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THE BROADCAST MONITORING COMPANY

BROADCAST REPORT

TEL: 0171-247 1166 FAX: 0171-377 6103

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INTERVIEW: SIR PATRICK MAYHEW

Programme : TODAY
Station : BBC RADIO 4
Date : 01.02.95
Time : 08:10

JOHN HUMPHRYS: Presenter

When the IRA announced their ceasefire nearly six months ago, there were many who said at the time that that was the easy bit. The real problems would come when the governments in London and Dublin sat about putting flesh on the bones of a long-term agreement which would have to satisfy both Unionists and Nationalists. Well, that's beginning to happen and it is proving difficult. A document which *The Times* has got hold of speaks of a 'joint north-south authority with real executive powers' including the right to deal directly with Brussels. On this programme an hour ago, David Trimble of the Ulster Unionists said that if that's what is being considered, his party will take no further part in the peace process. He also warned the party's MPs at Westminster would no longer be able to support the Government. Well, with me is the Northern Ireland Secretary, Sir Patrick Mayhew.

Sir Patrick, good morning.

Sir PATRICK MAYHEW: Secretary of State for Northern Ireland

Good morning.

JOHN HUMPHRYS:

Is the document authentic?

Sir PATRICK MAYHEW:

I recognise some language from a negotiating document which is not agreed; what I don't recognise are the conclusions that the newspaper draws. For example, *The Times* leads its story with the words that 'the British and Irish governments have drawn up a document that brings the prospect of a united Ireland closer than it has been at any time since partition in 1920'. That's absolute rubbish. It hasn't brought it one inch closer. That question is governed by the Downing Street Declaration of a year ago and consent of the people living in Northern Ireland, is what is



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going to determine whether people stay within the Union or join up with a United Ireland. So that's absolutely wrong.

JOHN HUMPHRYS:

But forget *The Times'* own interpretation, look at what *The Times* says is in the document - that, you say, you recognise.

Sir PATRICK MAYHEW:

I recognise language plucked from a document which goes over 23 pages and something like 56 clauses or paragraphs in its last negotiating draft. But I'm simply not going to get into discussion of what a draft document yet to be agreed says or may say or does not say. It's absolutely impossible in a very difficult, very delicate and pretty dangerous negotiation to have this kind of thing suddenly leaked and then be asked to say, well, is that right and is that right? It's a balanced and careful and delicate document that we're trying to put together and I'd like to have an opportunity to explain what it's all about. We, the two governments, are doing this because party leaders asked us to set out what the governments' shared understanding or bottom line might be, in order that we might be able to help them get that round the table again. They sat round the table for about six months in 1992. We think that's terribly important because we think that far and away the best means of helping the people of Northern Ireland get rid of this chronic instability that has plagued their lives is for the parties to get round the table and talk and work out a joint compromise solution, a settlement. Now we are aiming to help them do that by what's come to be called a 'framework document'. That can't be imposed, we've said that 50 times. It will be offered to the parties, is what will happen. The parties will, we trust, sit down and at least discuss the ideas; then we hope they'll come to an agreement. That agreement will then have to be put in a referendum to the people. So the notion that this is something being imposed, this is some new joint declaration or, let alone Anglo-Irish agreement, is absolute rubbish.



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JOHN HUMPHRYS:

But you would accept that what is contained in the document is fundamentally different to some of the things that had been talked about in the past?

Sir PATRICK MAYHEW:

No, I don't think I do.

JOHN HUMPHRYS:

Well, the Ulster Unionists very, very clearly do. You heard David Trimble on this programme. He said, 'As far as we're concerned, this is the authentic document. It represents the position of where the document is at the moment and it is a sell-out.'

Sir PATRICK MAYHEW:

Well now, look, the fuss is about, so far as I have heard, the fuss is about what is said to be in train for north-south institutions, working between north and south. The minister of state, Michael Ancram, in Question Time a fortnight ago, or thereabouts, said what we are proposing will include provision for a north-south body with executive power but look to see where it derives its authority, look to see to whom it will be accountable and that is the point. I mean...

JOHN HUMPHRYS:

Well, it will be accountable to a Northern Ireland Assembly.

Sir PATRICK MAYHEW:

Well, can I just - yes certainly. Now can I just say this...

JOHN HUMPHRYS:

But - but, but, but - it will be able to report directly, be able to deal directly with Brussels and according to Mr Trimble this morning the Northern Ireland Assembly *must* take part, not may take



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part, but must take part; Dublin can intervene, Dublin can go to you in London and say, we're not satisfied with what's happening here, and therefore Dublin will hold the whip hand.

Sir PATRICK MAYHEW:

You're trying...

JOHN HUMPHRYS:

That is his interpretation.

Sir PATRICK MAYHEW:

...you're trying to get me to get into a discussion of details of an extremely lengthy, delicate and balanced negotiating document which is not agreed between the parties and I'm simply not going to do that.

