

NATIONAL ARCHIVES

IRELAND



Reference Code:	2010/53/872
Creation Date(s):	13 April 1980
Extent and medium:	5 pages
Creator(s):	Department of the Taoiseach
Access Conditions:	Open
Copyright:	National Archives, Ireland. May only be reproduced with the written permission of the Director of the National Archives.

helly
you will need to
see 18/4/80

M. Murray
John
13/4
18/4

cc Mr. Nugee
Mr. Barker
Mr. Murray (DIT)
John
Gordon

M. Murray
John

Interview with Rev. Ian Paisley on RTE radio on
Sunday 13 April 1980

80
Paisley:

Reps

W. H. H. H.

1st

file (S.
19284?)

1st

20
4
80

M. Murray
20/4

Well, I think that the British Government are considering an Assembly and a Government of Northern Ireland - a Parliament of Northern Ireland and a Government of Northern Ireland if you want to put that way and I think that they realise that there is only one way to do that and that's by respect for the ballot box, and that whatever the electorate throws up by that election they, even if they don't like what it throws up will have to abide by it. I think they realise that you cannot now rig elections in Northern Ireland. After all we have changed our voting pattern - in that we have changed our STV. Some people thought this would be the be all and end all of the situation. It made no real change and they tried the Assembly, they tried the Convention and I think they are back to buts and they are saying what they said in Rhodesia "well, we just have to accept what the ballot box throws up. We may not like what the people of Northern Ireland vote for but we will have to accept it and within that then we will have to have parameters of Government that will be acceptable to what the electorate want".

Q. Would this be a majority rule Government like we had before?

A. I think it will have to be a majority rule Government, probably with certain safeguards that would be mutually agreed with the British Government and those in power concerning the fears of the minority population. Of course on the other hand, under the proposals that we have put forward the power-sharers if they win the election could have a power-sharing Government. If the people support me then we would have a majority rule Government; under the proposals of the Alliance Party and under the proposals of the SDLP that couldn't happen, so we have made a proposal that if the ballot box so wills it can fit into whatever system you desire and I think that ^{that} is the strength of our position and the weakness of our opponent's position - that their position only legislates for one particular form of Government while we are making proposals that can be acceptable to both. The safeguards for the minority - we must think of all minorities not just a religious minority. We don't know who the minority would be. I might be the minority and the people I lead and I think that what is generally acceptable to everyone is that there should be a strong bill of rights incorporating I would think the human rights outlined by Europe. I think that there should be certain safeguards along that line. I think that that's very very important. I also think that the opposition whoever the opposition are should have a real say in the Parliament in regard to committees with safeguard for them to have x number of chairmanships of these committees and also the scrutiny of each Government department by a

committee which was really the seed of the thought of the Convention but that of course could be developed, but of course that is a matter really for the British Government and they have many proposals on their table and no doubt they will take a thought from here and a thought from there and probably have thoughts of their own on that.

Q. You mentioned Rhodesia. Britain put a lot of effort into getting a settlement in Rhodesia - do you think now that that seems to be solved, seems to be out of the way that the British Government will put the same effort into trying to get a long/^{term} settlement here?

A. I am absolutely sure that Margaret Thatcher is determined to have a settlement in Northern Ireland. I said that when she was elected. I said that it was a good thing because she's determined to deal with part of the United Kingdom. I mean how can she as a world political figure go to conferences with world statesmen and they say to her but you have a problem in your own territory - it's not Rhodesia now or it's not somewhere across the equator - it's your own country. What are you going to do about it and I think she is going to do something about it and I don't think anybody should underestimate the strength of Margaret Thatcher. She's a strong woman and she is a strong leader and no doubt she has certain very strong principles and I think one of her principles will be that law and order should be restored in Northern Ireland and there should be a constitutional settlement and I think she is going to move towards that very very quickly.

Q. Well, you outlined what you think is likely to happen; a majority Government again with safeguards for the minority, safeguards for the opposition, some role for the opposition in committees. Could I ask you frankly do you believe that that form of Government here is likely to bring peace to Northern Ireland, do you think it will be acceptable to the Catholics?

