



## **An Chartlann Náisiúnta** **National Archives**

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Mr. Gallagher,

(18)

*cc PST; PS4  
Mr Nelly; PS8  
H. Brown; H. Sullivan  
Gunnell H1  
Hox*  
*8/3 11.3.91*

Telephone conversation with Eddie McGrady

7 March, 1991

1. I spoke to Eddie McGrady today to get his views on the SDLP meeting with Mr. Brooke yesterday. His account obviously broadly confirmed that of Hume and Mallon, but there were some additional nuances.
2. McGrady said he found it an extremely odd meeting with a total difference in tone between the first and second parts. The first part, he said, was like a "funeral oration". Brooke praised the SDLP contribution to the process, as well as that of the Irish Government, in a manner that definitely suggested the exercise was now coming to an end.
3. However, about half way through the meeting, Mr. Brooke suddenly struck an entirely different note. He said the Irish paper of early February was very helpful in giving extra room for manoeuvre. There were now only two outstanding issues: the timing of North-South talks and the description of Unionist participation. On the timing issue, McGrady said that Brooke made two very precise points (of which McGrady took a careful note):
  - (i) in exercising his role as arbiter, Brooke would obviously be aware of the attitudes of the various parties but he would reach his decision irrespective of party wishes. There was no question of getting permission or clearance from anyone; none of the parties had a veto;
  - (ii) when he judges an appropriate point has been reached, Brooke will publicly state that the time has arrived to go forward to the North-South strand; it will

then be up to the parties to decide what to do. (Brooke emphasised that while he cannot force the Unionists to participate in North-South talks, a negative attitude on their part will not prevent him from making his public statement).

4. On the description of Unionist participation in North-South talks, Brooke maintained (as we heard from Hume and Mallon) that the Unionists are "unshiftable". However, he insisted that this had no implications for the SDLP or the Alliance Party, both of whom would obviously be present in their own right. He described this labelling of the Unionists as part of the UK team as no more than a "fig-leaf" - in practice they would certainly not be acting as part of the UK team.
5. McGrady said that the SDLP, in reacting to Brooke's presentation, made clear that they were satisfied with what was being suggested on the timing issue. While they expressed disappointment at the lack of movement in relation to the "UK team", they did not have particular "hang-ups" on this issue and did not feel the problem was insurmountable. According to McGrady, Brooke was left in no doubt that the SDLP were prepared to go forward on the basis offered and the meeting ended on a very positive note.
6. McGrady repeated that he was puzzled at the lack of continuity between the first and second parts of the meeting and indeed - given Brooke's upbeat mood in the latter part of the meeting - by the general air of pessimism being spread in British briefings over recent days. In McGrady's view, the only logical explanation is that the British, by suggesting that a breakdown is imminent, are trying to panic people into last ditch concessions.

7. Finally, I asked McGrady if Brooke had made clear whether the Unionist leadership acquiesced in the scenario he had outlined on timing. McGrady said that this point had not emerged clearly in the discussion.

A.A.

Anne Anderson  
7 March, 1991.

CONFIDENTIAL

by h.c. [unclear]  
M. Keefe  
on 11.3.91  
8/3

SDLP Meeting with Secretary of State.6th March, 1991

1. John Hume and Séamus Mallon briefed us separately - though in very similar terms - on yesterday's meeting between the SDLP and the Secretary of State; the meeting lasted for fifty minutes. The following is a summary of their reports:

Hume's Account

2. In opening the meeting, the Secretary of State paid tribute to the SDLP contribution to the talks process and said that many of the ideas in the talks had come from that party. He also said that he wished to make it clear that the Irish Government had made major concessions in order to help get the process under way.

Outstanding Issues

3. Brooke said that only two points of difference remained, the timing of North-South talks and the description of Unionist participation in such talks. He was inclined to believe, however, that the timing question had in effect been resolved; he himself will take the decision on timing but, before doing so, will discuss it with all the parties. At the same time, and while the final decision would rest with him, he had to accept the reality that any party which disagreed with his decision could walk out at that stage.
4. Brooke went on to say that the UK delegation issue still remained a blocking point. Hume, in response, said that the UK team proposal conflicted with the basic agreed approach

that the talks should fundamentally address all three strands. (However, privately to me, Hume said he believed it would be very difficult to block the talks getting under way on the basis of this issue. He added that one possible way round the impasse might be for the Unionists to say unilaterally that they were coming as part of a UK delegation, and for the other participants to say nothing).

#### Next Stage

5. Brooke said that the next stage was for him to have a meeting with the Minister, and then perhaps have further meetings with the Northern parties. He also added that he would be raising with the Minister on Monday the question of his briefing journalists in advance of meetings of the Conference, which he said was unhelpful to the process.

#### Joint Referenda

6. Finally, Brooke made something of an issue of the dropping in our paper of the idea of any agreement being underpinned by a referendum or referenda. I said that the proposal in the British paper was very vague and admitted to be such by British officials; indeed it seemed to us to be responding more to Paisley's idea of an internal referendum in Northern Ireland rather than to the SDLP proposal for joint referenda, North and South, on the same day. I also made the point that Brooke might well be raising this as a tactic in order to flatter Hume and perhaps drive something of a wedge between the SDLP and Dublin.

#### Mallon's Account

7. Mallon said that, in his opening remarks, Brooke stated that the time had come to move forward or put up the shutters;

the credibility of the process was at stake. The Unionists are sceptical and are shifting to a new agenda. He asked if the SDLP was still interested in going forward with the three sets of talks? Hume responded that the SDLP position is unchanged - they failed to understand the Unionists but, for their part, were willing to try to move the process forward.

#### Timing of North-South Talks

8. Commenting on the latest Irish paper, Brooke said "it does not by itself take the trick but does loosen the logjam". On the timing of North-South talks, Brooke said the Unionists went a long way at the 24 December meeting towards removing conditionality. In relation to his own role as arbiter, Brooke said he would consult the parties but it would be his decision and he would state publicly when the time had come to move forward. The Unionist views would be taken into account but would not in themselves be decisive. Consultation with parties did not confer a veto on them. However, Brooke added that if the Unionists felt that he had made a misjudgment in his role as arbiter, they would not agree to go forward.

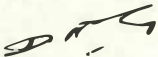
#### UK Team/Referenda

9. On the question of the UK team, Brooke said this was "an unshiftable phrase" for the Unionists. Raising the referendum issue, he said that the Irish paper had omitted any reference to the need for referenda. Responding to this latter point, the SDLP said that referenda were now an accepted part of the process.



Other Aspects

10. Mallon asked whether Brooke had given the Unionists a copy of the Irish paper; Brooke responded that the Unionists are aware of all that is in the paper but he had felt it more prudent not to give them a copy. In further remarks, Brooke apologised to some extent for the sharp tone of his recent responses to Hume and Mallon in the House of Commons.
11. Brooke also said that the Minister on 31 January had reverted to briefing the media before the Conference and this had the effect of "setting the hares running".
12. Concluding the meeting, Brooke said that he would be seeing Mr. Collins shortly and would come back to the parties thereafter.

  
Dermot Gallagher,  
6 March, 1991.

cc: PST; PSM; Mr. Nally; PSS; Mr. Brosnan; Mr. Dalton;  
Counsellors A-I; Box