



An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

Reference Code:	2021/93/30
Creator(s):	Department of the Taoiseach
Accession Conditions:	Open
Copyright:	National Archives, Ireland. May only be reproduced with the written permission of the Director of the National Archives.

TRANSCRIPT B - PM/MR. HAUGHEY - JOINT PC - DUBLIN - 4 DEC 91

- 1 -

FROM JAMES LEE FOR COI RADIO TECHNICAL SERVICES

TRANSCRIPT OF JOINT PRESS CONFERENCE

GIVEN BY THE PRIME MINISTER, MR. JOHN MAJOR,

AND THE IRISH PRIME MINISTER, MR. HAUGHEY,

IN DUBLIN

ON WEDNESDAY, 4 DECEMBER 1991

TRANSCRIPT B - (CONTINUED FROM TRANSCRIPT A)

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS (CONTD)

(NOTE: SOME QUESTIONS INAUDIBLE)

QUESTION:

You say that you are rejecting any kind of horse-trading; you also say you want to see further movement before the treaty is acceptable to you. Does that mean that you are now less optimistic of a settlement?

PRIME MINISTER:

It was always going to be the case from the very beginning that many of the things that I hope will form part of the final settlement at Maastricht would not be agreed until the Heads of Government got round the table. Until everything is agreed, a great deal will not be agreed. That has always been the position.

What I said a moment ago about horse-trading is that it is a very simplistic way to conduct negotiations to say: "If you happen to make a concession here, there must be a corresponding concession there!" That is not the way to conduct extremely complex negotiations of this sort where national interests are at stake across a whole range of issues.

We must take the negotiations in the round. We must look at them and then we must make a decision when the negotiations are completed as to whether the whole package collectively is in the interests of Europe and in the interests of the United Kingdom.

Let me make one further point: there is no single country in the European Community who at the end of Tuesday if we reach an agreement will be absolutely satisfied with every aspect of that agreement. All of them will not be. All of them will have something in that agreement that they for preference would not have had and we will all have to make adjustments: is the balance of the package right and is it a package that we can go back and present to our individual domestic parliaments as a package we should sign up to? That is what we have to consider, looking at the whole thing collectively.

QUESTION:

Are you more or less optimistic that that can be achieved?

PRIME MINISTER:

I don't know yet whether it can be achieved. I have set out what I believe needs to be done in the House of Commons. As to whether it can be achieved, I will know that when we have the discussions at Maastricht - I can't make judgements of that in advance.

What I have said consistently is that it is in the interests of Europe to get an agreement. That is not just my view; that is the view of every Minister who will actually be at the Maastricht Summit. With that collective will, I would hope we can reach agreement.

MR. HAUGHEY:

I can confirm that the Prime Minister in my conversation with him is quite clear that he wants an agreement in Maastricht and so do I - there is no doubt about that.

QUESTION:

Could I ask you a question based on the communique? Since believing things to be full of sweetness and light, what did you disagree about?

PRIME MINISTER:

That is a new definition of optimism!

TRANSCRIPT B - PM/MR. HAUGHEY - JOINT PC - DUBLIN - 4 DEC 91

- 4 -

MR. HAUGHEY:

Unfortunately, Prime Minister, this man was here with us in Dublin for a long time and then he went over to London and he learned these bad habits.

We don't agree on everything. We have different priorities going to Maastricht naturally. We in Ireland, a small peripheral country, have our own priorities and the things that we will be looking for but, as the Prime Minister pointed out, when agreement is reached, as we hope it will be, there will be things that we will not be all that enamoured about but by and large we hope that the overall balance of the agreement will be to everybody's advantage.

QUESTION:

Do you agree on defence and the social charter?

MR. HAUGHEY:

Not fully, not totally.

PRIME MINISTER:

There are very substantial areas of agreement in both those areas but I don't think when one runs down the Community that you find any two countries who would wholly and absolutely agree on each part of every aspect of that. There is a broad measure of agreement and of objective in many of those areas but it would be very difficult to say one agreed with every dot and comma and I

think that is true even of those countries who traditionally have been closer together on individual issues.

