



# An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

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STATEMENT BY SIR PATRICK MAYHEW, SECRETARY OF STATE  
FOR NORTHERN IRELAND, IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS,  
WEDNESDAY, 1 FEBRUARY 1995

NORTHERN IRELAND - JOINT FRAMEWORK DOCUMENT

With permission, Madam Speaker, I will make a statement concerning the lead story in The Times today.

First, the background.

The House knows that for a considerable time Her Majesty's Government and the Irish government have been engaged in discussing a Joint Framework Document. It has long been recognised in Northern Ireland and further afield that political progress can only be achieved by dialogue and agreement among all who are properly concerned. The purpose of the two governments has therefore to help the main constitutional parties get into inclusive political talks again.

How? In two ways.

First, by offering the British Government's own suggestions for new democratic arrangements for the internal government of Northern Ireland.

Secondly, by jointly offering the parties, as we were requested to do, the two governments' shared ideas about a possible basis for the other parts of a comprehensive political settlement. We are seeking a basis that might have the best chance of getting the wide support that will be needed in Northern Ireland, so that further talks will be seen to be worthwhile.

That document, if we could agree it, would simply be offered to the Northern Ireland parties. Not as some blueprint to be imposed - time and again we have made that clear - but for the parties to examine it. They could accept it; they could reject it; they could amend it; or adapt it.

But at least we would hope they would sit down again together and discuss the issues in it.

That has been our purpose. It remains our purpose.

So far from imposing it, the Prime Minister has made clear that, once agreed, it will immediately be published, so that not only the parties but all the people of Northern Ireland as well, can consider it.

f, as we hope, the parties resume discussions and reach the wide agreement that would be necessary, then the people of Northern Ireland will have their direct and decisive say on the outcome. Any agreement that the parties may come to must be put to them in a referendum - for them to show if they agree or not.

Lastly, it goes without saying that the consent of Parliament would be required.

That is the triple lock - parties, people, Parliament - the triple lock against imposition upon the people of Northern Ireland that the Prime Minister has so often spoken of.

We have not yet reached agreement on a framework document to offer to the parties. Last Thursday Mr Spring and I met in London and afterwards we both said that work on important matters remained to be done. That is still the position.

Both governments hope, and earnestly hope, that we can reach agreement. But consent will be the key. And the Prime Minister has made it clear that - because consent would be absent - we could not, for example, propose arrangements providing for joint authority over Northern Ireland, that is to say the British and Irish governments jointly running the affairs of Northern Ireland over the heads of its people.

Nor, for the same reason, could we agree to propose any North/South body that was autonomous.

A body that was accountable to a Northern Ireland elected assembly, which would delegate authority to those of its members discharging its functions, is a different matter. Such a body, empowered in that way and accountable to the assembly, making common cause North and South in areas of common interest and mutual benefit, might well get consent.

Similarly we have always made clear that for the same reason, there would be no point in putting forward proposals which left the Irish territorial claim to Northern Ireland in place.

These are matters of the greatest sensitivity and difficulty, even danger, in an area where fears and suspicions very understandably abound on all sides. An enormous amount potentially turns upon them.

In The Times' story today I recognise a few phrases lifted highly selectively from a lengthy negotiating text employed in the discussions with the Irish government but upon which the governments have not agreed. I do not, however, recognise the conclusions that the author draws from them. For example, the story leads with the assertion 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 is simply not true.

What is true is that the future of Northern Ireland is declared by both governments in the Downing Street Declaration to lie in the hands of the people who live there. That is where it rests, and will stay. That principle of democracy the two governments constantly re-iterate. It has been the foundation to our resolute opposition to 25 years of violence, now ended we trust for good.

must not be drawn into a premature publication of a document in these negotiations which has not been agreed by the governments, reaction to distorting leaks calculated to destabilise and destroy this immensely sensitive process.

The process is too important for the people of Northern Ireland to be further damaged in that way.

When and only when an entire package of proposals is published conforming to the principles we stand by could parties, people and Parliament judge its true worth.

ENDS

Brain calculations  
to report be wise to  
keep a copy of this on file.

Taviseach 1.2.95



Fergus Finlay confirmed that the statement issued at about 2<sup>55</sup>. It was sent over as a courtesy - there was no advance consultation.

The statement is fine and I believe it was a good idea to issue it given the level of interest in the UK as well as here.

M. Erickson  
Mark  
Alan Dunt

2:55 PM

**STATEMENT BY DICK SPRING TD  
TANAISTE, MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS  
Wednesday 1 February, 1995**

Today's London Times article makes a totally selective and tendentious use of excerpts from work in progress between the British and Irish Government. Its manifest purpose is to alarm unionists rather than to inform the public, and full allowance must be made for the blatant political agenda behind it.

It is very disquieting that the confidentiality agreed between the Governments has been breached. I am convinced that the leak could not have come from any Irish source in Dublin, and we will be in consultation with the British Government to seek to establish how it occurred.

It has been made clear from the outset that the Joint Framework Document is not a blueprint to be imposed, but a document to be discussed <sup>as an aid to negotiation</sup> and ~~ultimately~~ ~~agreed~~ by the parties. The Document is not about Joint Authority, and had the article not ignored important features, that would have been clear. For example, the Document contains clear and express commitments about the democratic accountability of a North-South body to new institutions in Northern Ireland, which has been one of the many areas where the Governments are seeking to meet key unionist criteria also.

The two Governments will not be deflected from their work. When they have completed it, the parties and the public will have ample opportunity to consider it calmly and in its entirety, as a document which challenges both sides to take new steps in the interests of a fair and viable political accommodation, entirely without prejudice to the attitude any of the political parties are free to adopt in negotiations, and with the assurance that the outcome of negotiations will be subject to referendum. I appeal to all sides to reserve judgement until the completed document is published, and not to react to an article which is clearly inspired by partisan motive.

George / Sean Doulon

ends

Miall Bulgess left  
this week for Jan 8  
see at 2:40. It is a  
copy statement that Tanaiste  
will issue