



An Chartlann Náisiúnta **National Archives**

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Taorofel
To see please. Mr. McCarthy
Mr. Wells
Mr. Plath, etc.
Box
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The British Joint Secretary, Mr. Alston, said Mr. Brooke had briefed his side with the following points:

- The Taoiseach had not closed the door on the possibility of agreement between the two Governments in regard to Mr. Brooke's efforts to arrange political talks.
- The Taoiseach had indicated clearly his doubts about the intentions and sincerity of the Unionists.
- He had expressed himself particularly strongly on the question of any gesture to Unionists in regard to the Secretariat.
- He had indicated that in coming to his final assessment of the Unionist position he would be influenced by what happened next Wednesday when he visited Northern Ireland.
- An answer one way or the other would be given at the Conference on 19 April (following which Mr. Brooke would have a round of talks with the political parties).

Present on the British side with Mr. Brooke were:
Sir John Billeloch, Ambassador Fenn, Mr. Alston, Mr. Thomas and
Mr. Leach (Private Secretary).

Present with the Minister for Foreign Affairs were Mr. Dorr, Mr. Gallagher and Mr. O'Donovan.

Mr. Brooke began with an expression of private appreciation of the evidence given by Gardai and Customs Officers at the Slab Murphys' libel trial. He said he was very pleased with the outcome. The Minister agreed.

Mr. Brooke gave notice that an indepth discussion would be needed at the Conference on 19 April of

- The political position;
- The McGimpsey judgement;
- The extradition judgements in Finnucane, Clarke and Carron.

Extradition

Mr. Brooke indicated the British side would want to discuss the position on the political offence exception following recent Court Judgements and might put proposals to us.

McGimpsey

Mr. Brooke said his preoccupation was with the phrase "constitutional imperative" and what it meant in practical application. The Minister noted that this was a difficult question.

Political Developments

In regard to political developments Mr. Brooke spoke of the importance of clarity between the two Governments. When he met the Unionists on 16 March they did not say that they had no desire to speak to him further. In fact they said they wanted to keep lines open. The nature of what he would say to Unionists when he next met them had to be agreed between us. It would be pointless for him to say anything unless it was endorsed and sustained by us.

The Minister said we had to consider this very carefully. In our view, we could not trust the Unionists, they were not genuine, not sincere about talks and we had been thrown considerably by the statements of Molyneaux and Ross. Mr. Brooke said that Molyneaux had sent him his recent speech to the Ulster Unionist Council and had asked him to read it with extreme care (Mr. Brooke was suggesting that Molyneaux did not regard the speech as ending the Brooke initiative).

The Minister expressed doubt about Molyneaux's intentions but added that if we could be satisfied where we were going and that it would not weaken the Agreement, then we would look at Mr. Brooke's proposals in an overall context.

In this respect the Minister hoped, that the Taoiseach's visit to the North on Wednesday would be a successful day. It had been agreed to provide a copy of the Taoiseach's script (Mr. Alston told me the British side interpreted this to mean they would get the script on Tuesday). The Minister asked Mr. Brooke to thank the Chief Constable for the RUC arrangements for the Taoiseach's visit.

Returning to the question of what he could say to Unionists, Mr. Brooke repeated that he needed to know what we thought and what he could say. The Minister said we would think about this with a view to giving a definitive answer at the Conference on 19 April.

In regard to arrangements for the Conference, Mr. Brooke left open the possibility that it could start in the morning (which would mean his not attending Cabinet) and the Minister said he had no engagements which would cut short a meeting in the afternoon.

The Minister asked Mr. Brooke if he would flesh out his thoughts on the three Unionist preconditions. Mr. Brooke said

- First, the Unionists want a confirmation that both Governments would contemplate or consider a different Agreement. There should be no problem with a joint statement in this regard.
- Second, the Unionists wanted an assurance that a gap between Conferences would constitute an interval in which talks could take place. It would be understood that there could be informal meetings as in February (and today) and there would have to be agreement between the two Governments not to call a special conference in that period, although this would not be said to anyone else. Having decided when the Conference would meet again, it would meet whatever happened, if necessary in Lusaka!
- Third, the Unionists had been warned that their requirements on the Secretariat caused most difficulty. He would say that the Secretariat was in residence in Maryfield but he would acknowledge informally that the British Joint Secretary would be involved in servicing talks if they took place, since such discussions would put the NIO under pressure (here, Mr. Brooke compared the situation with our position under the EC Presidency). Since there would be no meeting of the Conference in the period, the Secretariat would be dealing with the ordinary business of the Agreement but not with Conference business. In the event of Unionists saying that the Agreement was in abeyance or that the Secretariat was not working there would be an instant rebuttal by both Governments, perhaps with the British Government statement preceding the Irish statement.

In response, the Minister said that our side would have to tease this out before the next Conference. Before the conclusion of the meeting Sir John Blelloch reminded Mr. Brooke that there would be three strands in the talks between the two Governments and the parties (inter-community in Northern Ireland, North-South, East-West) and the discussions in each would go on with some kind of relationship with the others. Mr. Dorr noted that the relationship would also have some sort of "simultaneity".

cl
Declan O'Donovan
6 April, 1990

cc : PSM

PSS

Mr. Gallagher