QUESTION:

Mr. Haughey, did you get a legal binding commitment by the richer countries to increase the structural funds for poorer countries from Mr. Major?

PRIME MINISTER:

It is not in my gift.

MR. HAUGHEY:

It is not in his gift.

QUESTION:

...the richer countries are opposed to binding legal agreements to increase structural funds...you are all in favour of political statements....

MR. HAUGHEY:

The shorthand we use there is "economic and social cohesion" and so far we have been able to have inserted in the treaty language a number of important principles which acknowledge the importance of economic and social cohesion and that certain steps must be taken in regard to it.

In the Maastricht discussions and negotiations, we will be looking for firmer guarantees as to the future of the implementation of the principles of economic and social cohesion but just as everything else, there is still a great deal of negotiation to take place.

QUESTION:

What was Mr. Major's view on the commitment to binding.....

MR. HAUGHEY:

Well I will answer for him on that one.

PRIME MINISTER:

I might say a word myself too!

MR. HAUGHEY:

Because he knows that this is a matter of great importance and significance to Ireland, he will be as favourably disposed as possible! (laughter)

PRIME MINISTER:

Perhaps I might add a word to that (laughter) We need to examine the details of what it means, how it would work and what can be done. I am perfectly content for us to look at the general principle of cohesion - I think it is quite wise for us to do so - and I am perfectly content for us to agree at the Summit the areas that we should actually look at but these are decisions that will

TRANSCRIPT B - PM/MR. HAUGHEY - JOINT PC - DUBLIN - 4 DEC 91

- 7 -

affect not just beneficiary countries, not just the relatively rich countries, but all the countries of the Community.

We do actually need some solid facts, some solid research, some solid background. We need to know what it affects and how it affects and in what time-scale and to what degree. None of that is yet clear and it is for that reason that you can't make binding agreements.

What I am perfectly prepared to say is that I understand the concern that is felt in Ireland about that. I understand that very clearly and other countries have the same feeling and I think it is right for us to examine the matter and make it clear that we will examine it but we cannot reach conclusions on it until that examination is over, not in advance of that examination.

If one wants to get the wrong answer not just for one country but for every country, then you start making commitments without having examined what those commitments might mean and for that reason I think we have to take this measure in detail when we have that information before us and when we have to discuss all the financial perspectives.

QUESTION:

Can I ask you please for your comments on the latest French proposal on this that if there isn't agreement by 1996, then the whole thing will go to majority voting by 1998?

PRIME MINISTER:

I haven't seen the text of anything the French may have produced. A new proposal on one or other aspect of the treaty emerges out of every 15 seconds at the moment from somewhere or other. I haven't seen it.

But nothing can change the position that I have set out before on economic and monetary union and that is the position that the British Government and the British Parliament will want to decide upon at the time Stage 3 looms and be able to decide on that without commitment at that time. That means we need to know not just when but whether we go into Stage 3 at that stage. No new commitments can change that.

At first blush, the French proposal is not attractive; I have not myself examined it, but in any event, even if people decided they would go forward by qualified majority vote, no qualified majority vote could take the British Parliament and the British Government into economic and monetary union unless the British Government and the British Parliament wished to go into it.

MR. HAUGHEY:

Our position is that we are different from Great Britain in that regard and again, that is because as a small peripheral country we have a different set of priorities. We are wholeheartedly in favour of economic and monetary union because we believe that it is in this way that we can best secure our economic future.

We have been negotiating for 12 months on the details of economic and monetary union and so far we don't feel that at the end of the day we will have any particular difficulty with what will emerge.

QUESTION:

In view of the recent in London, will you use that time to assess the success or otherwise of Mr. Brooke's initiative and decide on whether or not.....

MR. HAUGHEY:

The Brooke initiative or the Brooke talks are ongoing and of course there will be intergovernmental conferences to assess progress in that regard. Our bilateral, twice-annual meetings will be of a much wider scope; they will naturally review progress made in regard to Secretary Brooke's initiative or any other matters in Northern Ireland but they will also range over the totality of relationships between the two countries.

QUESTION:

Will you have to from both governments working to prepare for that first bilateral meeting?

MR. HAUGHEY:

That is the normal process, yes.

