



## An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

<b>Reference Code:</b>	2020/17/17
<b>Creator(s):</b>	Department of the Taoiseach
<b>Accession Conditions:</b>	Open
<b>Copyright:</b>	National Archives, Ireland. May only be reproduced with the written permission of the Director of the National Archives.

*H. Lobb* *M. McCarthy* *10.9.90* *7/9*  
Meeting between the Taoiseach and the Alliance Party.

Government Buildings, 5 September, 1990.

*in the briefing  
note for the  
Taoiseach  
for this  
meeting  
might*  
of the 1. The Alliance delegation was led by the party leader, Dr. John Alderdice, who was accompanied by his Deputy, Gordon Mawhinney, and by another senior party member, Sean Neeson. The meeting lasted approximately one hour and was conducted in a very friendly and positive atmosphere.

Brooke Initiative

*be. brief  
on the  
file about  
talks  
about  
talks  
hh  
10.10.90*  
At the Taoiseach's invitation, Dr. Alderdice gave his assessment of the present status of the Brooke initiative. He said it appeared to the Alliance Party that the initiative had been developing very successfully for six to eight months and, through its own momentum, had carried along even those Northern Ireland politicians who were hesitant about the whole process. This progress seemed to continue into early July when, in the Alliance perception, it was halted by a number of requirements on the part of the Irish Government. If the party misunderstood the situation, it was important that this misunderstanding be cleared up quickly; if there was no misunderstanding, however, this created a fundamental problem for the Alliance Party - a problem which Alderdice would wish to explain.

3. The Taoiseach said that, in the light of the opening remarks by Dr. Alderdice, it was timely to have a meeting. During the period of the initiative, the Government had remained relatively silent in order to make it easier for all parties to reach agreement; the less positions were out in the public domain the better. (In this regard, he suggested that the Alliance Party should be as circumspect as possible in their briefing on today's talks).
4. The Taoiseach said he recognised that, if the process did not get underway, there was a possibility that the

Government might be blamed but we were prepared to take this risk. As indicated earlier, we had not rebutted charges made against us and had been very quiet in order to facilitate the process. Opposition spokesmen and the Dail generally were also very responsible in their approach to the talks.

5. The Taoiseach went on to say that the talks were designed to secure a transcending Agreement. In this regard, we might have taken the attitude that the two Governments would control the initiative. However, again in order to help and facilitate the process, we had said to Peter Brooke that this was not necessary and that he could go ahead and present the initiative as his own.
6. Brooke's initial approach had been that all talks should start simultaneously. The Unionists responded, however, that they wanted the Northern Ireland set of talks to begin before they would talk to Dublin. Although this presented us with something of a dilemma, we had accepted it; again, in order to be helpful, we said we would not ask to be party to these (internal) talks. It was also agreed with the British that there would be an overall liaison group to cover the three sets of talks; this would keep us informed of what was happening in the Northern talks.

#### Deadline of 5th July

7. The Taoiseach said that the deadline of 5th July for his statement, which had been set by Peter Brooke, was an artificially created one. Some twelve hours before the statement was due to be made, we received a long text from the British which contained much material which we had not seen before. In the intervening timeframe, we tried to absorb it but this in fact proved quite impossible. At no

stage, however, and the Taoiseach laid emphasis on this, did we say that the Secretary of State could not make the statement; all we said was that, if he did go ahead, we might have to give our side of the story in a public statement.

8. The Taoiseach also mentioned that at this time there seemed to be an unfortunate change of advisers to the Secretary of State, and this did not help matters. In the event, all sides had done their best to ensure damage limitation. The Taoiseach again emphasised that we did not veto the Secretary of State's proposed statement; it was dangerous to say we did and only served to make the Unionists more "hot and bothered".
9. With our encouragement, the Secretary of State had kept the process going. The question now was the timing of the talks between the parties in the North - in particular the Unionists - and ourselves. We had tried a considerable number of drafting options but the Unionists were proving very "stoppyp" and insisting that "substantial progress" be made in the internal talks before they would agree to the opening of North/South talks. In order to be as helpful as possible, we had departed from the original agreement with the British that all sets of talks would start simultaneously and were prepared to agree that the North/South talks would begin within weeks of the internal talks. We could not however accept a situation where we had no clear guarantee or understanding that we would be involved in the process at some stage.
10. The Taoiseach said he did not believe we were at an impasse. John Hume had drafted a possible compromise paper just before the holidays and had apparently a good meeting with the Unionists about it. The Taoiseach himself had seen Peter Brooke at the launch of the North/West Study in

Redcastle and had suggested that the process not be formalised too much; a private understanding about a timescale would be satisfactory from our point of view.