A. Well, first of all I don't think that any form of Government will bring peace. I mean let's be perfectly frank - we have the men that went out this week and shot 3 police officers are not interested in any political settlement and my party believes that the IRA have got to be militarily defeated. Terrorism has got to be put down and there is only one way to put down terrorism and that is to use greater force than they use and that's a bald statement but that's the truth and of course I believe that the deterrent of hanging should be immediately brought back and I have always said that and as far as peace is concerned, peace will only come through victory over terrorism. If we had an acceptable form of Government in Northern Ireland in which all the parties - the SDLP, the Alliance, Official Unionists, Democratic all the parties agreed unanimously you wouldn't have peace. That wouldn't bring peace because the men of terror would still carry on so let's put away from our thoughts and our thinking the fact that if you have a political settlement you are going to have peace - you are not going to have peace. In fact I would think that for the first months of that settlement and its working you would have a real upheaval of terrorism. I believe that as the IRA did in the early Stormont days

that they would try to strangle that Government by overcoming it by terrorism, so I don't look at that. If you say to me will everybody work this system, I say they have to work this system as at the moment and that it is not acceptable to everybody. If it is a form of rule in which people will have a say in deciding these issues, I think they will be glad to work it and I don't think that among the Roman Catholic population as I read it there is anybody keen to come back to the old days of street marching of boycotts and so on. I think that the people want to have a settlement and they want their political leaders to work it but of course that would all be safeguarded if the British Government are wise and have a referendum because if they have a referendum they will not be deciding on political figures. They will be deciding on political principles and if an overwhelming majority of people and I am talking now not ^{just} about a 50% but I am talking about a good majority of people vote for the system in a referendum. Then all the politicians who want to remain politicians will have to work the system even though they don't like what the system is, so I think that that is the way that that should be tested.

Q. Could I ask you Dr. Paisley are you 100% certain, 100% confident in your own mind that the link with the United Kingdom will be maintained?

A. Oh yes because the link with the United Kingdom does not rest. You see this is where I think the southern politicians Mr. Haughey and Lenihan and the men from the South of Ireland have got the wrong impression. They say that the British Government are guaranteeing the link. The British Government are doing nothing of that kind. Well, the SDLP are absolutely wrong. It's good propaganda for them to use but I mean it's a phony argument. What the British Government are saying. They are saying that as long as a majority wish it so that is the guarantee. The guarantee is the majority Protestant population. This is what I have always said. The Unionists said if Stormont falls the Union is lost. I said nonsense. Stormont can fall but the Union will not fall because the majority of the people wish to maintain it. Stormont fell, aren't we still, don't we still have the Union, so that was a phony argument of Official Unionists. I believe that as long as a majority of people of Northern Ireland want to remain with the U.K. will be in the U.K. and nothing can alter that so the strength of the Protestant people is their majority. Once that is gone then they have no guarantee, even if the British Government guaranteed that we'll keep you in the Union they couldn't do it. It's the majority is our guarantee. Our salvation is of ourselves as far as the Union is concerned and I think that I know the feeling of the majority of the Protestant people in Northern Ireland and indeed a large number of Roman Catholic people who want the Union to be maintained so that being so the Union is not in jeopardy.

Q. Mr. Haughey said in a newspaper ^{interview} this week that he hoped he would see an United Ireland in his lifetime, do you think he is being over optimistic?

A. Well, I replied to him that he was in cuckoo land and if he lives to have great great grandchildren they'll not see an United Ireland either so he can put

that completely and totally away and it reveals to me the sad truth that Mr. Haughey doesn't know what he is talking about when he comes to talk about Northern Protestants. He neither knows what makes them tick nor does he know their determination, nor does he know their power - their world power to resist republicanism. The sooner he learns that he'll neither take over Northern Ireland nor will he see an United Ireland in his lifetime the better for his own peace of mind.

Q. Mr. Atkins is coming to Dublin later this week to talk to Mr. Lenihan, are you concerned about what they might be talking about?

