



An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

Reference Code:	2020/17/56
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1. cc P22
Mr. Wells, the lady
Mr. H. H. H. H. H.
and her
C. H. H. H.
Mr. H. H. H.

2. H. H. Huber

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- if it does not prove possible to move matters forward, the Secretary of State, as facilitator in this process, will not shrink from his responsibility to take the lead.
4. Chilcot outlined the British view that the situation within the OUP was much more positive than might appear in public and that the mood within the party was one of "making and taking positions with a view to future talks" rather than any pulling back from talks. Their view is that serious work is being undertaken by, or is in hand among, all political circles in Northern Ireland with a view to the talks getting underway - however, in response to a question from Mr Nally, he was unable to be precise about what kind of work was underway and by whom. Ambassador Fenn added that the Secretary of State was determined to carry matters forward as he believed a possibility for movement existed at present which may not be there again in the foreseeable future.
 5. In response, Mr Nally, on the basis of a quick preliminary reading of the speech, thought that it was reasonably balanced and reflected a definite improvement on the texts of last July. Mr Gallagher said that, while we would of course have preferred a greater emphasis on the Irish dimension, the text certainly reflected a better balance than the July texts; these, in our view, had reflected too much concern for unionist sensitivities while offering little reassurance to nationalists.
 6. Our concerns about the development of the Brooke initiative were then outlined in some detail:
 - it was imperative to get the structures for any talks right. If the structures contained the seeds of their own destruction, it might be better not to proceed;
 - to proceed on a shaky foundation, which would be likely to lead to ultimate collapse, would only give comfort and propaganda to the IRA who could point again to the failure of constitutional politics. Now, when the IRA appear to be having problems, was not the time to give

them a propaganda boost of this kind;

- we feel we have been very flexible and have made a major contribution to helping the initiative to get off the ground. A number of speeches by the Taoiseach were particularly helpful, especially in indicating that we are prepared to consider new arrangements which could transcend the existing Agreement. The document of 19 April was the culmination of considerable work on both sides and was not just our opening position. The document had in particular set out the agreement of both Governments that talks would begin simultaneously and in unison. Subsequently, and in order to be as helpful as possible, we agreed to be flexible on this point and were even prepared to move forward on the basis of a private understanding about the timing of our involvement. In going this far, it should be appreciated that we were taking real and substantial political risks;
- it was quite clear that any talks which do take place will be outside the framework envisaged by Article 4 of the Agreement. The Unionists have been crystal-clear on this point. What we are talking about was a new Agreement which would transcend the existing Agreement. We were the co-parent of the present Agreement and, therefore, must be fully involved in the negotiations on any replacement. We cannot be expected to sit in Dublin and eventually be presented with a fait accompli derived in a process of talks in which we have not been fully involved. This was not just the Government's view but was shared by all the main opposition parties;
- for these reasons, the definition of what was meant by "substantial progress" was crucial to our concerns.

7. Mr Gallagher referred to the amount of apparent misinformation about our position which seems to abound among Unionists in Northern Ireland. He mentioned that Alderdice at a meeting with the Taoiseach earlier in the week seemed to believe that we were insisting on being involved in the internal talks. Paisley, in some of his public comments, also seemed to reflect the same type of confusion, while a number of other Unionists appeared to have a sense that the North/South talks, when they got under way, would subsume the internal talks, whereas in reality

all talks would continue in parallel. He wondered whether our position was fully understood in political circles in Northern Ireland.

8. It was clear from the discussion that there was a divergence between the two sides of both perception and assessment, viz

- the Secretary of State perceives a public mood strongly in favour of talks. We, for our part, had not perceived any great signs of enthusiasm, particularly among nationalists. For them, the Agreement was the touchstone. It was fundamental for nationalists that any structures for talks must not be at the expense of the Agreement. On the Unionist side, views seemed to vary widely and it was by no means clear that a majority favoured talks. Certainly, it was clear that Molyneaux was very sceptical about the whole process;
- the British did not share our view that failure of the initiative could damage the Agreement and the constitutional political process. The British felt that, even if the initiative did not prove to be a success, the process itself would have a beneficial effect on constitutional politics;
- neither did they appear to share our concern that Unionist motives in this entire process may be dictated by their desire to see an end to the Agreement. Those who had led the public protests in the early days were now those apparently most in favour of the talks. The Agreement survived because both Governments stood by it and refused to bow to pressure. Are the Unionists now pursuing a different strategy with the same objective in mind - to enter talks and then, by stalling the process, to drive a wedge between the two Governments?

9. Chilcot expressed considerable interest in these differing perspectives and assessments and felt that it would be useful for both sides to sit down and compare and contrast these perspectives and assessments in some detail.

Brendan McMahon
Anglo-Irish Division
7 September 1990

cc A/Sec Gallagher
Ms. Anderson