Article 4 of the Agreement.

11. The Taoiseach said he would like to clarify the position about Article 4 of the Agreement. The discussions underway at present did not derive from Article 4, as this clearly envisaged devolution being established in circumstances where the Agreement would stay in place. Such a scenario would clearly be anathema to Unionists. We were therefore talking about arrangements which would supercede and transcend the Agreement.

Response by Alderdice

12. Dr. Alderdice said that the Taoiseach's views were very helpful and they illustrated what he called the problem of misunderstanding. The Alliance had always felt that it would be unlikely that something could emerge which all parties could put their name to, unless this was in fact a new Agreement. In reality, it had to be a whole new document before the Unionists could agree to it. In the Alliance view, therefore, the talks could be much more important than those of 1985. He said it was interesting that the Taoiseach's presentation seemed to recognise this.
13. The Alliance view also was that, where internal structures were in question, this was a matter for the Northern Ireland parties; there should be as little input as possible from anyone else into these internal talks, except perhaps initially from the UK in a chairmanship role. But there could be no final agreement on internal Northern structures until all sides, including the two Governments, were in agreement; there could be no partial outcome until the

whole had been agreed. He had a sense that the Unionists accepted this, though they differed from Dublin as to timing.

14. Alderdice went on to say that the Taoiseach was in a different position from the Unionists in that, as Head of the Government, he could carry the country with him. The Unionists, on the other hand, believed they needed to be able to "look forward towards some arrangement", where they would be representative of the people of Northern Ireland, before they could speak to the Government here. They needed to have some "little piece of work done" internally in this direction before they would agree to coming to North/South talks. Alderdice added that he had the sense that we were afraid that if Unionists went into internal talks, without a date being set for the North/South talks, they would "destroy the process".

#### Further Discussion

15. The Taoiseach again emphasised in some detail the concessions that the Government had made, and this against the background where public opinion in the South was strongly supportive of the existing Agreement. From the point of view of Southern public opinion, the concessions we had made were major ones. If we were talking about new arrangements to transcend the Agreement, we must be involved. An essential element of the Nationalist position is that no new arrangements for Northern Ireland can be developed unless the arrangements with the South are also spelt out. Otherwise, it would be a recipe for the instability of the past. We see the involvement of the Irish Government as axiomatic and basic. Turning to Alderdice's point about the difficulties of Heads of political parties talking to the Government, the Taoiseach said he understood that it was to overcome this perceived

problem that the idea had been put forward that Peter Brooke would lead the Northern delegation at such talks.

16. The Taoiseach went on to emphasise that every effort would be made to get over the remaining difficulties. He regretted that some Unionists seemed to be living in "cloud cuckoo land" - the reality was that European union was around the corner. While Unionist politicians had a major inhibition in talking to him, he had been very warmly received by Unionist businessmen on his recent visit to Belfast.
17. Alderdice said that the Unionist difficulty arose out of a "sense of threat". In the South there was a feeling of confidence because the country was self-governing. In the North this was not the case and as a result people felt paranoid. An example of this was the fact that the former Lord Mayor of Belfast, Reg Empey, had been thrown out of the Unionist group in City Hall because he had been in the same building in Belfast as the Taoiseach.
18. Alderdice accepted fully that, from all points of view (including the Unionists), there had to be a resolution of the three relationships. However, it would be difficult for him to accept that the Irish Government could be present at talks on internal structures for Northern Ireland. For him this would involve de facto acceptance of Articles 2 and 3. Dublin had, of course, to be involved in discussions about all relationships, including final agreement on internal Northern Ireland structures. But our actual involvement as of right in the Northern talks would "require one to say that the writ of the Irish Government ran throughout the island". If this were maintained, it would make the Alliance Party fundamentally reappraise their position on the Agreement. The Taoiseach, responding to references to Articles 2 and 3, said that we had not been saying anything



about Articles 2 and 3 for a long time. It was the McGimpsey brothers who had forced the Articles on to the agenda and had made the Supreme Court interpret them.