TRANSCRIPT B - PM/MR. HAUGHEY - JOINT PC - DUBLIN - 4 DEC 91

- 10 -

QUESTION:

Can the European Community tackle the problem of Northern Ireland? Does it have the scope for that? Recently, the European Office in Brussels referred to.....

MR. HAUGHEY:

I wouldn't see the Community becoming involved in anything purely political but I do see the whole evolution of the Community as having an enormous impact on the affairs of Northern Ireland and indeed the whole island of Ireland. In particular, the advent of the single market, for instance, is bound to have major beneficial repercussions on the possibilities for economic cooperation between the two parts of Ireland and I also believe that as Europe moves closer to real union - to economic, monetary and political union - that that general movement will have a beneficial effect on the community relationships in Northern Ireland. If all the people in Europe, particularly the nations of Europe who in the past have been enemies and gone to war with each other, can now sink their differences in a new exciting and forward-looking European union, surely that must have a message for all the people in Ireland and particularly in Northern Ireland?

QUESTION:

(inaudible)

PRIME MINISTER:

No.

QUESTION:

Taoiseach, one question. How is it compatible that you are asking in Maastricht for more political union but you are not prepared to accept that the EC be involved in political involvement in the case of Northern Ireland?

MR. HAUGHEY:

I was asked about the European Community getting involved politically in Northern Ireland. I don't think there is any possibility of that no more than the Community will be involved in political affairs in Dublin.

PRIME MINISTER:

Common foreign policy is for the Community to collectively use its weight externally - that is what it does very successfully.

MR. HAUGHEY:

I don't see what the contradiction is.

QUESTION:

You stressed the importance of dialogue and in Northern Ireland. Is it in any way a message also.....

PRIME MINISTER:

The prospect of getting together and talking about the difficulties that people face seems to me the only rational way to move towards areas of agreement. I believe in that prospect. I

want to reach agreement and I think a proper dialogue which enables a better understanding of the positions of people who may be quite sharply opposed on some things is the only credible and rational way to proceed so I do want to see such a dialogue.

I have watched with admiration the way in which Peter Brooke has brought together parties to talk - I think it is wholly admirable - and I think that principle is one that bears very wide application.

QUESTION:

The Deputy of the Peter Robinson said recently that the Union no longer existed in any recognisable form and that Britain was in fact slowly pushing Northern Ireland out of the Union. Would the Prime Minister like to comment on that?

PRIME MINISTER:

I didn't see the comment and I didn't see the context in which the comment was made but the British position has been perfectly clear for many years and it hasn't changed.

QUESTION:

Prime Minister, can I ask you a question about security? The communique talks about the two governments building on a high

level of security cooperation. One of your MPs, Ken Hinds, in Dublin with the British-Irish Parliamentary Group, did express reservations about cross-border security and suggested that failures on the southern side were costing lives in the north.

What have you got to say about that?

PRIME MINISTER:

There is good cooperation between the security forces and I welcome that but we do know that the terrorists do try and exploit the border - we have seen that over many years - and what we want to see is whether more can be done to deny them that resource but I do not believe that elaborating upon that would be at all useful.

QUESTION:

Mr. Major, the Unionists argue that you will have to restart these talks from scratch. Do you think that you should go back to the drawing board? What is your attitude to it?

PRIME MINISTER:

My attitude is that I wish to see the talks restarted. I want to see Strand 1 restarted. That is what we are working for. The sooner we can get that done the better and I think often it is better to stick to those propositions and make sure we get the talks started. That is the most important thing for us - by "us" I mean the British Government, the Irish Government - and for all

TRANSCRIPT B - PM/MR. HAUGHEY - JOINT PC - DUBLIN - 4 DEC 91

- 14 -

the communities in Northern Ireland and that is the direction in which we are working.

QUESTION:

(inaudible but would Mr. Major consider personally asking the political parties in Northern Ireland to come and see him if there were a breakdown of the talks so that they could be restarted)

PRIME MINISTER:

I think everybody knows - and if they didn't know they have certainly known from what we have put in the communique and what I have said today - that we actually want those talks to recommence. That is a general message.

(END OF TRANSCRIPT B AND END OF WHOLE TRANSCRIPT)