum there might not be grave, but, in the medium or longer term, there could be no real stability and no real progress unless there were a forum in which the people of the North could express themselves

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and, to whatever extent might be agreed, govern themselves. I stressed the need for political action and the Prime Minister agreed that, if there was a general desire, the British Government would be ready to devolve a range of powers to a locally elected body under arrangements acceptable to both sides of the community. I understand that exploratory discussions will take place shortly to see whether this general desire exists.

I impressed on the Prime Minister the need for greater economic co-operation between both parts of Ireland. I have always thought it strange, to say the least, that the two administrations governing this small island have not found it possible to co-operate to a greater extent on economic projects for our mutual benefit. He welcomed my views in this respect and we agreed that officials of the two Governments would meet in the near future to review the arrangements and opportunities for economic co-operation between our two countries, with particular reference to Northern Ireland. They will review current and proposed cross-border studies and identify subjects

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and areas for further examination, with EEC assistance, where appropriate.

We discussed the present arrangements for security co-operation and both the Prime Minister and I agreed on the importance of this co-operation. The Communique records the British expression of satisfaction at the degree of co-operation under the present arrangements. We agreed that, in the general context of further Anglo-Irish meetings, there should be continuing consultation about how this co-operation could be developed and improved as the security situation required it.

While in London I had the opportunity of meeting the Leader of the Opposition, Mrs. Thatcher. She was strong in her belief in the need for the United Kingdom government to make political progress in Northern Ireland, and in her commitment to the concept of participation or partnership by the two parts of the Northern community in government.

This principle does not offer any threat to the future or

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to the integrity of any group in Northern Ireland. It is a truism that the only sound basis for democratic government is the consent of the governed. Almost by definition this consent cannot be obtained if large and homogeneous minorities are, through the ordinary operation of the law, permanently excluded from government. The participation of which I speak is a means by which the minority in Northern Ireland can be involved in the administration by which their lives are governed.

We are interested only in progress by reconciliation. We, want for Northern Ireland the stability which only a lasting peace can bring: and all experience shows that a lasting peace can be achieved only <sup>through</sup> / full participation in government by both sections of the Northern community. It is only in that way that the economic evils of poverty and unemployment which have sapped the hope and vigour of generations of men and women can permanently be overcome. We are ready at all times to discuss with the representatives of any elected party in the North ways by which we can help in attaining this objective - without commitment on their part and with

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the greatest of goodwill towards them on ours.

I cannot over-emphasise the fact that our first priority is to help to establish peace and a basis for progress in Northern Ireland. This cannot be done by violence - or by the policies advocated by the men of violence. The Government will continue, by every means in their power, to apply the law against men who use violence and subversion to attain political ends.

But simply to campaign against violence is too negative an approach to a fundamental problem. The violence is a recurring symptom; and you cannot eradicate a disease by attacking the symptoms. In discussing the issue with Mr. Callaghan, I pointed out the effects which the negative guarantees of his Government are having and I stressed the legitimate aspiration of the vast majority of the Irish people to see this island united in peace, by consent and under agreed structures. I said that one inference from the results of the last election here was that this wish was as live and as potent, among the people of this country, as it had ever been. I remain strong

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in my belief that it would take nothing from the honour of  
Britain or from the rights<sup>of</sup> the majority in Northern Ireland  
if the British Government were to acknowledge this aspiration  
and positively to encourage the people of this island to  
progress together, as a nation, of many traditions, each  
with its own value and entitled to its own respect,

in harmony with the people of the United Kingdom, with  
whom we have such close ties.

In our discussions of the European Economic Community, we  
talked of the applications of Greece, Portugal and Spain for  
membership. Enlargement of the Community will have the most  
profound effects. Politically, enlargement is eminently  
desirable. In my view, these political considerations  
outweigh the institutional and financial difficulties - large  
as these are. It must be our priority, as a Community, to  
improve the working and financing of the institutions so that  
they can stand up to the strains of enlargement without being  
destroyed. I do not say this to take in any way from the  
rights of the applicant countries to membership - but simply

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to stress that they themselves could hardly wish to be members of a Community so weakened by accession as to become little more than a loose agglomeration of States. What the Community would be then would not be the Community they have sought to join.

In relation to the Common Agricultural Policy, I said that our interest was paramount. While I am not by any means arguing that the CAP cannot be improved, I think that arguments for improvement based on the proportion the CAP takes of the Community's budget are not well based. The total budget is in fact, only a small proportion - perhaps .6% - of the Gross National Product of the countries of the Community. It follows that any policy involving worthwhile action must, almost inevitably, absorb a large proportion of the total. The CAP may produce distortions in the market but, without it, the distortions - and the vulnerability of Europe - would be even greater. And the effects on social, regional and industrial policies of a stable and prosperous agriculture should not be minimised.

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We also discussed direct elections to the European Parliament. Mr. Callaghan gave me an indication of how he saw prospects in the United Kingdom. I reciprocated with an account of how our legislation was developing. As far as we are concerned, we will be able - and we fully intend - to have elections next Summer - if that fits in with the general European approach.

In discussing fisheries, I emphasised our unique position and the regional aspects of the problem. As Deputies know, the matter is the subject of more detailed discussions between the Minister for Fisheries and the British Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries, and other Community Ministers and interests.

We also discussed the project for the construction of the massive facilities for research into nuclear fusion, known as JET. I indicated our preference for siting the project in the best location, technically, and where the maximum benefit to the community as a whole would accrue. Consensus on this issue, if at all possible, is obviously highly desirable.

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We also discussed some aspects of the contributions by the different 'new' member countries of the Community to the Community Budget in the years 1978 and 1979, which will see their transition to the full 'own resources' system of financing.

Finally, we discussed the economic prospects for our countries particularly in the international context. We had a useful exchange of views on the likely development of incomes policies and on industrial relations generally. The Prime Minister indicated his country's willingness to press ahead as soon as possible with the proceedings for the division of the Continental Shelf between the two countries. It is obviously in the interests of both countries to get this issue settled as soon as possible.

In conclusion, I found the discussions extremely useful. Of their nature, they could not be expected to produce immediate and dramatic results. Their purpose was basically exploratory. It is essential that countries which have so much in common

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should each have an understanding of the basic purposes and intentions of the other. This, I hope, our talks helped to achieve. Relations between us are good; and it is by developing what we have in common that I think progress can best be attained to the advantage of both peoples.