19. The discussion then turned back to the North/South talks; the Taoiseach mentioned that John Hume, arising out of a meeting before the holidays with the Unionists, had the clear impression that the Unionists had not asked Brooke to lead their delegation but that this suggestion had come from the British side. For us it was not a major issue whether Unionists came on their own or were led by Brooke.
20. Mawhinney said that there was no doubt that the Unionists were serious. If they were not prepared to make progress, the Agreement would be quickly "back in force" and it would be seen that there was no alternative to it; there was therefore very great pressure on the Unionists to make progress
21. The Taoiseach said we were in the process as of right and this right was not conditional on anything else. At the outset in fact, as he had indicated earlier, it was clearly understood with the British that we would be involved from day one.
22. Alderdice said that what worried him now was that the whole process seemed to be beginning to dissipate. Westminster elections were coming close and once the electoral process was underway the various parties, who at the end of the day wanted to take votes off one another, would fragment. In addition, with the likely early appointment of a Commissioner to review local government boundaries, it was possible that the British might tinker with local government powers in the North. What Molyneaux wanted was an increase in local government powers and any move in this direction would play into his hands. If there was a revision of



local government boundaries and powers, the Councils in the border counties, which would be nationalist controlled, would gravitate towards the South; those in the rest of the North, given likely unionist paranoia, would go their own way and refuse to allocate places on committees or boards to nationalists or indeed to the Alliance Party. The end result would be a "de facto <sup>repartition</sup> ~~partition~~", which could impede political progress for 40-50 years.

23. The Taoiseach said he thought this was an exaggeration. He emphasised again that neither the Alliance nor ourselves should say or do anything which would exacerbate the situation. In the period ahead, we would be doing everything possible, without sacrificing basic positions, to support Peter Brooke and get the talks underway. We were, however, talking about major fundamental issues on which civil wars had been fought in the past. It was encouraging that Alderdice and he could talk about these matters across a table even though their ancestors could not. Alderdice interjected that that was the type of constructive tone that both of them wanted to see followed.

#### Extradition

24. Alderdice then said that extradition was one specific area about which they were particularly worried; the extradition issue is perceived in the North as a kind of "touchstone", even though it is publicly exaggerated beyond its practical significance. In reply, the Taoiseach said that practical cooperation between the police forces was far more important than extradition. Extradition was a matter about which public opinion in every country was very sensitive. The extradition issue had to be seen against a background of cases such as the Guildford Four, the Birmingham Six, the remarks of Lord Denning, etc. Even though we did not say this publicly, these factors did not encourage any Irish

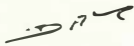
Executive or Parliament to hand their citizens over to another jurisdiction.

25. The Taoiseach then explained that a number of cases in the recent past had arisen under earlier legislation but that he expected future cases to come under the new 1987 legislation. This new legislation should be allowed to work; if flaws showed in it, it could be looked at again. The Taoiseach went on to say that, in our view, the Criminal Law Jurisdiction Act (CLJA) offered a better vehicle in many instances. In cases arising out of a clear-cut outrage in British or Northern Ireland, there should be no problem with extradition; however, if a particular case looked difficult, there was every good reason to use the CLJA.
26. Alderdice said that he appreciated that any difficulties in this area could be teased out over a period and that no immediate issue arose now. The Taoiseach added that it was very helpful that the two Attorney Generals had a good working relationship.

#### Concluding Remarks

27. At the conclusion of the meeting, there was a brief discussion about the position of the second tier leadership in the Unionist parties. Alderdice paid particular tribute to Peter Robinson and mentioned that he had drafted the three Unionist pre-conditions to talks in such a way that they could be met by the two Governments. Mawhinney added that Unionists had to create obstacles in order to overcome them - i.e. to be able to say to public opinion that they had won concessions. Alderdice added that, in a private conversation recently, Robinson expressed the view that the envisaged political talks could constitute the "most important political development since partition if buckled down to now".

28. In reply to the Taoiseach's question about whether public opinion was ahead of politicians in the North, Alderdice said the stock of politicians in the North was very low at present. This allowed people who took an intransigent line to get away with extreme positions. However, the fact that he could have useful meetings with the Taoiseach put pressure on such people. Alderdice added that if Molyneaux was prepared to help move matters forward, and was sufficiently interested, he could be the next Prime Minister of Northern Ireland; however, the reality was that he did not seem to be interested in this possibility. Alderdice's hope was that, if Taylor and Smyth came to realise that this was a possible option for one or other of them, they might be moved to topple Molyneaux from the leadership of the Official Unionists.

  
Dermot Gallagher,  
5 September, 1990.