

RESTRICTED

(with MR Moffatt) R3/89 (C)
11 JUL 90 Vol 2
453

PS/11030/90/DR

31 JUL 90 Mr. Pearson

FROM: PRINCIPAL SECRETARIAT
10 JULY 1990

cc Mr Alston
Mr Mackenzie, DOE
Mr Dodds
Mr Bell
Mr Blackwell
Mr G McConnell
Mr Fergusson

Mr. Hyndman
re file
7/8
31/7/90
A. F. A.
J. C. S.

Mr Spence

STATEMENT ON BOMBINGS OF RAILWAY LINE, 4 JULY 1990

The Irish side has passed to me the attached copy of a motion and a statement by Mr Burke on the disruption by PIRA of the Belfast/Dublin railway line. The statement was made on 4 July 1990. Prior to this motion, the Irish side of the Secretariat had asked me for details of 2 recent bomb explosions on the railway line at Newry and Lurgan in which it had been reported that teenagers had been hurt. In the Lurgan attack, SPOB confirmed, there had actually been no casualties. However Mr Burke's statement contains a misleading reference to an injured teenager in the Lurgan explosion.

2. Apart from the denunciations of PIRA, the Minister's statement contains references to the economic and social importance of the railway line which might be worth replaying to Irish Ministers and officials when discussing investment in the service.

[signed]

He

Principal Secretariat

Drumblin

RESTRICTED

STATEMENT BY THE MINISTER FOR JUSTICE AND FOR
COMMUNICATIONS, MR. RAY BURKE, T.D.

295 ; 5- 7-90; 10:48 AM;

353 1 789100 +

754505 ; # 2

SEANAD MOTION ON 4 JULY 1990

cl ke 8.1

1. In the period in question, there have been 87 disruptions of this kind of the railway service between Dublin and Belfast. The deliberate disruption of rail services is a denial of this right, Seanad Eireann demands that the provisional IRA -

1. stop the disruption of the Belfast-Dublin service which has linked the people of Dublin and Belfast for over a century;
2. stop putting the lives of passengers and rail staff at risk;
3. stop threatening the jobs of railway workers".

STATEMENT BY THE MINISTER FOR JUSTICE AND FOR
COMMUNICATIONS, MR. RAY BURKE, T.D.

For the past 18 months or so, the Dublin-Belfast railway line has been the target of a protracted campaign of disruption carried out by the Provisional IRA or by persons claiming to act on behalf of that organisation. This campaign of disruption takes the form of the placing of bombs on the Northern side of the line or the making of hoax telephone calls to the effect that there are bombs on the line.

In the period in question, there have been 87 disruptions of this kind of the railway service between Dublin and Belfast and it is incredible to have to say that, in the course of those disruptions, the Provisional IRA have placed 29 bombs which have either exploded or been defused on the railway line, a line used by the ordinary people of Ireland in going about their everyday business.

The most recent disruption was on the 28th of June when a bomb exploded at Newry railway station, the second such attack on the Dublin-Belfast railway line. I call on the members of the Provisional IRA to put an end to this senseless campaign before there is a major disaster and I know that all those who contribute here today to the debate will echo this call. Only last March, all sides of the other House joined together in a motion condemning the Provisional IRA campaign against the line, not only as a threat to the safety and well-being of passengers and staff alike but also as a denial of the basic

the station this year. In this incident, a 13-year old boy narrowly escaped death when shrapnel from the explosion crashed into his house nearly half a mile away from the scene. Only the previous week another teenager was injured when a bomb exploded on the line at Lurgan. This was an incident in which a bomb had been placed in a location close to the scene of an explosion the previous day and which was clearly intended to murder those engaged in carrying out a clearance operation to ensure that the line was safe to travel.

It is only through the good grace of God that a major disaster involving massive loss of life has not taken place on this railway line as a result of this mindless campaign of disruption. On at least two occasions last year, passenger trains narrowly avoided passing in the vicinity of bombs placed on the line through the sheer good luck of being slightly delayed for a few minutes. Any organisation which places bombs on a railway line used by ordinary citizens in going about their peaceful everyday business shows a callous disregard for the possible disastrous consequences of their lunatic behaviour.

All right-minded persons are at one in calling on the Provisional IRA to put an end to this senseless campaign before there is a major disaster and I know that all those who contribute here today to the debate will echo this call. Only last March, all sides of the other House joined together in a motion condemning the Provisional IRA campaign against the line, not only as a threat to the safety and well-being of passengers and staff alike but also as a denial of the basic

civil right of freedom of movement and as a threat to the jobs of over 400 railway workers.

On that occasion, I emphasised - and I repeat it here now - the concern of the Government about these attacks and drew attention to the fact that the Minister for Foreign Affairs had personally raised the issue with the Northern Ireland Secretary of State. The Department of Foreign Affairs have maintained close contact with the British authorities on this matter through the Anglo-Irish Secretariat and they, the British, fully share our concern about this issue and about the importance of keeping the line open and safe for travel.

I think it is important to acknowledge that, while the Dublin-Belfast railway link has been severely disrupted on nearly ninety occasions since December 1988, it has never been suspended or withdrawn. On those occasions when the rail schedules have been disrupted by bombs or hoax telephone calls, services have been maintained by bus substitution between the nearest station on each side of the incident. The staff of Iarnród Éireann and Northern Ireland Railways deserve the greatest credit for maintaining the service in the face of adversity and, while bus substitution may not be an ideal solution to the problem, it is a clear example of the very determination to ensure that all steps possible are taken to keep the Dublin-Belfast line open.

The Dublin-Belfast railway has united both parts of this country for over a century. It has provided a vital link between business and commerce as well as providing a personal

4.

link for people from North and South to travel freely from one part of the island to another. It is not merely a link between Dublin and Belfast but a service which is available to all, North and South. It is as important to the citizens and businessmen of Cork and Antrim as it is to the citizens and business men of Dublin and Belfast. It is used by people every week of the year for family reasons, for commerce reasons or for social reasons, many of whom have no other means of travel. This is a time when barriers all over Europe are coming down and it would be comic, if it were not so tragic, that those who claim the unification of the island as their primary goal seem to be determined to undermine and destroy the primary visible and symbolic link of unity between North and South.

In conclusion, a Chathaoirleach, I wish to call again on those responsible for this senseless campaign to call it off before there is a major disaster resulting from their actions. The people of Ireland want them to stop and to stop now and they should heed this call. For my part, I can assure the House that the Government recognise the importance of the railway link and will continue to take whatever measures are necessary on our side of the Border to ensure that the line stays open.