A. No, I am not concerned because Mr. Atkins has made it clear publicly and he has made it clear at the Conference, he made it clear in Parliament, he is on record that the final solution to the problems in Northern Ireland are a matter for the Cabinet, the Parliament and the people of Northern Ireland and are not the concern of Dublin or America or anybody else and Mr. Atkins is not going to wheel and deal in Dublin with some deal that's going to sell out the Unionists and say he did. Say Mr. Atkins went down and said to Mr. Lenihan "I will sell the Protestants of Ulster to you, I'll deliver them on a plate like the head of John the Baptist". He couldn't do it, he couldn't do it. He has no power whatsoever. If the British Government said to us tomorrow you go into the Republic, both the Republic and you and me and every right thinking person that has any brains between their ears, no, it could not be done. Even the Cardinal, the former Cardinal said you cannot force a million Protestants into the Republic so as far as that is concerned Brian Lenihan can talk to him as much Irish blarney as he likes. I am not concerned about it. All I am concerned about is we keep our majority.

Q. You seem sure that political initiative is on the way from the British Government. Are you optimistic that it will work, are you hopeful for the future?

A. I am always hopeful. I think that's one of the great characteristics of Ulster people and indeed of all Irish people that there is always a hope, that there is a silver lining with every dark cloud, that the sun is going to shine again and that the Autumn maybe followed by Winter but Spring is coming and a beautiful Summer and it's coming towards the 12th again. Yes, Sir.

Q. Are you any closer to the SDLP than you were say 8, 10 years ago? Are you still as far apart as ever following the talks with Humphrey Atkins?

A. Well, I would think that it would be impossible for a principled Unionist to have anything in common with the republicanism of the SDLP. I mean between the SDLP and myself there is a great gulf fixed which no man can cross over except he sells his principles and I am not going to sell my principles and I don't think it is likely that the SDLP are going to sell their principles so they have got to come to the hard fact which I have said to them have got to come the hard fact that we are not going to have an United

Ireland and you can^{not} force us into it, you can^{not} black ball us or black mail us into it, we are not having it so the sooner you give up the idea that you are going to do something and move us towards the South the better and then perhaps we can get down to dealing with matters that are of vital importance, matters concerning jobs, concerning work, concerning making this province better for all people whether it be Protestant or Roman Catholic to live in and I think that they need a baptism of reality, but perhaps in their hearts their convinced that that is so. I don't know. I haven't scratched them enough to see what's in their hearts but all I can say is that they would be very wise to face up to it. I think Mr. Fitt to a great degree in recent years has faced up to that, that no Unionist worth his salt is going to do any deals with the Union.

Q. And if they were prepared to let's say, let's put it lay aside their aspirations to an United Ireland, could you then do business with them?

A. Well, as far as that is concerned if they are prepared to lay aside their aspirations for an United Ireland then I think that they would have an opportunity to make a real contribution to Northern Ireland but they will only be able to do that within a democratic framework. I can't offer to them anything as far as power-sharing is concerned or anything like that because I don't believe in that. I believe that the ballot that the final decision in the democracy is the ballot box and if the ballot box rejects Ian Paisley it's just too bad for him. If it rejects John Hume it's just too bad too and after all if I was born in the Republic it would be rejecting me every day. I don't know what I would do. I probably wouldn't even get a seat in the Dáil because ~~there wouldn't~~ there wouldn't be a constituency with enough Protestants to return me to the Dáil so I would have to sit on the outside while that would just be too bad. Well, if the SDLP are rejected from a place in the Government, it's just too bad. It happens to be a fact of life which they have to bear.

Q. And what will you do Dr. Paisley if the British Government proposes a form of power-sharing. Will you then accept it if it's a proposal from the British Government?

A. No. I will not accept it for the simple reason I don't need to accept anything they give. They can say all right, we are going to have a power-sharing Government and I would simply say, well, I am not having part in that and of course the likes of them will have the say.

Q. Would you actively oppose them in organising another strike for instance?

A. No. I don't think so. I think that we would just need to oppose it at the ballot box. I think that we have^{got} the people convinced of the right way and I think vote against it and that the British Government might want to strike after that.