JOHN HUMPHRYS:

Well, can I...

Sir PATRICK MAYHEW:

I'd just like....

JOHN HUMPHRYS:

If I may just follow up that small point...

Sir PATRICK MAYHEW:

...I'd just like to say this...

JOHN HUMPHRYS:

Well, go ahead.



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Sir PATRICK MAYHEW:

...because it's quite important, the context is all important. I'm going to just remind you - well, perhaps it won't be reminding you, of course you won't have had it in mind

JOHN HUMPHRYS:

Go on.

Sir PATRICK MAYHEW:

...but I spoke to the Orange Lodge in Comber in August and I said it is quite a different matter to examine, as we did in the 1992 talks, ways in which, without impinging on sovereignty, some north-south body that would enable common cause to be made in areas of common interest to the general good of both parts of the island of Ireland. Then I went on to say - Mr Trimble was quoted in the press in July as saying, and I quoted - If executive functions are confined to purely practical things which are genuinely beneficial to both sides, that's fine. So there is no mystery about this idea that in a small island like Northern Ireland that it may make sense in certain areas to make common cause where there's common interest. The question is whether you go about that and you propose to do that in a way which impinges on sovereignty or gives joint authority over Northern Ireland to the Irish Government and with the British.

JOHN HUMPHRYS:

But the reality is, as far as - this is terribly important - as far as you're concerned and the Government is concerned, Mr Trimble and his party, many in his party regard this as a sell-out - 'completely unacceptable' were the words that he used this morning. If it is endorsed by the Government, he said, 'We will not be able to proceed to the inter-party talks' - in other words, the whole peace process is derailed. More importantly perhaps, from a political point of view in one sense for Mr Major, 'We would no longer be able to support this Government'.



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Sir PATRICK MAYHEW:

Well, you're putting all of this in terms of the understanding which you claim exists between the Northern Ireland...

JOHN HUMPHRYS:

No, no, I'm not making any claims, Sir Patrick. What I'm doing is I'm reporting David Trimble's interpretation of this document.

Sir PATRICK MAYHEW:

Yes, well, I understand that...

JOHN HUMPHRYS:

You tell me that he accepts it, but what he said very clearly on this programme this morning is that he doesn't.

Sir PATRICK MAYHEW:

Well, what I am looking for is a little steadiness, a little calm. The people of Northern Ireland, desperately want the current peace to continue, they want to see a settlement. My judgement is that they want to see their politicians talking. They support - I get this over and over again - they support the process which is going on, the discussions that are going on between the Irish Government and the British Government. What I think they will be dismayed by is random leaking of a kind which has been described on your programme this morning as a 'battle of the leaks' - one day it's this, one day it's the next - because it is calculated to stir up anxieties which are never far below the surface, to stir up fears, to stir up excitability, and it is not a way in which you can do business. Now what I want, just to emphasise is what the Prime Minister has said time and again: this is not proposed to be imposed - it can't be imposed. This is something which is not going to be proposed to give authority over Northern Ireland to the Irish Government...



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JOHN HUMPHRYS:

Ah well, you see, he said, Mr Major said there are no proposals. There are going to be no proposals in this document for joint authority.

SIR PATRICK MAYHEW:

No, he didn't...

JOHN HUMPHRYS:

Well, this envisages a joint authority.

SIR PATRICK MAYHEW:

No, no, that is not an accurate quotation. What he has said is that there is no proposal that the Irish Government shall have joint authority with the British Government over Northern Ireland.

JOHN HUMPHRYS:

Oh well, that's a distinction without a difference!

SIR PATRICK MAYHEW:

No, indeed it's not. It is a very important distinction because, as I've said before, I said in August what I've just reminded you of. Michael Ancram said in the House of Commons the other day that we will be proposing in this document - I don't know whether it will be agreed - we will be proposing arrangements whereby common cause can be made, north and south, where it makes sense. Heaven's sake, that's been done since 1952 in something called the Foyle Fisheries Authority which the Stormont regime put up. I mean, of course it makes sense. The way you've got... what matters is whether it impinges upon sovereignty. Don't tell me that the Stormont regime intended to give Ireland, the Republic of Ireland, some say over Northern Ireland generally or to impinge upon the sovereignty of the United Kingdom in Northern Ireland. Of course it didn't. So I'm calling for a little calm and I'm calling for people to recall what the Prime Minister has said time and



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time again, and I'm calling upon people to remember that these are proposals to be offered to the parties, no more. This isn't a Downing Street Declaration which is set in stone the moment anything is signed. It's going to be offered to the parties. They can accept it, they can reject it, they can adapt it, but at least we hope they will sit down and discuss the ideas that are in it. I don't think that's very much to ask and in the meantime I do think it is reasonable to ask for a little calm and let us wait and see what is going to be offered. If indeed we can agree what to offer at all.

JOHN HUMPHRYS:

Sir Patrick, thank you very much.

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